

# Liberty

May 1992

Vol. 5, No. 5

\$4.00

## Fearing and Loathing Bill Clinton

### Clarence Thomas: Cruel and Unusual Justice?

*by James Taggart*

### There's No Such Thing as the Environment

*by William Dennis*

### The Peculiar Politics of H.L. Mencken

*by R.W. Bradford*

### The Cost of Kids

*by Karl Hess*

### Inside Ted Koppel's "Town Meetings"

*by Eric Banfield*

Also: *Vernon L. Smith* on the Dustbin of Prehistory;  
*Richard Kostelanetz* on the Irrelevance of Contemporary Literature;  
plus other Articles, Reviews, and Humor.



*"A greater equality than is compatible with Liberty is undesirable." —Ben Tucker*

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*Liberty* (ISSN 0894-1408) is a libertarian and classical liberal review of thought, culture and politics, published bi-monthly by Liberty Publishing, 1532 Sims Way, #1, Port Townsend, WA 98368. Second-Class Postage Paid at Port Townsend, WA 98368, and at additional mailing offices. Address all correspondence to: Liberty, PO Box 1167, Port Townsend, WA 98368. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Liberty, PO Box 1167, Port Townsend, WA 98368.

Subscriptions are \$19.50 for 6 issues, \$35.00 for 12 issues. Foreign subscriptions are \$24.50 for 6 issues, \$45.00 for 12 issues. Manuscripts are welcome, but will be returned only if accompanied by SASE. Queries are encouraged. A Writer's Introduction is available: send request and SASE.

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# Letters

## The Perplexed Critics

Stephen Cox ("Albert Jay Nock: Prophet of Libertarianism," March 1992) wonders what a good libertarian like Albert Jay Nock could have seen in the works of Henry George. Tolstoy's recent biographer wondered the same about Tolstoy. The wonderment of these modern writers would turn into amazement if they could confront the long list of highly respected lovers of liberty who, like Nock and Tolstoy, heard the clarion call of Henry George.

Actually, the old single-taxer has such a seductive appeal to libertarians that we can only applaud the strategy of contemptuous dismissal that modern writers employ. People need to be warned that Henry George was a crackpot, so they will know better than to read his works and risk being overpowered by his magic, as were Nock, Tolstoy, Winston Churchill, Admiral Spruance, Helen Keller, and so many otherwise right-thinking people.

Robert Tideman  
San Francisco, Cal.

## Wrangling for Fetuses

R.W. Bradford says that he finds the abortion debate "long and boring" ("Less is More, More or Less," March 1992). Tiring and frustrating I can understand, but not boring — for much more than abortion rides on the outcome. The become-a-person concept presupposes two classes of human beings, an upper class of persons and an underclass of non-persons. That libertarians, of all people, can hold this premise worries me very much. Yet I find it fascinating to watch abortion choicers wrangle among themselves while they search for solid ground on which to rest their case.

Doris Gordon  
Wheaton, Md.

## Fetus Theories

In his letter (March 1992) about my review ("Peikoff's Objectivism: An Autopsy," January 1992) of Leonard Peikoff's book, David Braatz addresses a series of questions to me. One or two of these appear to be good-natured leg-pulls, but in the remaining cases, where Mr Braatz seems to be genuinely perplexed, I will try to help him.

"How is a fetus . . . programmed? By whom? Or what?" By its genes.

"Is every fetus conscious of its theories?" I didn't suggest that any fetus was conscious of anything (though, in view of the fact that fetuses can be trained to recognize speech-patterns they will subsequently encounter after birth, I wouldn't want to rule it out, either).

"What meaning can a theory have to . . . an embryo with no language or concepts?" A cat can form the theory that if it hears a can being opened it is about to be fed. The same cat can then revise or discard that theory. So language is not essential to theory formation or revision. We don't know enough to be sure that a fetus doesn't have concepts. A non-conscious computer can form and evaluate theories. Aside from all this, I'm not committed to the view that the theories with which a fetus is programmed have any "meaning" to that fetus, any more than a theory embodied in a book or diskette has any meaning to that book or diskette.

"What happened to adults who wouldn't recognize a theory if one bit them?" Many adults wouldn't recognize an adverb, a natural number, or a litotes, but most adults employ these devices daily. Similarly, all adults have developed their intellectual capacities by formulating, criticizing, and revising theories.

"Will my revised theories be passed on to any eggs I fertilize?" In the opinion of August Weismann and me: Only if you catch these fertilized eggs later, and give them a good talking to.

In my review I pointed out that Peikoff always "stops where the interesting questions start." Mr Braatz complains, on the evidence of my review, that I'm no better. But surely this is unfair. A full-sized book on philosophy might be expected to pursue details that a brief review doesn't.

Furthermore, the Critical Rationalist standpoint that I broadly agree with is elaborated in a great many books and articles (Karl Popper's *Objective Knowledge*, Jagdish Hattiangadi's *How is Language Possible?*, Radnitzky and Bartley's *Evolutionary Epistemology, Rationality, and the Sociology of Knowledge*, to mention just a few). These works can hardly be accused

of always avoiding the interesting or difficult questions. There are also many published writings sympathetic to the Randist point of view, but here the great majority are afflicted with the same peculiarity as Peikoff. They nearly all stop where the interesting and awkward questions begin. Their central dogma and implicit motto: "Nothing is the least bit puzzling!"

David Ramsay Steele  
Chicago, Ill.

## Equilibrate This

Contrary to Michael Rothschild's protest, Ross Overbeek was much too soft in his review ("Economics vs Bionomics?" March 1992) of Rothschild's book and article ("Beyond Austrian Economics," January 1992). Rothschild's biological analogy of economics may be appropriate in describing some processes, but much of Rothschild's discussion of "equilibrium" reads like the work of an overeager first-year graduate student who has discovered his first Ludwig Lachmann harangue.

Some economists overuse and misapply the theoretical construct called equilibrium, but this is no reason to condemn every use of it. In its proper place, such as comparing a world with rent control to one without (everything else being equal), the elementary texts' static equilibrium model is extremely useful in forcing students to think through all the implications of rent regulation.

Rothschild's vociferous defense of his writings ("Contra Overbeek," March 1992) suggests he is someone who hasn't read enough economics to quite know where his minor criticisms fit in.

Paul Geddes  
Burnaby, B.C.

## A Fine Point

In the March 1992 issue of *Liberty* Michael Rothschild says: "And *Bionomics* explains why the appropriate use of a limited government for specific community purposes . . . is not inconsistent with bio-nomic thinking."

Well, that's fine.

But it is inconsistent with free-market thinking.

Chris Pickering  
Lakewood, Colo.

## A Lone Reviewer and His Lonely Source

I am disappointed that my friend Sheldon Richman has chosen to write a semi-

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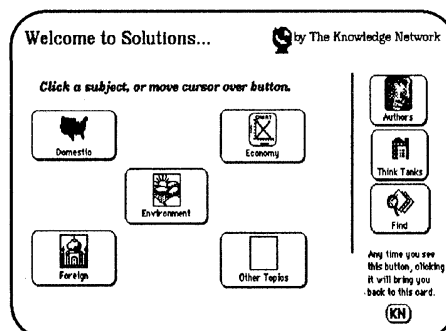
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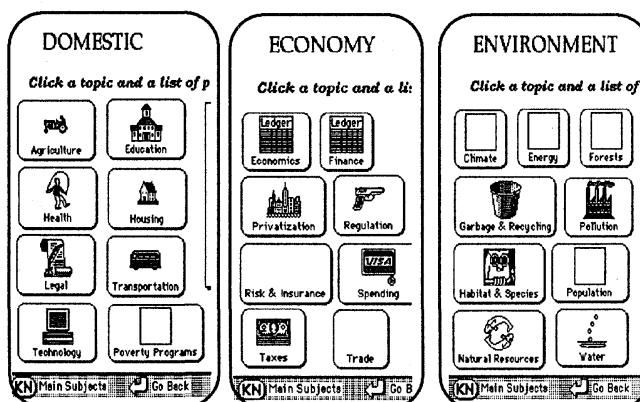
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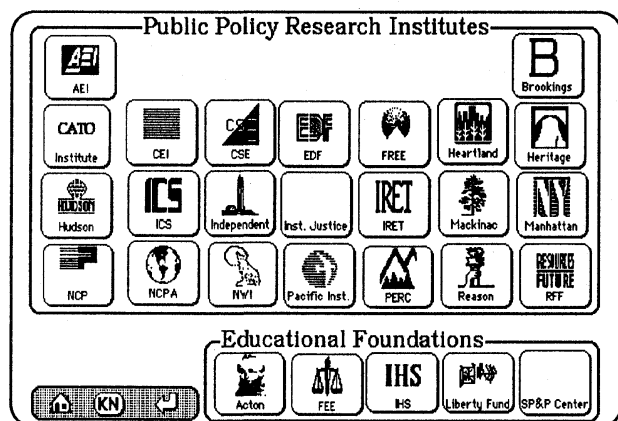
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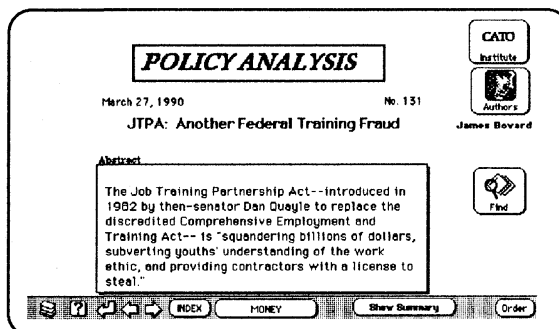
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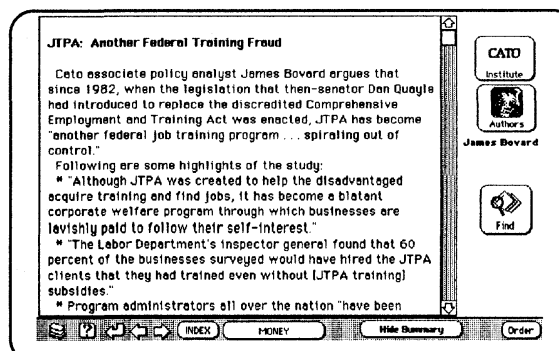
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## Letters, continued from page 4

serious article on the Kennedy assassination ("JFK, Conspiracies, and Me," March 1992) based on an "enduring hunch" and the reading of one entire book on the subject.

Come on, Shel. You and I would be the first to criticize anyone who intended to write an article on international trade or antitrust policy based on an enduring hunch and one lonely source.

Our federal government may well be inefficient in productive activities but surely its recent bloody demonstration in Iraq leaves little doubt that it has no real trouble killing people — or censoring information. And, yes, conspiracies do tend to come apart over time (price-fixing conspiracies, for instance), but that does not mean that the public ever discovers the true nature of the activity. Anyway, all that is beside the point. The point is: is there evidence beyond a reasonable doubt that Oswald shot Kennedy or that there was no conspiracy?

You note that eyewitness testimony is the weakest form of evidence and I agree. But the circumstantial evidence tying Oswald to the shooting is far weaker than you assume. Since 1963 a cottage industry of private investigators has developed and has devoted its considerable energies to investigating the so-called "evidence" collected by the FBI and the Dallas Police Department. Each piece of circumstantial evidence has been examined in great detail: the rifle; the bullet fragments; the "magic" bullet; the bullet shells; the wounds in Kennedy and Connally; the paraffin test; the palm print; the photos of Oswald with the alleged murder weapon.

This "market process" in investigating evidence has many things going for it. One, it has been conducted by private citizens with private funds; two, it has been competitive and rivalrous; three, unlike the Warren Commission, these investigations started with the assumption

of innocence and attempted to discover if the circumstantial evidence was strong enough to establish Oswald's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

Now, as with any market process, some of these investigations have been of higher quality than others, and one certainly has to be cautious. Nonetheless, to assert (as you do) that conspirologists have produced *no* "hard evidence" in thirty years is clearly irresponsible. Where is the hard evidence, you ask? Not surprisingly, Shel, it is scattered through those hundreds of books and articles that you have chosen not to read and that the establishment press has chosen to ignore or distort.

I agree that Oliver Stone's tale of conspiracy is good cinema but probably bad history. I don't agree, however, that any "perfectly reasonable explanations for the single bullet theory" have surfaced or that the circumstantial evidence establishes Oswald as the shooter beyond a reasonable doubt.

Dominick T. Armentano  
West Hartford, Conn.

### Falsifiability Falsified

Sheldon Richman suggests, "Next time you talk to a conspiracy advocate, ask him what piece of evidence would change his mind. If you get an answer, let me know." I am not a "conspiracy advocate," but I'll respond anyway. The honest answer is that no single piece of evidence would change my mind about anything, and I'll bet you'd have to answer the same way were I to reverse your question and hand it back to you. So this challenge may sound snappy, but it means nothing.

Edson C. Hendricks  
San Diego, Cal.

### Okay, You Are a Crass Political Opportunist

Like the blind men describing an elephant by its feel, Sheldon Richman and I found entirely different aspects of the film *JFK* on which to dwell.

What struck me was that few viewers could fail to leave the movie theater without a renewed distrust of their federal government.

Call me a crass political opportunist.

The voting public has already been treated, within its admittedly short attention span, to the S&L bailout, a sneaky pay raise, check-kiting revelations, broken presidential promises, Bill Clinton's

sleaziness, and numerous other scandals, to which *JFK* can only contribute a motivation to "send a message" at the polls.

"Take that, you slimy crooks, I've just voted *Libertarian!*" That may be the sentiment of many voters come November. But to capitalize on such sentiments, Libertarians need to condition themselves to see the political opportunity in the events of the year, including Oliver Stone's recent film, and position themselves on the ballot in record numbers to receive the coming harvest of votes.

Jim McClarin  
Nashua, N.H.

### Off the Track

I was pleased to see Buchanan challenging Bush. Buchanan has principles, and Bush doesn't. But let's not lose sight of the fact that they are not libertarian principles. As C.A. Arthur points out ("Inside Pat Buchanan," March 1992), there is hardly anything recognizably libertarian in Buchanan's platform.

Buchanan's appeal to libertarians for support was that his train went closer to our station, but the scary truth is that even Bush's train is closer than Buchanan's. For example, Bush is for free trade and the voluntary military, while Buchanan is for protectionism and conscription.

Of course, Bush is no libertarian either. Since the Democrats also fail to be even remotely libertarian, that leaves the Libertarian Party.

A.J. Skoble  
Terre Haute, Ind.

### Another Choice Candidate

The Libertarian candidate for president is Andre Marrou. The libertarian candidate for President is Paul Tsongas.

When Paul Tsongas first made his views known, I thought to myself, "A major-party, pro-business candidate who is liberal on social and defense issues? Pinch me, I must be dreaming."

*Liberty* devoted more than 11 pages in its March issue to Pat Buchanan. Why not devote at least as much space to Paul Tsongas?

David Hoscheidt  
Belleville, Ill.

### A Note With a Touch of Finality

I have cancelled my subscription due to your persistent bashing of libertarians and of Ayn Rand's books. With friends like you, I need no enemy.

R.M. Borland  
Colora, Md.

## Letters Policy

We invite readers to comment on articles that have appeared in *Liberty*. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. All letters are assumed to be intended for publication unless otherwise stated. Succinct, typewritten letters are preferred. Please include your phone number so that we can verify your identity.

# Reflections

**Congressional confessional** — The Miami *Herald* has reported the reaction of Lawrence J. (Larry) Smith (D-Fla.), one of many Congressmen who have belatedly confessed to writing bad checks on the House of Representatives bank.

"My wife had a checkbook," Smith said. "She didn't know what was in the account. If she wrote a check, she assumed there would be money to cover. So did I."

This, as I take it, is the definitive statement of a politician's relationship to the economy. —SC

**It's rough at the top** — It's strange, all the fuss the CEOs of the Big Three are making about "fair trade" with Japan. It's not just a desire to protect their companies from foreign competition; there's an almost *personal* quality to it. These fellows seem to be genuinely hopping mad.

I suspect they're simply afraid of getting fired. We've heard a lot in the last few months about Japanese executives who do a better job for only a fraction of Iacocca & Co.'s bloated salaries. With free competition, what's to keep American shareholders from hiring one of them in our incompetent executives' place? —JW

**Neighbors at the trough** — The *Wall Street Journal* reports that a coalition of environmental groups is urging state and federal governments to spend about \$50 million to buy up tracts or easements on Northeastern forestland. Hard times in the timber industry are causing as much as 400,000 acres of prime forest to go on the block. These groups think that the government should buy the land to keep it from being developed.

In doing so, they are ignoring a third alternative: Why don't they buy the lands or easements themselves? \$50 million is not an excessive amount for these people — together, the top ten environmental organizations budget more than \$500 million *each year*, and the median Sierra Club member has double the income of the median American. But no, the leaders think the *taxpayers* ought to fork over the funds for these "natural jewels." And if many of those taxpayers are struggling to make ends meet in the middle of a recession — well, that's too bad. Apparently, all citizens should feel good about paying more taxes to give affluent backpackers and hikers more land to play in, virtually without charge.

Yes, wilderness is a good thing, but the federal government alone has already set aside 88 million acres as wilderness; 118 million more acres are managed as wilderness while they are under study for permanent wilderness designation. These numbers don't even include the 43 million acres of national parks.

The environmentalists' pleas for government subsidies

are no different from those made by business seeking government help. Only arrogance prevents them from realizing that they, too, feed at the government trough. —JSS

**Have you stopped raping your wife?** —

It's been easy enough to see that radical feminists have it in for the boy-girl thing, find it disgusting, and aim to spoil it as much as possible. Catherine MacKinnon, professor of law at the University of Michigan and chief feminist crusader for anti-pornography legislation, has now suggested a rationale for making it illegal. In an interview with the *Toronto Star*, MacKinnon supported the new Canadian rape shield law, but went on to say: "In the context of unequal power [between the sexes], one needs to think about the meaning of consent, whether it is a meaningful concept at all. I'm saying we need to think about it. I think it's very questionable."

Got it? Every act of sex between a woman and a man, MacKinnon is broadly hinting, is an act of rape, because a woman cannot give valid consent. So feminism closes the circle: women are once again looked on as children, and sexual intercourse is always at best statutory rape.

Does that mean that women are to be deprived of sex altogether? Well, no. After all, MacKinnon's strictures apply only to vile acts with beastly *men*. Obviously, it's different when a woman loves a woman. . . . —RR

**We arm the world** — The *United States* is the world's only superpower, and it ought to remain that way. That's the conclusion of a "secret" Department of Defense study leaked to the press in early March. So I guess the world can look forward to "Pax Americana," or as George Bush explained the situation, "What we say, goes."

Perhaps it is time to change the name of the Department of Defense. There is precedent for a change. The Department of Defense was originally called the Department of War. Its name was changed in 1947 to reflect the "fact" that the U.S. was intent only on defending itself, harboring no hostile intentions toward other nations.

But with no real enemies left in the world, its new mission of maintaining the U.S. as the world's only superpower, or "what we say, goes," isn't really defensive. It seems to me the "truth in packaging" law ought to apply here. Perhaps we should call it the "Department of Offense," or "The Department of World Oppression." —RWB

**Ghettoizing gays** — We are used to waking up to find that terms or words we had used for years had, overnight, become impermissible.

There are no more girls, only women. There are no more Spanish-Americans, only Latinos. There are no more American Indians, only Native Americans.

But that is mere fashion, superficial and meaningless except for the amazing way in which, through a relatively small media circulation, the fashions shift and become temporarily standardized.

There is one manifestation of this, however, that is not superficial, and not meaningless. That is the standard condemnation of white males which has, slowly but surely, been narrowed to the condemnation of white male *heterosexuals*.

The white male part is objectionable enough, the sort of race-baiting that would be absolutely unacceptable in other contexts. (Even if some white males have deformed or horrified history, the majority, of course, have been as much victims of the regal males as people of any color and of any gender. Lumping all white males into one despicable category is no more helpful than lumping all of *any* racial or gender group into a stereotypical niche.)

The addition of "heterosexual" to the "white male" *auto-da-fé* is counter to every truly liberal hope. The obvious reverse-obverse of such incantation is to make a tribe of indistinguishable people out of every element of humanity.

Homosexuals, therefore, are made a tribe, not a collection of individuals. Is this what the hope for liberty of sexual preference has come to? One baleful effect is that when some, perhaps many, heterosexuals think of homosexuals they may be encouraged to think of them as just clones of the most obnoxious ones. There are countless other examples of this thoughtless stereotyping (religious fundamentalists, some conservatives).

The impulse to defend the liberty of people regardless of ethnicity or sexual preference is made needlessly uncomfortable by stereotyping. And it will get worse. Those homosexuals who want to condemn all heterosexuals are digging their own graves. It becomes part of the horrific ghettoization of people and the tribalization of debate — a curse on reason, a call to the most bigoted arms. —KH

**Note to travelers** — Two years ago, the U.S. government established the precedent for invading another country in order to arrest its head of state for a violation of U.S. law that is alleged to have happened entirely outside the U.S. I refer, of course, to the invasion of Panama for the purpose of arresting its president, Manuel Noriega, for violation of U.S. drug prohibition laws. Alas, the "cocaine" the Army found in his residence turned out to be tortilla flour, and the only witnesses the Department of Justice can dredge up are convicted criminals who are offered their freedom in exchange for testifying against Noriega, and their testimony doesn't really connect him to drug trafficking, leaving the Justice Department arguing that Noriega was a corrupt politician. Whether the Justice Department's "case" will convince a jury to put Noriega behind bars for good remains to be seen. Irrespective of the outcome, an interesting issue is raised: ought U.S. jurisdiction extend to other countries?

During the nation's first experiment with prohibition (of alcohol, not drugs), citizens of Canada and Mexico regularly dealt in liquor that they knew was going into the U.S. Yet the U.S. didn't invade Mexico or Canada. Were they guilty of dereliction of duty? Or have some fundamental notions of law changed?

It has reached the point where you have to inquire to the federal government to find out whether a law applies in other countries. A recent *Wall Street Journal* dispatch on the use of growth hormone as an anti-aging drug reported, "The treatment is beyond the reach of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, which doesn't regulate foreign medical practice, an FDA spokesman says." It's nice to know that people in other countries can't be arrested for violating U.S. laws or regulations pertaining to medical treatment, at least for now. But what if the FDA changes its mind?

Meanwhile, how should a prudent American traveling abroad figure out which U.S. laws extend overseas? When

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*During our first experiment with prohibition, citizens of Canada and Mexico regularly dealt in liquor that they knew was going into the U.S. Yet the U.S. didn't invade Canada or Mexico. Were Prohibition agents derelict in their duty?*

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he goes to Germany and learns there are no speed limits on its *autobahns* and most cars are traveling at speeds of about 90 miles per hour, should he limit his speed to 65 until he checks with the U.S. embassy? When he goes to Martinique, where nude beaches are the rule, should he keep his swimsuit on until his embassy advises him whether U.S. decency laws are enforced there?

Perhaps the various federal departments should issue a pamphlet explaining to Americans (and to foreigners) which U.S. laws will be enforced *in partibus infidelium*, so that future invasions might be avoided. —RWB

**The spirit of American enterprise** — The heads of America's Big Three automakers bellyached for days in Tokyo about how few of their cars the Japanese buy. *Protectionism! Xenophobia!*, they cried.

Would you believe left-handedness? The Japanese drive on the left, which means they need the steering wheel on the right side of the car. The American companies don't make that kind of car for the Japanese market. They say they can't risk such an investment before knowing whether the cars will sell. Good to see the spirit of American enterprise is alive and well. Maybe the U.S. government should demand that the Japanese change their driving habits on grounds that left-side driving is a trade barrier.

By the way, how many Japanese cars would sell here if the steering wheels were on the right? —SLR

**What's bugging you?** — The Department of Justice is trying to force the nation's long distance companies to purchase expensive equipment to make it a simple matter for it to eavesdrop on private telephone conversations. When the phone companies complained that they don't want to spend the money, the Department of Justice suggested that they should pass on the cost to their customers.

This is one really terrific idea. If people were allowed to have private telephone conversations, it would be virtually impossible for the Department of Justice to enforce the laws



of the land. Making us pay for equipment to allow the Department of Justice to listen in on our phone calls is eminently fair: it doesn't place any burden on taxpayers, it doesn't make the phone companies pay, and it makes law enforcement more efficient.

Why stop at this? By the same logic, why doesn't the Department of Justice force us to bug our homes, so they can listen in any time they want? Why not make us put television cameras in all our rooms, so they can watch us as well? And this could be done at no cost to the taxpayer. All that would be needed is a change in the building codes. The only people who have anything to fear are those who are breaking the law. —RWB

**What's my crime?** — Regardless of what you might think of Michael Milken, the most revealing truth about his conviction is the common ignorance of his exact crime. I've asked colleagues, financial professionals, and even lawyers, in New York and elsewhere, and invariably they draw a blank. I challenge readers of these pages to tell us (without peeking at a source, of course). If no one knows what he is guilty of, aside from earning an amount of money thought by some to be obscene (and inventing, or reviving, an unusual financial instrument), what lessons are taught the kiddies by his incarceration? —RK

**When to say "no"** — I tend not to follow the legal trials and sexual tribulations of famous people, but recently they have been shoved in my face, right there on the television news.

Mike Tyson's rape trial is a case in point. When the trial started, I neither knew nor cared whether or not he was guilty. But when I learned that Tyson's alleged victim accused him of "forcing" cunnilingus on her, my curiosity was aroused. Rapists, I have always assumed, are primarily interested in their own pleasures and passions. Providing oral stimulation to their victims does not seem to figure into their game plan.

But even if the cunnilingus was not forced, the penile/vaginal intercourse that followed may still have amounted to rape. Consider: after oral stimulation to orgasm, the victim simply said, "No, that's enough." —KRB

**One small step** — Early in the presidential primary campaign Paul Tsongas stated, "You can't redistribute wealth you haven't created first." It just goes to show how far some Democrats have come in their economic thinking; at least Tsongas admits that wealth has to be made before it is seized. But he should work on his pronouns: The government redistributes the wealth; the people create it. —JSR

**Forward, into the past** — According to the *Washington Post*, the German office for the Protection of the Constitution is deeply worried about the estimated 4,000 neo-Nazis in the Federal Republic (out of a population of 80,000,000). These aren't the "skinheads": the chief activity of these characters seems to be publishing books and giving speeches denying the accepted history of the genocide of the Jews in the Second World War.

Such activity violates the German law against "insulting and defaming the memory of the dead," and the Office for

the Protection of the Constitution has brought criminal prosecutions resulting in fines and prison sentences. The campaign has the public's strong support. Opinion polls conducted by the Interior Ministry find that the great majority of Germans believe that theirs should be "a well-fortified democracy," one that "actively defends itself" against its enemies. Accordingly, 72% of Germans favor banning "dangerous books," and 63% believe extremists should be denied freedom of speech.

The *Post* did not report how many Germans feel that, in order to defend democracy, writers of dangerous books should be sent to concentration camps. —RR

**That's a rap** — Rap music is making the covers of news and opinion journals across the land again. As usual, it does so as a baleful cultural force rather than as music. Its latest outrages against the polity include songs by Ice Cube on his *Death Certificate* LP that advocate burning down Korean grocery stores and shooting specific living Jews, and a video by Public Enemy that portrays the murder of Arizona public officials in retaliation for not celebrating Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday as a national holiday.

I'll follow the pernicious trend in non-specialized coverage of pop music and mostly ignore the music *qua* music; I haven't even heard the Ice Cube record, and the Public Enemy song is not among their best.

But what does it say about our culture that such hate-mongering sells, and sells big? Nothing we shouldn't already know, actually.

Since *Billboard* magazine, the charter of record for pop music, switched to a system that records actual sales electronically by bar code instead of merely cobbling together reports from vendors whose accuracy could not be checked, it has been revealed that musical styles marginalized by radio pro-



THE MULTICULTURALIST'S WORST NIGHTMARE ...

grammers — rap, country, and metal — were actually what Americans liked the most. This led to a much-excoriated think piece by David Samuels in the November 11, 1991 *New Republic*, based on the discovery that rap's audience includes a large number of whites.

I don't think this is a big surprise to anyone living in the real world, attending high school or college with white people, or even occasionally watching MTV. But it inspired much brow-wrinkling at *The New Republic*, and the worried conclusions Samuels reached caused many of the hipper media outlets to guffaw and discount his analysis.

That may be all it deserves. After all, the phenomenon he "discovered" was obvious. Gee, white people digging a music indigenous to and initially loved by black audiences? Ever hear of jazz or rock'n'roll, David? His assumptions that it is only menacing, violent images of young black men that appeal to suburban whites were erroneous; rappers as benign — or as pale — as Hammer and Vanilla Ice sell as well with whites as Niggas With Attitudes or the Geto Boys. And of course, he showed a typical pundit's inability to approach pop music as music instead of as a cultural phenomenon.

Samuels expressed some seemingly deserved alarm that singers of such, umm, rampaging negativity are what appeals to American record-buyers nowadays. And of course, as the racially sensitive don't fail to point out, Ice Cube has his white analog in America's favorite rock'n'roll singer, the confused, manic-depressive midwestern boy W. Axl Rose, who likes to complain about immigrants, faggots, bitches, and niggers.

So is it something worth being frightened about, that hateful, scowling, misogynous, joyless dudes like Cube, Chuck D., and Axl are young America's spokesmen of choice?

Cheapjack sociological analysis of pop music loves to fall back on that hoary old Plato quotation about the walls of the city falling when the modes of music change — you can look it up. I think a more appropriate quotation is "All young people are fascists." Young people are attracted to ferocity of vision, to intolerance of the different, and to opposition to their elders. And for those raised by the '60s generation, hate-mongering creeps are just what they need to whet their craving for driving mom and dad nuts.

However cogent this analysis might seem, it is very probably irrelevant. Pop music appeals for reasons of sound as

much as sense, and popularity feeds on popularity as much as on intrinsic appeal. Whatever is happening is what people tend to buy. And despite attitudinal, or musical, faults, the likes of N.W.A. and Guns'n'Roses provide a burst of energy and snotty enthusiasm that, to put it plainly, the young can get into.

Columnist Joe Queenan wrote a very funny column in the *Washington Post* attaching the rhetoric of rock critics' writings about hateful musicians to stories about the rise of the Nazi movement in Germany. The juxtaposition was amusing, but inappropriate. Pop musicians are most certainly *not* the

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*No matter the wrongheadedness of their attitudes, rap musicians do not present the threat to the commonwealth that a budding Hitler does. What these pop singers sell is attitude, not ideology. In most people's lives, pop music is a distraction, a hobby.*

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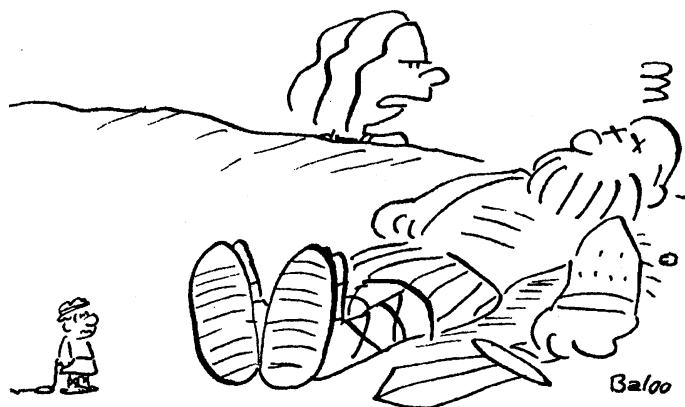
unacknowledged legislators of the age. Ice Cube, no matter the wrongheadedness of his attitudes, does not present the threat to the commonwealth that a budding Hitler does. As rappers Niggas With Attitudes' very name suggests, what these pop singers sell is attitude, not ideology. In most people's lives, pop music is a distraction, a hobby, maybe even something of an obsession. And while exposure to too much bad thought will certainly dull, and even pervert, one's ethical sensibilities, these attitudes purveyed by Cube and Axl are derived from the culture already; they most likely possess little power to change anyone for the worse. Pop stars do not make waves in our culture; they are merely the pond that reflects the oncoming stone.

—BD

**Dis "honor"** — There is such a thing as too much respect. This struck home to me, recently, when President George Bush referred to Richard Milhous ("Tricky Dick") Nixon as "President Nixon." This is patently absurd: Bush is commander-in-chief of this country, and merits the title, but Nixon is not, and deserves no special honorific. (For those weak on history: the slime-ball was run out of office a long time ago.)

We should generalize from this. In a republic such as ours, people may adorn themselves with prenomens such as "Mister," "Missis," or "Miz," and whatever title of office they *now hold*; former office holders should make do with what we, the common folk, use every day of our lives. The current practice makes of political office an avenue for royal aggrandizement, and smacks of vulgar aristocratic pretension; it is elitist, anti-democratic, and as worthy of chucking out as was the king of England.

The Founding Fathers understood this principle, and wrote a condemnation of "title-holding" into the Constitution. But the old customs were reasserted, over the years, first by retired military officers using their old titles to garner public support for political office, and finally by politicians seeking to keep their names in the history books (and to get



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on the boards of corporations). With all due respect to even those few retired politicians who are, in my court of private opinion, truly honorable, even those ladies and gentlemen should abandon such titles as "Honorable" when they leave elected office. (Any mail I get with a return address from "The Honorable Ron Paul," my favorite ex-Congressman, immediately goes into the round file.)

And as for Nixon, "Mister" seems too good. —TWV

**Green in tooth and claw** — Lately, there has been a good deal written here in *Liberty* about the problems of environmentalism — or environmentalisms, since there's more than one of them.

There's the scientific environmentalism that concerns itself with preventing abuses to nature that may also be physically harmful to man. There's the political environmentalism that expresses people's desire to assert their power over others by excluding them from the use of natural resources. And there's the type of environmentalism that authors in *Liberty* have labelled "aesthetic": the desire merely to protect the beauty of whatever you or I happen to regard as beautiful, no matter what the physical or political results may be.

I think that I personally have managed to escape some of these tendencies. I'm not much impressed by the fits that scientists are always throwing about Alaskan oil spills or acid rain on the plains of Maine. (Yes, I know that scientists have also located real threats to the environment and that the best scientists are finding ways of dealing with them. I'm talking about emotions here, not reason.) I suspect that a lot of what passes for science is a sublimated politics — and political environmentalism is a terrible thing indeed.

But I do have a weakness for aesthetic environmentalism — don't you? We wince at the thought of a bunch of houses being built on our favorite empty plateau; it's aesthetically offensive, and we wish, at least for a moment, that someone would just pass a law to stop it. If we value liberty — and fairness, too — we may then reflect on the immorality of coercion and the fact that we ourselves may live on what was in 1910 someone else's favorite empty plateau. I know that I live in such a place, and when I recall that fact, I stop wishing for the ecocops to turn on their sirens and bring everything to a halt.

But there's yet another kind of environmentalism, frequently underlying and strengthening the first three; I'll call it theological environmentalism. It's an expression — almost always a debased expression — of an absolutist religious idea about man's relationship to nature. I'm not thinking just about goofy cults that worship the earth goddess, or posters of a new Ten Commandments displaying rules like, "Thou shalt not value thine own species higher than another." I'm thinking about an idea so common as to form a cliché in almost everyone's mouth.

What brought this forcibly to my mind was (of all things) a recent perusal of the diaries of Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's Minister for Popular Enlightenment:

14 November 1939. "Yesterday: Beautiful autumn days now. Sun, mist, and falling leaves. How glorious the world is, and how little Man in general has done to deserve this glorious world."

23 May 1941. "A fine, mild May evening. What a beauti-

ful world! But for people, wicked people! Nevertheless, one has to find a way of dealing with them, too."

The idea is simply that man by his very nature pollutes the physical world. The fact that even Goebbels, one of the wickedest of men, writes so easily in this way of "wicked people" merely illustrates how widely the theology had spread, even 50 years ago.

It's been with us, in fact, since the Romantic movement of the 19th century went to seed (or became "tainted," if you prefer the environmentalist metaphor to the environmental one). Romantics who reacted against orthodox religion wanted to maintain a sense of the sacred while rejecting the Christian idea of the Man-God. While Christians had been indifferent if not hostile to "nature" as a source of values, some Romantic writers began to regard it as the embodiment of a moral absolute. The role of the devil, in a world without a supernatural home for him, devolved to Man. And the bizarre theology of naked "nature" sank deeply into the popular consciousness, where it continues to influence thinking in all sorts of unanalyzed ways.

That's the diagnosis. What is the cure? Good public-policy analysis. Well-aimed satire at modern advocates of Dr Goebbels' antihuman naturalism. And equally well-aimed reference to the kind of Romanticism that did not go to seed, to the romantic belief in the human potential that led William Blake to proclaim that "where man is not, nature is barren."

—SC

**Loose lips** — In Washington, DC, Joe Gillespie, the news and program director of WTOP-AM, has been fired because of an "insensitive remark" he made while being interviewed by a reporter from the *Washington Post*.

In discussing local TV news anchors, the reporter asked about one named Pat Lawson Muse, an anchor of color. Gillespie asked who she was. When told she was a news person of Channel 4, Gillespie replied, "Oh, the one with the lips? . . . Her lips, that's how I remember her."

Off with his head!

How sensitive must we be?

"Dolly Parton? Oh, the one with a pair of Siamese cats?"

"Jimmy Durante? Oh, the one with a big car?"

"Don King? Oh, you mean the one who isn't bald?"

Okay, so I'm insensitive.

—KH

**Here come the bums** — When the *New York Times* starts complaining about left-liberal bias in the media, that's news. That's exactly what happened in Walter Goodman's column of February 19th. Goodman, for those not as addicted to the *Newspaper of Record* as I am, covers "intellectual" topics — Norman Mailer's latest public tantrum, the mutual recriminations of Norman Podhoretz and Irving Howe as to who is really harming the cause of Israel, the latest wrinkle in the Rosenberg case — all the issues of burning concern to the Manhattan literati.

This time, however, Goodman took on the TV news establishment. He noted that a typical news story on the homeless "will feature a hard-working, straight-living young couple or an attractive teenager and her child who have run into a spell of bad luck." But a recent report on the homeless in New York shows a very different picture. "More than two-thirds



of the single men and almost a third of the adults in New York City's shelters are on drugs or alcohol. . . . Fifty percent of homeless people have served time in jail." Thus "the homeless" — whose plight the media incessantly parade as the "dark side" of the "orgy of greed" we allegedly wallowed in in the 1980s — begin to resemble what used to be called, well, bums.

Goodman chides TV news producers for sending out to "advocacy groups to supply them with model victims for viewing purposes." Instead, he concludes, they should "tell what is, and let others take it from there." Well said. Now maybe the editors of the news pages of the *Times* will take his advice to heart as well. —RR

**The new hawks** — Who are the hawks these days? The Democrats in Congress, that's who. Led by Richard Gephardt, the new hawks want to launch preemptive economic strikes against the new evil empire, Japan.

When the Republicans were the hawks, they at least had an appropriate enemy. The Soviet Union was aggressive. It did subvert American interests. It slaughtered millions of its own people and millions more in its enslaved extra-territorial gulags. The Republicans argued that Communism could not sustain a modern economy, but they apparently didn't really believe it. They lacked faith in their own prediction.

The Democrats now lack faith in their country, their corporations, their technology, and the future generally. They see a sort of shadowy replication of the Soviet evil empire. The crafty Nips are subverting American consumers by sneaking in high-quality automotive and electronic products. They're probably practicing industrial espionage — a Gephardt investigation of that outrage might not be far ahead. They are gulaging their workers into obedient robots doomed to live in some of the most high-priced urban areas on Earth. They have even stolen the ideas of a domestically shunned management theorist.

And they eat raw fish.

When will the perfidy, the outrages, the productivity ever end? —KH

**Unoriginal sin** — I do not expect profundity from politicians. For good and ill, we do not live in a time of philosopher-kings. But this year, with both Jerry Brown and Pat Buchanan on the campaign trail, I had thought that I might at least witness a clash of the *Weltanschauungen*. Much to my surprise, the first philosophically objectionable statement I heard uttered by a presidential candidate this year came not from either of these gentlemen, but from the *Libertarian*.

"Libertarianism holds that people are basically good, and if left to themselves, will do what is right," said Andre Marrou. Although I consider myself a libertarian, I believe this notion to be hogwash. I have another view of human nature, and see the responsibility required by equal freedom as a means of *restraining* people, people who, as often as not, will stick it to their fellows if they can. I am for *limited* government in large part because people are too dangerous to be trusted with *extensive* government.

But the most striking thing about Marrou's statement is not that a libertarian might believe it (in my experience, libertarians are as capable as anyone of holding nut-ball notions)

but that a Libertarian presidential candidate would *say* it. Libertarianism is a *political* doctrine, and admits many foundations. Just as a Libertarian Hindu would not (I hope) publicly declare the basis of libertarianism to be contained in the concept *karma*, or a Libertarian Christian link freedom to some arcane interpretation of soteriology, so too should a Libertarian atheist keep his humanistic optimism to himself. Precisely *what libertarianism is* is controversial enough; muddying it up with non-libertarian positions in public should be anathema.

Of course, Marrou's homespun philosophy is also *impolitic*.

There are three basic positions on the nature of human goodness: people are basically *good* (but corrupted by "bad institutions"), basically *evil* (but capable, perhaps, of redemption and control), or a *mixture* of both good and bad. Most people who have given this matter any thought hold to some version of the last position. It is, after all, only common sense. A very small number holds to a variant of the second position. But both of these groups look upon believers of the first position as unrealistic utopians, nuts to be indulged and perhaps watched with wary eye. There is no good reason for a Libertarian politician to propound a non-libertarian point of philosophy that most people look upon as silly and possibly dangerous. It is not only bad philosophy, it is bad *marketing*. —TWV

**It can't happen here?** — Until *perestroika*, private enterprise was an economic crime in the Soviet Union. Now in Russia, private enterprise is supposed to be encouraged, but there is no governmental system for the enforcement of property rights. According to Barbara Mills, a lawyer who attended an international forum on law and cooperation held in Moscow, Russians at the conference rightly feared that, as a result, organized crime would flourish in what was the Soviet Union.

They considered that the disruption of the economy, shortages of essential goods, lack of legal regulation and a thriving black market will encourage the growth of organized criminal enterprises. They foresaw this affecting the financial and banking systems as well as the market place. Unless regulation and an effective criminal law is in place soon, their forebodings are amply justified.

Most Russians and now most people in what used to be called the free world appear to agree that the outlawing of



"Think, Dummkopfl! — Where did you last see your brain?"

private enterprise was *not* a good idea. Or do they?

Most would also agree that regulation and effective criminal law *are* good ideas. Here, in the not-so-free world, many activities that are clearly forms of private enterprise have been just as clearly considered crimes — the retailing of cocaine, for example; or, during Prohibition, the retailing of alcoholic beverages; or, today, the retailing of alcoholic beverages except under strictly regulated, heavily taxed circumstances.

As a rule, governments that have been strong enough to enforce property rights and choose to do so, also choose to regulate economic activities in ways that sometimes amount to the criminalization of private enterprise. So, the freeness of your enterprising is relative and varies with the winds of legislative and democratic fancy; businessman today, criminal tomorrow.

Maybe my examples sound like particularly good candidates for decriminalization or deregulation. How about this: You and a few business associates have savings that you would rather not put in a bank at current interest rates, so you take a close look at a very risky, fresh, young distribution company in need of cash for expansion. You lend ten million dollars to the company at a rate far above what you would earn in a bank and, for the sake of liquidity, you have the company sign one thousand promissory notes of ten thousand dollars each. Then, from time to time, when you need cash, you sell the notes by putting a notice in a business journal explaining what they represent. Sounds like just the sort of thing that ought to be and probably is going on in Russia. Well, it would be illegal in every state of the Union (ours) several times over. The rules applicable to this fairly simple deal are complex and change frequently. Some of what I described would be criminal and some would simply fail to comply with extensive regulation affecting the offer and sale of securities, lending generally, advertising for the sale of securities, and so on. Good luck trying to get your various agreements enforced, and if you attempt enforcement yourself, that would be worth some jail time too.

Perhaps organized crime is the lesser of two evils.

—Guest Reflection by Michael Christian

**New World DisOrder** — Once, commenting on the end of the Cold War, I warned of a “legalistic, megacor-

porate, one-world peace on Earth.” Right. Welcome to the New World Order.

So here we are — decadent soft-core-commercial anarchists operating out of multinational Japan’s favorite two-bit Banana Republic, this mercenary entertainment state with a big Hollywood Rambo ego, all glitter on the edges and *profoundly* stupid in the middle. How can we *resist* the New World Order, irresistible as it is?

There’s always been the idealistic hope, ever since The League of Nations, that in this time of increased interpenetration and communication, nations great and small could come together to blah blah blah *ad nauseam*. Forget it! The New World Order is the thousand-year Reich of the international well-behaved center, with a small sexually pent-up macho American adolescent core of police protectors and overseas mercenaries.

To resist the New World Order, spread chaos and confusion, first amongst yourselves. Don’t come together. Come apart. Don’t identify with the nation-state, the tribe, your race, gender, bulletin board, or dance club. That’s how you get suckered. Be mercilessly politically incorrect. Be commercially successful by being pleasingly offensive. Subvert through media, not because you think you can “change the system” but because successfully tickling America’s self-loathing funny bone is an amusing sort of foreplay. And believe us, everybody’s gonna get fucked.

Holocaust German-style, 1940s: piled up dead Jews, gypsies, and communists in a concentration camp. Holocaust American-style, 1990s: Consumer goods spill out of the guts of bombed-out cars in a silent traffic jam in the Kuwaiti desert. With dead Iraqis hidden from view inside.

Johnny’s come marching home. America is transformed in its pride. The American media completely capitulated to state censorship. *That job is done.*

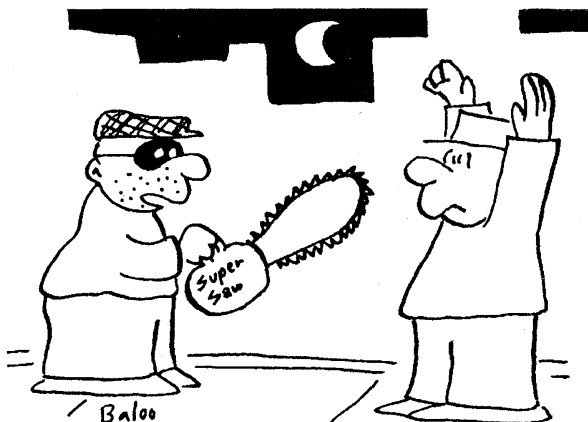
Have no illusions. Something has changed. You blinked your eyes and there was suddenly a juggernaut. Blink again and it’s breaking down your door. Abortion. Drugs. Freedom of speech. You wake up tomorrow and find out that *if it ain’t whitebread, it ain’t allowed*. We can see how fast that can happen.

So the New World DisOrder — which is all you have left — starts within yourself. It starts when somebody says “we should (or shouldn’t) fight against Iraq” and you think, “What the fuck do you mean by *we*? I’m not gonna fight, you’re not gonna fight, and I’m not a member of any nation-state. There *is* no *we*.” The New World DisOrder starts when you realize that safe sex is boring sex, cheap thrills are fun, and *you’re as atavistic as they are*. The New World DisOrder starts when you can no longer listen to debates about whether the nice guys or the mean guys can make the trains run on time.

—Guest Reflection by R. U. Sirius

**Pre-school choice** — In the small town where I live, choice in education is alive and well — for children under age six. Our town has traditional preschools, Montessori schools, playschools, and daycares that mix education, “socialization,” and babysitting. They are found in churches, in grand old residences, and one in a bright new complex with sunlit rooms that open directly onto an enclosed patio.

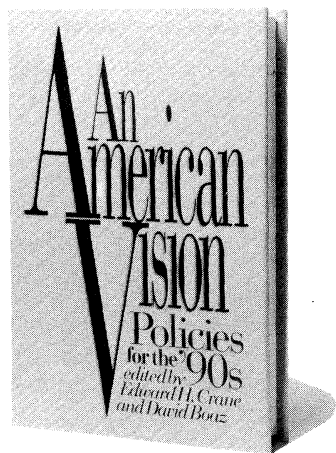
The Yellow Pages lists eighteen such institutions, and this



“It seems silly to me, too, but guns are illegal in this city.”

# // The high-beta think tank of the '90s will be the free-market libertarians at the Cato Institute. //

— Lawrence Kudlow, "Money Politics," March 25, 1990



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does not include them all. Nor does it include the wide range of at-home babysitting, licensed and unlicensed, some of it by trained teachers who work at preschools earlier in the day. There is even an association, Child Care Connections, that helps you find the right place for your child.

This is a far cry from what you find when your child reaches kindergarten, and government-provided education begins. The choices drop dramatically, and by the third grade, you have only three: Your child goes to the assigned public school, your child goes to a very conservative Christian school, or you teach your child at home.

The rich variety of preschools is itself an argument for parental choice in education. But variety is only part of the reason why choice is so important. Unless consumers can back up their opinions with their pocketbooks, there will never be constructive change.

Consider the Methodist Preschool. You won't find this venerable institution in the Bozeman telephone book; you learn about it from other parents. It was started in the 1970s by a group of at-home mothers who wanted a good social experience for their children and some time off now and then.

The mothers hired a professional as part-time director and persuaded the Methodist Church to rent them facilities at low cost. (One requirement was that they put away all the materials at the end of the day so the classrooms could be used for other purposes.)

When the director hired teachers, most were women with families who wanted to work just a few hours a week. To accommodate their schedules, the school started late, at 9:45 a.m. (after all, they had to spend an hour getting the classrooms ready), and finished at 12:45 p.m. Two-year-olds attended once a week; older children, twice. The preschool had a warm, homey atmosphere, and it was so popular that you had to sign up by May to obtain a place for your child the following September.

Gradually, however, parents' interests changed in Bozeman. With each passing year, fewer parents were work-at-home mothers; more wanted outside care for their children for longer hours or more days a week. Daycares proliferated; Pooh Corner, a daycare that had started about the same time as the preschool, thrived financially, and built an attractive modern facility. The Methodist Preschool, still operating out of an aging church building, maintained its excellent reputation, but was falling out of step.

As a mother with a child there, I devoted a parent-teacher conference to voicing my disappointment with the limited schedule and the awkward hours. My comments were received sympathetically and I was told that other parents had expressed similar views. But I was also told that if I wanted change, I would have to do it through the parents' organization. I knew a more effective way to deal with my problem: I took my child elsewhere.

Apparently some other parents did the same, because in the fall of 1991, for the first time in years, some slots were unfilled. The school, which operates under a tight budget, was unprepared for this financial setback. It took immediate ac-

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*I was told that if I wanted change, I would have to do it through the parents' organization. I knew a more effective way to deal with my problem: I took my child elsewhere.*

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tion — a fund drive to shore it up financially, and then steps directed toward the future. The director sent around a questionnaire to parents, asking them what they liked and didn't like about the school. One result was a decision to increase the number of days children could attend; I am sure there will be others.

The school didn't have to listen when parents expressed their concerns. But it did have to listen when our expression took the form of dollars — elsewhere. As a result, the Methodist Preschool is undoubtedly today serving its customers better than it was. If it doesn't serve them well, it won't survive.

I despair for what will happen when my son has to go to public school. If I am dissatisfied, how can I possibly bring about change? Who will listen to me? I expect that the public school teachers will be as nice as those at the Methodist Preschool, but they will have their own ideas and priorities, and I will have no way to influence them. Bozeman citizens support their schools with their taxes, whether they want to or not. Without the ability to affect the school's finances by taking their children to other schools, parents have no leverage. Once again, I rue the day that this country began government education.

—JSS

## **TWISTED IMAGE** by Ace Backwords ©1992





# Politics

**Sociopathic wimp** — Is there any more contemptible figure on the political scene today than George Bush? For months this sorry excuse for a human being defended his budget deal that clamped the largest tax increase in American history on the backs of the people. Then he sent little Danny Quayle to New Hampshire to say that Bush had to agree to the tax increase or else he would not have been able to concentrate on the Persian Gulf crisis. (The trouble with that one is, he entered the budget deal with the Democrats five weeks *before* Iraq invaded Kuwait. Maybe Quayle was saying Bush knew it was going to happen — evidence of long-suspected administration complicity.)

Finally, just before the Georgia primary, Bush said he was sorry he had agreed to the tax increase. Why? Because he had broken his only 1988 campaign promise? Because it was economic insanity? No, nothing so honorable. Here's the reason: "Listen, if I had to do that over, I wouldn't do it. Look at all the flak it's taking." This act of contrition is supposed to win the support of tax-haters? The man is a sociopath. It's time like this that I wish there was a hell. —SLR

**Them Dems** — What a pathetic bunch of losers the Democrats offer the American public as Presidential candidates! The Hon. Sens. Kerrey and Harkin have already been rejected by the voters. Kerrey's mistake was to believe what the left-liberal pundits said about the 1990 elections, especially the defeat of Richard Thornburgh by Harrison Wolford in the Pennsylvania Senate race: viz, that the American people want socialized medicine, the sooner the better. Kerry got nowhere with "national health insurance," the central theme of his campaign.

No one told Sen. Tom Harkin of Iowa that the Great Depression is over, and that the tax-and-spend social programs of the 1930s don't cut it anymore. His attempt to start a bandwagon for old-fashioned, labor-union, populist socialism went nowhere, just like Kerrey's crusade for socialized medicine. It just took it a little longer to get there.

Paul Tsongas lasted a little bit longer. It is a measure of the bankruptcy of American politics that Paul Tsongas passes as a man of vision and courage. When he tells a group of middle-class Americans that he opposes Bill Clinton's proposal to cut their taxes by two dollars a year, he is praised as courageous. When he advocates Mussolini's old idea of a government-business partnership, he is praised as progressive. The polls show that wealthy, well-educated Democrats like him. Unfortunately for him, most Democrats are poor and uneducated. After being clobbered in Michigan and Illinois, his campaign went belly up.

Having spent the past several years of his life cashing fat checks from PACs and other fat cats for the California Democratic Party, Jerry Brown suddenly realized that big money from PACs and fat cats was destroying democracy. He

limited his campaign contributions to \$100, relentlessly trumpeted his toll-free phone number, and bought half-hour commercials on cable TV, squeezed in among ads for juicing machines. Along the way he adopted term limitation and a flat income tax as campaign planks (a couple of reasonably sensible ideas with wide appeal), managed to turn just about every television news spot into a plug for his toll-free number (on one ABC interview, he gave the toll-free number three times!) and managed somehow to parlay these elements, along with his own undeniable power-lust, into a campaign that threatens to make him into a Democratic Party power.

Brown's appeal cuts across a wide cross-section of Americans, but it doesn't cut very deep. Early in his campaign, he supported free trade, denouncing protectionists as "cry-babies who can't compete." Lately, he has been bashing the proposed free trade treaty with Mexico, as part of his strategy of sucking up to so-called "organized labor" (i.e., cartels to limit competition among working people). This managed to put him past Paul Tsongas in Michigan, at least, and keep his campaign alive.

Meanwhile, the race is being won by Bill Clinton, the Democrat best able to appeal to low-income, uneducated *lumpenproletariat*. His beautifully coiffed hair, the apparent genuine pleasure he derives from his empty demagoguery and

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*Having spent years cashing fat checks from PACs and other fat cats, Jerry Brown has suddenly realized that big money from PACs and fat cats is destroying democracy.*

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from pressing the flesh, his marvelous ability to get away with breaking the rules (e.g., cheating on his wife, dodging the draft), his skill at evading issues . . . these are all qualities that stand very well with Democratic voters.

It is likely that Clinton will win the nomination, and he has an excellent chance of unseating Mr Kind and Gentle in November. Shortly thereafter, the nation will no doubt go through a period of Clinton-mania, during which we will discover that young Bill is as exciting and fascinating a person as Michael Jackson or Mike Tyson. It may not be good government, but it is good entertainment. —CAA

**Choices, not echoes** — For voters won't support any of the establishment party candidates but aren't satisfied with Andre Marrou, here is a brief guide to six other Presidential hopefuls, who appeared at a March 1 forum in Boston sponsored by the Independent Voters Party of Massachusetts.

*Bo Gritz, Populist Party: "A patriot, not a politician," Gritz*

wants a "righteous nation" based on decentralized local self-government. He would limit the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court, disband the Federal Reserve, and stop interest payments on the national debt, because it is "ridiculous to pay interest on our own money." He favors "free enterprise — not corporations, not capitalism, but free enterprise!" He opposes free trade, because it means "we have to bend our knee to foreign dependency." His foreign policy rejects globalism, the U.N., and a world army. The former Green Beret says, "We've got one more hill to take — Capitol Hill." He warns that if the people don't take Washington by ballot in 1992, they won't have the chance in 1996.

**Howard Phillips, U.S. Taxpayers Party:** A moralist who believes in limited government and impending economic collapse, Phillips would end corporate subsidies, loan guarantees, and such informal links between government and business as trade representatives becoming paid lobbyists for industries or foreign governments. He will neither seek nor accept Federal election funds, on the grounds that no one should have to subsidize another's beliefs. He would reduce the size of the bureaucracy and end Federal pensions. He favors term limits, opposes the New World Order, and maintains the U.N. charter was "written by communist spies." He has offered to step aside if Pat Buchanan wants to mount an independent effort.

**J. Quinn Brisben, Socialist Party:** Seeking to "maximize freedom, equality, and economic justice," Brisben's solution to most things is to "attack poverty." He endorses socialized medicine, nationalizing the educational system to reorient it towards "real economic life," and fighting drugs and alcohol by giving people a reason not to take them. He would abolish the CIA and most defense programs. His economic plan is to "soak the rich" through a progressive income tax, and to "take control of the heights of the economy." He opposes free trade: "18th-century mercantilist rules work for the Japanese; they will work for us."

**Earl Dodge, Prohibition Party:** As the name of his party implies, Dodge would extend the drug war to alcohol. He also supports a grab-bag of limited-government proposals, including a balanced budget amendment, limits on the taxing powers of Congress, and national debt reduction. He would end all hiring quotas, and supports adoption over abortion.

**Jack Thompson, Peace and Justice Party:** Another supporter of limited government, mainly because "government can't devise a non-violent method to deal with other people," Thompson confesses that when he began his quest to bring truth to the people he thought they would rise up in indignation

against the state, and grew despondent when they didn't. He thinks that most voters want to remain ignorant, because otherwise they would have to "change their corporate life-

style." He hopes for the decline of the U.S. Empire and the rise of the U.S. nation, but if the citizens continue to be "greedy, ethnocentric barbarians," he doesn't want to lead them.

**Michael Levinson, Republican Party:** Levinson's platform is "World Peace and Food Chain Harmony." In 1971, he wrote a 212-page Homeric epic covering the history of mankind. If elected, he will sing the epic from night until dawn on January 20, 1993, to "bring to the Earth the first peaceful night in 5,000 years." If the Czechs can elect a writer, he says, the U.S. can have a poet. Levinson would deflate the world economy, so that in forty years "beer would cost a nickel and space travel free." —JSR

**Fascism with a Democratic face** — Mussolini would be proud. Bill Clinton and Paul Tsongas are both committed to the philosophy that government should be directing the economy within the context of private property. They can't call this central planning or industrial policy, because those terms are in disrepute. So they say "strategy," and "government-business partnership." Clinton slipped recently, however, when he said that although the Japanese have unemployment, at least "they have a plan." —SLR

**Train without soul** — I'd be less leery about jumping aboard Pat Buchanan's train, as he recommends libertarians do at the end of his interview in the *March Liberty*, if I didn't have the sinking fear that he might promise to make it run on time. —BD

**Buchanan update** — Pat Buchanan's campaign for the presidency isn't getting anywhere; as I suggested two months ago in these pages, New Hampshire turned out to be its zenith. The conservative Roman Catholic voters in the Granite State liked him just fine; at any rate, some 37% of the Republicans chose him over Bush.

He made a valiant effort to capture the redneck vote in the South, mostly by harping on the theme that Bush is soft on homosexuals, favors turning white folks' jobs over to nigras, and will let them damn furriners sell their peanuts and cars in the U.S. He bought lots of television time, airing a brief excerpt from a film funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, showing black homosexuals engaging in some activity repugnant to decent people, thereby hitting two themes with one ad. (He didn't mention that the maker of the film got his NEA grant while Buchanan's hero, Ronald Reagan, was president.)

But it didn't work. Mostly, I suppose, the problem was that rednecks didn't want to turn their back on an incumbent President who opposed abortion. But I suspect Buchanan's Roman Catholicism didn't sit too well with the Bubbas either.

He also failed to generate much enthusiasm among voters in Michigan or Illinois, doing worse in those Midwestern states than none-of-the-above did in South Dakota, where Buchanan was kept off the ballot by Bushite conspirators.

His presidential campaign may not be doing terribly well, but his campaign to wrest leadership of the conservative movement is chugging along. He is now reputed to have a mailing list of some 250,000 people, and has built a strange coalition of big-money textile and steel manufacturers (they like his opposition to imports), gay-bashers, small-town bigots, and right-wing Roman Catholics, plus a smattering of conservative intellectuals.



"Not funny!"

Early in his campaign, he had some support from libertarians, who liked his stand for an isolationist foreign policy and his opposition to higher taxes. A campaign for libertarian support was put together by Lew Rockwell, with Murray Rothbard as its major proponent. But his libertarian support dwindled when he stressed his opposition to free trade, and fell off more when he got into attacking gays. As nearly as I can tell from talking to libertarians, paleo-libertarians, and libertarian Republicans, his libertarian support these days is limited to Messrs Rockwell and Rothbard and a few of their minions. Even several of their close associates have told me that they can't stand Pat.

I am not sure whether Buchanan's protectionism or his opposition to homosexual rights cost him more votes. Free trade

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is one of the few libertarian planks that was accepted in the mainstream of modern economic policy some time ago, so the resurgence of the debate today can only seem like a major step backward. Sensing that Buchanan's protectionism was undercutting his libertarian support, Murray Rothbard came to his defense. "The phoniest charge leveled against Pat is that he is a dread 'protectionist,'" Rothbard wrote in the *Washington Times*. "As a free-market economist who believes in unrestricted free trade, it is my considered opinion that George Bush and all of the other candidates are far more protectionist than he."

Rothbard failed to mention who first leveled the "phony charge" that Buchanan is a "dread protectionist." So far as I can figure, this charge was first made by Buchanan himself only last year, in the forward of a book published by a protectionist lobbying group, in which he defended what he called a "protectionist" strategy. Worse still, Buchanan annoyed libertarians by making such a big deal about it. "The American farmers have a right to protection," he told peanut farmers in Georgia, "just like American workers and American industries do." Nor are libertarians happy to read in *The Economist* that Buchanan is privately saying he is "tempted by the idea of paying for credits [to the oil and gas, aerospace, textile, and ship-building industries] — and much more — by throwing up a wall of tariffs around the American economy."

While Rothbard was undoubtedly right in pointing out that George Bush has been far more protectionist in practice than in his public statements, not many libertarians bought the theory that it followed that he was more protectionist than Buchanan would be, in the odd event that he found himself in the oval office. Who is more likely to keep down trade restrictions: someone like Bush who argues *in favor* of free trade but is subject to a variety of incentives for trade restrictions from special interest groups, or someone like Buchanan who argues *against* free trade and is subject to the same incentives as Bush?

Two days before Super Tuesday, Buchanan attacked Robert Mosbacher, Bush's campaign manager, for meeting with a group of homosexuals. "I would like to see at least a statement from Mr. Bush that 'Mr Mosbacher doesn't represent us' — that he was off on a lark." Libertarians believe that a person ought to be able to choose to engage in any sexual activity with consenting adults, and the idea that *talking* to homosexuals is wrong seems bizarre. Buchanan's anti-gay campaign stimulated interest in his past writing on the subject, and it didn't take long for people to find his column of a year ago arguing that "a visceral recoil from homosexuality is the natural reaction of a healthy society wishing to protect itself," or his argument in favor of "thrashing" gay rights groups. "Homosexuality," he explained, "is not a civil right."

Meanwhile, the effect of free-market advocates Rockwell and Rothbard on the Buchanan campaign seems negligible. "Some of my friends in the conservative movement are thoroughly cerebral. They don't address the issues of the heart," Buchanan told an interviewer. "They say free trade, that's it. These are our people who are losing their homes, losing their jobs, losing their way of life. Unbridled capitalism — if you will, free trade theory — can be a very, very brutal force. It's a nice thing to sit in a think tank and say it's all for the best." On the other hand, "conservatives of the heart," he said, "don't get their conservatism by reading some tract by a dead Austrian economist."

—CAA

**Look who's talking** — The latest (early March) attack on Pat Buchanan is that he is a fascist, or a neo-fascist, or someone who flirts with fascism. So wrote or said Charles Krauthammer, the *Atlanta Constitution*, and William Bennett. Now, Buchanan certainly has an odious authoritarian streak in him, and I don't mean to defend the man, but name me one Republican or Democratic presidential candidate who *isn't* a fascist. And who is William Bennett, our former drug Führer and education commissar, to call names?

—SLR

**One nonvote for Bill Clinton** — The second Tuesday in November creeps up and what's a libertarian to do?

The answer is: anything he or she wants. Vote if you care to, otherwise take in a movie, shoot some pool, or stop down at the supermarket to scan the latest *National Enquirer*. No one vote makes any difference to the outcome and, alas, not all the libertarian votes put together send a discernible tremor to the political seismograph. No need, though, to be doleful. Although I am writing for and you are reading a journal of political opinion, we should not allow ourselves to become so wrapped up in the electoral fantasies playing in our mind's eye to forget that politics is only a small component of the good life, and that it is an arena in which individual efforts matter for far less than they do in business, recreation, or personal relations.

But even if your and my efforts don't matter worth a gnat's egg for what transpires at the polls, it is nonetheless undeniable that we shall be affected in ways predictable and not by how Americans collectively choose to vote. So it's worth briefly speculating on what would constitute better and worse outcomes.

In none of these speculations does the Libertarian Party play even a peripheral role. Readers of *Liberty* and inveterate C-SPAN viewers are aware that some guy named Andre is osten-

sibly running for president and may or may not be on the ballot in one's home state. But to regard this as of any more significance than, say, the final team standings in the Appalachian League displays a lapse of judgment. That's not just because the vote totals are bound to prove minuscule. Rather, it's because the Libertarian Party has become doubly irrelevant.

First, the party has become an increasingly embarrassing device through which to package a political platform. Barring occasional changes around the fringes, what libertarians as an organized (?) movement stand for remains constant. What then is the point of investing time and resources every four years to nominate someone as the alleged standard bearer of the cause? The novelty of the third party run has worn off, and now we are left with the ignominy of pledging our political

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*The Libertarian Party has grown increasingly peripheral as a vehicle for drafting and advancing ideas that enhance human liberty.*

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troth with people whom even we cannot take seriously as potential national office holders. Ragtag nominees inevitably tend to trivialize the principles for which they stand. In this regard the plight of the Libertarian Party is the opposite of that of the major two parties. They have candidates who possess at least a minimum of personal credibility derived from experience and professionalism, but one can hardly speak with a straight face of Democratic or Republican "principles." Conversely, libertarianism is replete with principles and ideas, but those who seep to the top as its political exemplars cannot be taken seriously. And it is precisely seriousness that one forfeits by pretending that platforms are self-implementing algorithms such that excellences of character and intellect in office-holders are immaterial.

Second, the Libertarian Party has grown increasingly peripheral as a vehicle for drafting and advancing ideas that enhance liberty. For the past decade the action has been elsewhere. During the Reagan years a number of libertarians donned suits and insinuated themselves in policy-making corners of the administration. Their collective influence was too slight to redirect the fundamentally conservative tenor of Reaganism, but it nonetheless was orders of magnitude greater than that of the Libertarian Party. Of greater long-term significance is the efflorescence of classical liberal think tanks and foundations: the Cato Institute, the Institute for Humane Studies, Liberty Fund, and a half-dozen others. These increasingly attract bright, innovative minds who are certain to shape the next generation's theory and practice of politics. Heartening too is the iconoclastic vigor of libertarian journals of opinion such as the one in your hands. These phenomena matter far more for the development and promulgation of liberal thought than does the maundering of a marginal party.

Even if one believes that the preceding assessment is too pessimistic, it's abundantly clear that the winner of the November election will be either a Republican or a Democrat, probably George Bush or Bill Clinton. Is there anything to be hoped for in the contest between them?

Although it is tempting to speak of the "Republocrats" as

an undifferentiated mass, which of these captures the electoral spoils is not immaterial to the prospects for liberty. We can see in retrospect that the Reagan victories over Carter and Mondale were on balance strongly positive. Preference for private over governmental activity was a pervasive Reagan theme, as was an acknowledgment of the oppressiveness of current levels of taxation. His reference to the Soviet Union as the "Evil Empire" was contemporaneously decried as a vintage Reaganesque gaffe, but it strikingly anticipated the critiques that erupted a few months later within the Soviet Union itself. To be sure, the Reagan rhetoric was more consistently pro-freedom than was the Reagan *realpolitik*, but a cynical dismissal of the significance of rhetoric is itself a species of naivete. It is not just what men do but also how they talk that affects their environment. Thus, from a libertarian viewpoint the Reagan years were ecologically friendly.

Now, however, resurgent Republicanism is thoroughly spent. George Bush evidently arrived in the White House with no aim in mind other than to remain there as long as he could. He is as pliantly responsive as any bar girl to each mood flicker from the paying customers. During the otherwise forgettable 1988 campaign he succeeded in establishing his lips as his most noteworthy organ and, true to form, it is only the most desultory lip service that he has given to individual liberty. Although it is impossible to attribute any consistency to the policies and pronouncements of this administration, it has been marked by a hankering to legislate morality (the pathetically inept "War on Drugs," rolling back abortion rights) and to internationalize the corporate state (Bush's obscure New World Order, service as a travelling shill for Lee Iacocca).

It is a well-confirmed law of political dynamics that administrations coming into office with a reformatory fire in their bellies grow increasingly fond of their own incumbency and lose their zeal. Once they run out of ideas — usually not a very prolonged process — they attempt to coast on their own momentum. If the Bush presidency is exceptional in this regard, it is in having not a jot or tittle to add to that of its predecessor. Four more years of Bush promise nothing but increasingly unconvincing simulacra of policy initiatives accompanied by general desuetude.

What of his potential successor? It is, admittedly, difficult to dredge up much enthusiasm for what remains largely an unknown quantity. Still, I judge that the best we can hope for is a Democratic victory — most likely Clinton's but any Democrat's will do. Throwing out the old rascals is an exercise that's at least minimally salutary in its own light, and stemming the excesses of conservative behavior-management is becoming a matter of some urgency. The Democratic propensity to cozy up to tyrannies without and economic micromanagers within is, to be sure, worrisome, but it seems unlikely that Clinton as president could offend more in these respects than does Bush.

I don't plan to cast a ballot this November; perusing the *National Enquirer* appeals more. But I'd be pleased if the majority of my fellow citizens who do decide to vote provide Mr Bush a well-deserved retirement.

—LEL

*The case for the Republicans* — George Bush had better win in November. I'd hate to think all those Iraqis died in vain.

—JW



## Appraisal

# Bill Clinton: Super Statesman

by Chester Alan Arthur

At last, the perfect specimen of *Homo americanus politicus*.

Bill Clinton's campaign has demonstrated that he is uniquely qualified to be president of the kind of national enterprise the United States has become.

The United States government is a huge enterprise. Every American is its customer: every American purchases a wide variety of goods and services directly from the government; every American is protected by insurance provided by the government; every American uses its transportation system. For these goods and services, every American pays directly (via users' fees and cash prices) and indirectly (via taxes). On average, Americans pay more than 30% of their income to the federal government and its subsidiaries.

It owns all the land in the United States: some directly (the so-called "public domain"), some through its subsidiaries, the states, and some indirectly (so-called "private property," whose "owners" must pay annual rents established by the federal government's subsidiaries [so-called "taxes"] and pervasive regulations over how such land can be used). Furthermore, every American is a part owner: each is granted a single share of stock, i.e. the right to cast a single vote in elections that choose who will manage the huge enterprise. Furthermore, the U.S. government establishes rules for its tenants/customers/employees/owners of an extremely pervasive nature: it tells them what they are allowed to eat and drink;

where they can travel; what they can read; what sort of work they can do, who they can do it for, what price they can be paid for their work and what form the payment must take; what goods they can own . . . the list goes on and on.

What sort of individual is needed to head this incredibly complicated, wealthy, and powerful enterprise? Plainly, the most important characteristic is management ability. Because the owners/customers/employees/tenants are an extremely disparate lot, they want different things from their government. As great as the resources of this huge enterprise are, it cannot satisfy all needs of all its owners/customers/employees/tenants. The individual who heads this enterprise must therefore be skilled at convincing as many of its constituents as possible that their wants are being served. So a President must also be good at what is called "salesmanship" in private enterprise and "statesmanship" in government. That is to say, a good President must be skilled at the art of mendacity. We would prefer a President who can slicker other heads of state, in the way

that, say, Stalin slickered Roosevelt at Yalta, or Hitler slickered Chamberlain at Munich.

How has Clinton demonstrated his superb qualifications to lead the American Enterprise? He has demonstrated skillful management, statesmanship, and the ability to formulate and execute long-term plans. Consider, for example, his brilliant handling of the the first big issue of his campaign, the Gennifer Flowers affair. Between 1977 and 1989, Mr Clinton maintained a clandestine sexual relationship with a young television and nightclub performer, demonstrating his extra-ordinary talent as a manager.

He was able to seduce Ms Flowers, teach her a variety of new techniques by which she could please him sexually, and induce her to live in a convenient location where his visits would cause minimal suspicion. He managed this with virtually no payment or giving of gifts, no dinners out, no promises of a rosy future together. He achieved this by the simple stratagem of convincing her, and keeping her convinced, that he was in love with

her.

And he sustained this for twelve years. That's longer than the average marriage in this modern era. And even after she inevitably severed their relationship, having finally realized that there was no future with him apart from occasional 30-minute "dates" at her apartment, he managed to keep her from revealing anything to the press for another year and a half.

For further evidence of his management skills, consider that he was able

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*Any man who has ever tried to maintain a relationship with one woman is aware of the subtlety, care, and attention to detail that is required. Yet Mr Clinton was able to maintain a relationship with two women at the same time, satisfying them both.*

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to sustain the loyalty of his politically well-connected and ambitious wife, an avowed and active feminist, a woman so independent that she refused to take his surname until she learned that her refusal was costing him votes. In addition, he kept his affair with Ms Flowers secret from voters in a state where the Seventh Commandment is taken quite seriously.

Any man who has ever tried to maintain a relationship with one woman is aware of the subtlety, care, and attention to detail that is required. Yet Mr Clinton was able to maintain a relationship with two women at the same time, satisfying them both, heading off any ideas the older might entertain of divorce, or that the younger might consider of cutting him off.

This requires considerable "people skills," the sort of skills that a President needs in order to maintain relations with Congress, his staff, and the American people. Indeed, his treatment of Ms Flowers might well be considered the sort of treatment he promises to the American people if he is elected president. He will exploit

them, teach them new ways of pleasing him, and induce them to change their lives in a way that will maximize his own convenience.

What he did literally to Ms Flowers he is already doing figuratively to the American people. And they love him for doing it, just as Ms Flowers loved him.

His handling of his campaign's second major issue was even more impressive. In 1969, Mr Clinton faced a serious problem. Convinced that the Vietnam War was immoral, he had already protested by trying to become an officer in the Army and in the Navy, where he could make a more effective protest than he might as an enlisted man. Unfortunately, he failed to meet the Army's and Navy's requirements for officers. Worse still, he did meet the Army's requirements for infantryman (i.e. cannon fodder), having passed the less stringent pre-induction physical. His student deferment had expired and his draft board considered him to be "at the top of the list" to be conscripted.

How could he articulate opposition to the immoral war if he were a common soldier? There must be a way . . .

Mr Clinton found the solution in Col. Eugene Holmes of the U.S. Army, a recruiter for the Reserve Officer Training Corps and the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville. He promised the Colonel that after spending a month or two studying in England, he would return to Fayetteville, enroll in law school, and join the Reserve Officers Training Corps. In exchange for this promise, the Colonel intervened with Mr Clinton's Selective Service Board, which awarded Mr Clinton a deferment from the military draft that might send him to Vietnam. On August 7, 1969, his draft board awarded him a 1-D deferment, a status reserved for young men who have joined a reserve unit or who are students actively taking military training.

Mr Clinton went to England, where he studied at Oxford University in preparation for the rigors of law school in Fayetteville. In that learned atmosphere, his conviction that the Vietnam War was morally wrong grew to the point where he thought it impossible for him to serve as an officer in the

Army. He wrote to Col. Holmes, explaining that he no longer planned to enter ROTC. Col. Holmes, until that moment unaware that young Mr Clinton was attending tutorials at Oxford and not marching in ROTC drills at Fayetteville, pulled the plug on his deferment.

When *The Wall Street Journal* reported this story on Feb 6, Mr Clinton was quick to respond. Fearing that his subterfuge to avoid the draft might cost him substantial voter support, especially among those less fortunate in their attempts to avoid conscription, he sought to explain it in a way that might minimize damage. He had dropped his ROTC deferment, he explained, because he felt it morally wrong to keep it while his friends were dying in Vietnam, and he wished to put himself at risk to the draft. He was not motivated by a desire to gain for himself what many Americans might regard as a privilege of avoiding Vietnam, but by a simple concern for equity. Indeed, he was a hero: a man willing to put his life on the line for his country, even when he opposed its policy.

Unfortunately for Mr Clinton, Col. Holmes had saved a copy of his letter. And Col. Holmes gave a copy to ABC News. It was interesting reading.

After thanking Col. Holmes for "being so kind and decent" and "for saving me from the draft," acknowledging that "I had deceived you," young Mr Clinton explained how his conscience now required him to refuse to enter ROTC as a protest, even though this might result in his being drafted and sent to Vietnam. But he remained adamantly opposed to the War and to military conscription. Naturally, the Colonel might wonder, he wrote, why he did not resist the military, as so many other young men opposed to the war had done? He could not follow this course, he explained, "for one reason — to maintain my political viability within the system."

But the most important information in the letter was its date: December 3, 1969. Between the time when he had gained his deferment and that date, a change in the draft law was enacted across the Atlantic: young Americans would be selected for military service based on a lottery, according to the day

and month of their birth. Mr Clinton had had the good fortune to receive the lottery number 311 — a number high enough that the chances of his being drafted were nil.

His letter to Col. Holmes had not put himself at risk to the draft. That risk had been ended forever with his good fortune in the draft lottery two days earlier. The only practical effect of his letter had been to save him from what he surely regarded as a fate only slightly less awful: law school at Fayetteville and service as an officer in the Army. Now he was free to go to Yale, where he could continue to make contacts among the wealthy and powerful political elite with whom he had cozied as an undergraduate at Georgetown and at Oxford.

This episode plainly demonstrates Bill Clinton's resourcefulness and ability to make long-term plans. Other young men were worried about surviving, about getting along without their girlfriend, about their friends. But young Bill Clinton had the foresight to be concerned about his future "political viability."

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*Clinton's treatment of Ms Flowers might well be considered the sort of treatment he promises to the American people if he is elected president.*

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Furthermore, he was able to formulate and execute an extremely convoluted plan. What other young men on their way to Oxford University for graduate school managed to convince a Colonel that they were about to enter a local college and join ROTC, induce the officer to secure them a deferment, and then enjoy the delights of Oxford's famous tutorial system without the Colonel's finding out?

He also demonstrated a remarkable skill at what politicians call "statecraft," or what normal people call "lying." And not just the simple lies he told Col. Holmes and his draft board. In the midst of his presidential campaign, he was able to fabricate a plausi-

ble explanation of his earlier deceit that not only relieved him of guilt, but also made him a hero, almost a saint, willing to sacrifice his own life in service to the ideal of equality. (Of course, he hadn't counted on the possibility that Col. Holmes would have saved the letter and would release it to the press, proving him a liar to all the world. But that possibility was clearly a long-shot, and we can hardly fault Mr Clinton for failing to anticipate it. And his ability to distract voters from the letter by charging that the Republican administration had leaked it was a master stroke.)

On other issues he has had as many positions as there are constituencies.

When talking to businessmen, he is pro-business. When talking to labor, he is pro-labor. When talking to foreign businessmen he is trying to attract to Arkansas, he boasts of its right-to-work law; when talking to Jesse Jackson, he explains that he supports its abolition. When talking to Southerners, he is a "good ole boy," whose language is peppered with words like "feedin'" instead of "dinner" and "y'all" instead of "you." When speaking to his powerful Northern friends, he slips effortlessly into the language of Yale Law School.

In sum, he is all things to all people. "He's always had a broad, multifaceted appeal, and different groups looked at different facets," explains George Stephanopoulos, an assistant campaign manager. This ability is exactly what we want in a president.

As a serious politician intent upon being elected president, Bill Clinton re-

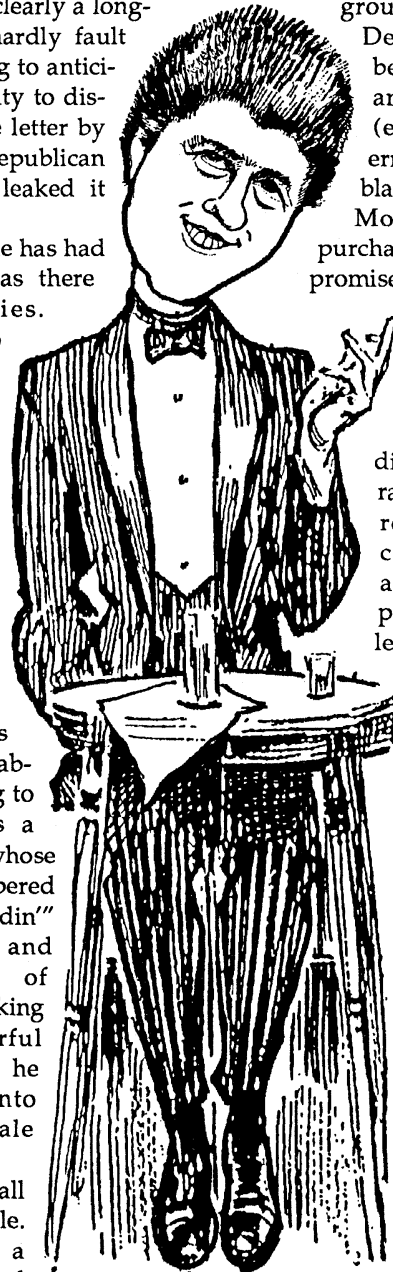
alized that he must have the support of the Democratic Party regulars (to win the nomination) and of the American people (to win the election). But this presented a problem: the two prerequisites are almost mutually exclusive.

In the past two presidential elections, those who won the Democratic nomination by pandering to the groups within the Democratic Party who can best deliver primary votes and delegates: unions (especially those of government employees) and black political leaders. Mondale and Dukakis purchased this support with promises to advance the goals

of these groups; which is to say, begin new government programs that would require hiring additional bureaucrats, give raises to teachers and bureaucrats, support racial quotas, and push for a variety of left-liberal programs. The only problem with this strategy was that it insured their defeat in the general election for the simple reason that most Americans realize that new programs mean higher taxes, and that the programs don't really work anyway.

Getting the nomination still requires the support of these constituencies, and he sought and got it by the same means Mondale and Dukakis used: promising to work for their dubious agendas. But Clinton learned an important lesson from the mis-

takes of Mondale and Dukakis: while one may have to agree to make a deal with the special interests, there is no need to tell the voters about it. Although committed to the special interests, Bill Clinton has been reluctant to articulate their old, worn out left-



liberal agenda. By choosing his words carefully, he has projected his program as a sort of middle-of-the-Democratic road policy mix, very sketchy on details.

Realizing that most voters don't care too much about issues anyway, and are inclined to classify him as a non-liberal by simple virtue of his home state, he has worked much harder on projecting an image as a young,

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forward-looking, innovative thinker. In a masterstroke of statesmanship, he has repeatedly characterized his own reactionary left-liberal program as one of "basic, fundamental changes" in American government.

This claim is, of course, plainly false. What is basic or fundamental about giving the vast middle class a tiny tax cut, while increasing taxes on the wealthy? or increasing spending on government schools? or "putting people first"? or enacting a small cut in capital gains taxes? or forcing employers to spend 1.5% of their payroll on training? or giving more money for Head Start? or confiscating wetlands from private owners? or socializing medicine? or cutting 3% from federal government administrative costs? or "a prudent slowdown in strategic modernization"? or using "our economic and diplomatic leverage to increase material incentives to democratization"? or allowing local communities to "set their own standards with regard to pornography and enforce them within the boundaries of the First Amendment as established by the Supreme Court"?

These are the programs he advanced when he is pressed. But he is not pressed very often. From the coverage of his campaign that I have seen on television (the medium through which most Americans get political data), it appears mostly he just talks about how what he favors are "basic, fundamental

changes." That characterization satisfies most Americans, whose lives are too busy to allow much time for evaluating complicated things like issues.

It is especially effective for Democrats, who like to think they want "basic, fundamental changes," but realize that the agenda pushed by Mondale and Dukakis guarantee more Republican victories. By de-emphasizing issues and concentrating on image, he is profoundly attuned to the wants of Americans.

His virtuosity at statecraft is further illustrated by his self-portrayal as a political outsider, which it seems quite clear the voters prefer over political insiders. His Arkansas roots help him a great deal here: anyone coming from a small, poor, ill-educated, and backward state like Arkansas is bound to seem like an outsider. "I am the favorite candidate from outside the Beltway," he says.

That truth is the diametrical opposite of the image. Clinton was educated at Georgetown, Oxford, and Yale, and has assiduously built relationships with powerful people all over the nation. In a recent *Wall Street Journal* article, Jill Abramson reported that "Nobody collects friends like Bill Clinton — and nobody puts them to better use. Inside the Clinton campaign, they are known as FOBs — Friends of Bill's — and they make up a remarkable network." When he was criticized for his draft evasion and Vietnam War hypocrisy, old friends Robert Reich (prominent Harvard economist), Strobe Talbott (*Time* magazine editor), Richard Stearns (Massachusetts judge), and Michael Mandelbaum (Johns Hopkins University security expert), all rose to defend him in the nation's press. When the draft and womanizing issues threatened his campaign in Georgia, it was Gov. Zell Miller and powerful Sen. Sam Nunn who came to his defense. The list of his friends is astounding: investment bankers, lobbyists, corporate bigwigs, Senators, Governors, political bosses, prominent academicians. He may be the most successful "networker" in history, with more friends among the wealthy and powerful than any other American politician.

Bill Clinton has taken to heart Abraham Lincoln's maxim, "You can

fool some of the people all the time, and that's usually enough to get you elected." Twice within a single month he was caught telling barefaced lies: his denial of his affair with Gennifer Flowers and his claim that he risked the draft rather than get a deferment. Yet he convinced a substantial portion of the electorate that he had told the truth in both cases, and convinced much of the remainder that his carefully calculated lies were not really very important and certainly were not moral flaws. He got the support of traditional Democrat interest groups by promising to advance their agenda, but publicly advocated only wimpy versions of the traditional Democrat agenda, all the while portraying himself as the advocate of "basic, fundamental changes." He has painted Paul Tsongas as the tool of evil "Washington lobbyists" while embracing lobbyists and their

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money. He has portrayed himself as an outsider, while cultivating a circle of powerful insider friends.

In sum, Bill Clinton has demonstrated that he is the Man for the Job. His handling of the Gennifer Flowers affair and his own marriage demonstrate magnificent people skills and management ability; his handling of his draft status demonstrates a remarkable resourcefulness; his handling of his campaign has shown remarkable salesmanship, skillful mendacity, and even statesmanship. He has shown that he is a uniquely skillful political leader.

Chances are excellent that he will be elected President. The nation will discover he is as fascinating as Hammer or Geraldo. And eventually, I am convinced, he will be remembered as a great statesman, along with Abraham Lincoln, Otto von Bismarck, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and Joseph Stalin. □

## Judgment

# Clarence Thomas: Cruel and Unusual Justice?

by James Taggart

He entered the Supreme Court after a storm of controversy, and he is still under a cloud of suspicion. What kind of justice does Clarence Thomas dispense?

The hounds of the establishment are dogging Clarence Thomas again. Justice Thomas recently penned a dissenting opinion (joined by Justice Scalia) that brands him, in the words of the *New York Times*, the "youngest, cruelest justice." The present controversy arose out of *Hudson v. McMillan*, a case that pitted a prisoner

in Louisiana's state prison system against one of the prison guards who had kicked and beaten him after restraining him with handcuffs.

Rather than filing a traditional tort claim for assault and battery under Louisiana law, Hudson filed a Section 1983 claim. Part of an early civil rights law intended to provide former slaves with access to the federal courts in order to protect their newly won freedoms, Section 1983 claims must be based upon a violation of the Constitution or other federal law. Despite the prerequisite of a constitutional violation, attorneys often prefer Section 1983 claims because, unlike an action under state law, losing defendants must pay the plaintiffs' legal fees on top of any damage award. Indeed, for this reason, plaintiffs' attorneys face a strong incentive to frame their client's case in constitutional terms.

In Hudson's case, his attorneys argued that his beating constituted a cruel and unusual punishment in violation of the Eighth Amendment. A majority of the Court agreed, finding

for Hudson on the grounds that "When prison officials maliciously and sadistically use force to cause harm, contemporary standards of decency always are violated."

In his dissent, Justice Thomas did not question the malicious or sadistic nature of the beating. Instead, he relied upon the minor nature of the injuries inflicted as a basis to limit what he considered the unjustified and unwise expansion of the Eighth Amendment. In his own words, "[A] use of force that causes only insignificant harm to a prisoner may be immoral, it may be tortious, it may be criminal, and it may even be remediable under other provisions of the Federal Constitution, but it is not 'cruel and unusual punishment.'" Thomas concluded that:

Today's expansion of the Cruel and Unusual Punishment Clause beyond all bounds of history and precedent is, I suspect, yet another manifestation of the pervasive view that the Federal Constitution must address all ills in our society. Abusive behavior by prison guards is deplorable conduct that

properly evokes outrage and contempt. But that does not mean that it is invariably unconstitutional.

At first glance, Justice Thomas' position does indeed sound detached, overly technical, and even callous. To better understand his argument, however, one must have some idea why he is concerned about extending the scope of the Cruel and Unusual Punishments Clause. In its entirety, the Eighth Amendment reads, "Excessive bail shall not be required, nor shall excessive fines be imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted." For the first 185 years since the Bill of Rights was added to the Constitution, the Supreme Court never applied the Cruel and Unusual Punishments Clause to anything beyond punishments prescribed by legislatures or sentences handed down by judges.

The year 1976 marked the first time in which the Court, in an opinion written by Justice Marshall, applied the words "cruel and unusual punishment" to the treatment or conditions of prison inmates. One strongly suspects that Thomas disagrees with the



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Court's 1976 decision to "cut the Eighth Amendment loose from its historical moorings," but his sense of judicial restraint appears to rule out a direct attack on this precedent. Instead, as previously mentioned, he would rely upon some threshold level of harm as a means to limit further unwarranted extensions of the Cruel and Unusual Punishments Clause. Unfortunately for Thomas, his indirect approach appears somewhat unprincipled and feeds the recent perception of him as an insensitive "hair-splitter." Of course, Thomas' desire to limit the scope of a constitutional protection available to individuals can be read as a setback for champions of individual rights. Nevertheless, on the basis of his dissent in *Hudson*, this conclusion may prove hasty.

The difference between the Constitution and the common law, both of which generally protect individual rights, lies at the root of Thomas' thinking. Properly conceived, the Constitution protects individuals from abuses of state power while the common law protects individuals from other individuals. Conduct that violates our common law rights does not always violate our constitutional rights. For example, if I am robbed and beaten by a street gang, my common law rights have been violated, but I have no constitutional claim. Consistent with this line of reasoning, Justice Thomas recognizes that a prisoner may have numerous common law claims against the guards who beat him; Thomas would simply deny that a prisoner has a constitutional claim for such mistreatment. Accordingly, the Eighth Amendment's protections would be limited to those infringements of individual rights which have no common law remedy: cruel and unusual punishments inflicted by legislative or judicial act.

However, a big question lurks behind the preceding argument: does the beating of an inmate by prison guards constitute an abuse of state power? The answer to this question should ultimately depend on how effectively a prisoner can seek redress under the common law against his tormentor. Theoretically, prison guards should be subject to the same liability standards for their torts and crimes whether they are employed by the state or by some

private company. Consequently, if the liability standards were the same, there would be no abuse of state power and no justification for recognizing a cruel and unusual punishment claim outside of cases involving legislative and judicial acts.

Unfortunately, as a practical matter, agents of the state — including

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prison guards — enjoy what David Friedman has called "special rights" amounting to some form of immunity for actions in "the line of duty." Moreover, "the line of duty" is often interpreted quite broadly. Because of these "special rights," constitutional protection for prisoners has a certain appeal as a fallback position. But if one is sincerely concerned about violations of prisoners' rights, why scrap a system that was designed to protect individuals from precisely these kinds of violations? Why not instead reform the common law by eradicating any "special rights" for agents of the state? Better yet, why not privatize the prisons, thereby yielding the same effect?

Needless to say, the "defenders" of prisoners' rights who criticized Justice Thomas for his dissent in *Hudson* have not urged such reforms. For his part, Justice Thomas has not specifically urged these reforms either. But then, that's not really his job. □

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## Clarification

# Divorce, Czechoslovak Style

*by Vojtech Cepl and Ronald F. Lipp*

The Velvet Revolution was not merely the end of an old tyranny, but the beginning of a new enterprise. The problem with the new is that troubles have not ended with the passing of the old.

For forty years, the mortal confrontation between the Soviet Bloc and the NATO alliance imposed a Cold War imperative of solidarity among the members of each camp. The collapse of the old order has dissolved these bonds and unleashed a multitude of European ethnic antagonisms and irredentist movements — the residue of unresolved conflicts dating from the First World War which always lay just beneath the surface. The enormous capacity of these animosities for chaos and violence has been demonstrated by the ferocious civil war in Yugoslavia and the sporadic but persistent conflicts in places like Nagorno-Karabakh, Moldova, and Bulgaria.

Ethnic and national violence has been limited thus far to the fringes, especially to regions populated by unasimilated minority enclaves. But the potential for upheaval extends across a broader canvas, perhaps to the entire interface where cultures which are dominated by Western, and especially industrial and bourgeois, values confront those which are not. The test case for disorder in the heartland of Europe may be the conflict between the Czechs and the Slovaks.

Ethnic and national violence has been limited thus far to the fringes, especially to regions populated by unasimilated minority enclaves. But the potential for upheaval extends across a broader canvas, perhaps to the entire interface where cultures which are dominated by Western, and especially industrial and bourgeois, values confront those which are not. The test case for disorder in the heartland of Europe may be the conflict between the Czechs and the Slovaks.

### **For Better or Worse**

Czechoslovakia was formed in 1918 from remnants of the Austro-Hungarian empire. Though the Czechs and Slovaks are Slavs and

speaking related tongues, there is in fact a deep and ancient gulf between their cultures and traditions. The Czechs have behind them a thousand-year history, first as an independent Bohemian kingdom and later as the most economically valuable portion of the Austrian Hapsburgs' domain. Their traditions are Germanic and bourgeois. In contrast, the Slovaks were for a millennium Hungarian subjects with a largely agricultural economy, subject to the more debilitating limitations of Magyar rule. Their only experience with independence was a brief period as a puppet Nazi republic from 1939 to 1945. Before 1918, the Czechs and Slovaks occupied different universes. Ever after, they have existed in uneasy amalgamation, the Czechs seeming to disdain their more countrified cousins, the Slovaks resenting perceived condescension and manipulation from the more numerous and wealthier Czechs.

During four decades of Communist rule, these tensions were relatively contained, but they resurfaced follow-

ing the Velvet Revolution of November 1989. Early in 1990, widespread protests against the country's name in Slovakia touched off a political crisis. The choice of "Czech and Slovak Federative Republic" reflected recognition of the existence of two republics with an overarching federal government. Repeated efforts to define the powers of the three jurisdictions have foundered on the demands of Slovak nationalists for independence and the insistence of more "moderate" Slovak politicians that the federation must first be based on recognition of Slovak sovereignty.

Early in 1991, the coalition governing the Slovak Republic was seriously weakened when the Prime Minister, Vladimir Meciar, defected to the nationalist camp. His successor, Jan Carnogursky, envisions an independent Slovakia as a member of a federation of European states, but only after Slovakia has achieved economic autonomy.

The conflict has now become so personal that Vaclav Havel, the feder-

al President, who is venerated in Prague, has been jeered, jostled, and pelted with eggs during appearances in Bratislava, the Slovak capital. Havel has repeatedly called for a public referendum on separation, but at the end of 1991 that idea seemed to have died for lack of Parliamentary support. In recent weeks, Carnogursky, during televised remarks about the prospects for Slovak independence, has spoken of the natural alliance and friendship of Slovakia and Ukraine. In Carpathia, the Ukrainian district bordering Slovakia, calls have been heard for a

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*For a small, poor country attempting to reestablish itself, the hazards arising from separation into two even smaller countries are obvious. And the problems of dissolution — disputes over property, public debt, and the like — are formidable.*

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plebescite on unification of the regions.

The Slovakian question has now become a dilemma of fundamental proportions. The Czech and Slovak Federation has degenerated into a political structure somewhere between federation and confederation. Preoccupied with constitutional and budgetary crises, it is in danger of paralysis. This threatens to undo the main achievements of the country since 1989, the replacement of a planned economy with free markets and transformation of a Communist society into one in which individual freedom, democracy, and decency are securely in place. If this conflict is not handled with understanding and skill, there is a potential for real trouble.

### For Richer or Poorer

The country now faces three possibilities:

The first is to create a real and viable nation, with a genuine federation involving a more unitary state, based on the principle of loyalty to the feder-

ation and recognition of the individual, not the tribe, as the fundamental unit of society.

The second possibility is divorce. For a small, poor country attempting to reestablish itself, the economic and social hazards arising from separation into two even smaller countries are obvious. And the problems of dissolution — disputes over property, public debt, and the like — are formidable.

The third alternative is the status quo: maintenance of an unstable, fragmented political structure, burdened with an unworkable constitution based on the Leninist-Stalinist doctrine of sovereignty for all peoples, the right to separate, and the principal of parity of nationalities. This system leads to endless conflicts and paralysis in the name of ethnic parity. As some Slovaks would have it, each republic, although part of a federation, would have its own sovereignty extending to foreign affairs and international treaties.

And this third possibility is exactly what both Czech and many Slovak politicians now support. President Havel claims that his mission is to keep the country together. Many Czech MPs concur, saying, "I don't have a mandate to dissolve the country." Some also say, "I am a Federal MP, and I have a duty to defend the democratic Slovaks against the danger of an authoritarian fascist regime which will arise in Slovakia if the federation breaks up." These people remain infected with a commitment to "empathy" and to compromise at any cost — even if the cost is the destruction of the values for which the Velvet Revolution was fought.

On the Slovak side, many of the leaders make intransigent and unworkable demands which at the same time appear insincere. Slovak Prime Minister Carnogursky and the Christian Democrats claim that they want federation. But they also speak of "our own star on the European flag, our own chair around the European table." What they mean is subsidy now, divorce later — like the penniless medical student who will remain faithful to his working wife, but only until she has put him through medical school.

It is paradoxical that the Slovak pol-

iticians are the ones who advocate divorce since the Czechs are far better able to tolerate its consequences. For one thing, the mountains and rivers that form the borders of the Czech republic are the oldest and only natural and undisputed frontiers in Central and Eastern Europe. In addition, the Czech republic has no significant minorities problem. The Slovaks living in the Czech republic are mostly located in the vicinity of Prague, are entirely assimilated, and occupy many posts in the Czech government. Finally, the Czechs have progressed much farther along the road to reform and have, in fact, subsidized Slovak development. Nearly all hard currency income in the country is generated on the Czech side.

Divorce would eliminate the economic burden of current subsidies. Other benefits may accrue. For example, northern Bohemia has been foully polluted by sulfur and other wastes from power plants fueled by the brown coal, lignite. Much of this power is devoted to the huge energy requirements of Slovakian aluminum mills and factories. After a divorce, these power plants might be shut down.

The future of Slovakia looks far more troubled. The Slovaks, through no fault of their own, were burdened by the Communist governments with an idiotic economic structure, dominated by inefficient factories producing heavy machinery and weapons, with great energy requirements but no energy resources, heavily dependent on exports to East European countries, especially the Soviet Union. Their markets are collapsing, unemployment is rising rapidly and massive labor problems loom on the horizon.

Reform in Slovakia is seriously at risk. The post-Communist structure there includes much of the old regime and involves a mixture of strongly socialist, Catholic, and anti-Semitic influences that are not supportive of free markets or individual property rights. There is a preoccupation with social justice, social security, social certainty, and a "humanitarian," slow step-by-step approach to reform. But time is the enemy of real reform; opportunity delayed may mean opportunity forgone.

Slovakia also suffers from a serious

minorities problem. Four million Slovaks live with 600,000 Hungarians, half a million gypsies, and smaller numbers of Ukrainians and Ruthenians. Ethnic tensions are high. Earlier this year, attempts to legislate restrictions on the use of the Hungarian language in Slovakia led to unrest and were softened. Most of the ethnic Hungarians live in southern

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*Markets are collapsing, unemployment is rising rapidly, and massive labor problems loom on the horizon.*

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Slovakia, in the region bordering Hungary. Some political observers believe that within a week after separation of Slovakia from the Czechs, the Hungarian army will enter the south of Slovakia. There is, of course, political precedent for such a step, since this region was for a long time Hungarian territory and was occupied by Hungary during World War II.

Slovakia's eastern border is also unstable. Ukraine includes a region, Ruthenia (or Carpatho-Ukraine) which was annexed from Czechoslovakia by the USSR in 1945. Many connections remain between these regions.

Given this situation, it is not surprising that Czech politicians are beginning to question the value of the present system. Even if the immediate crisis can be cooled by some expedient, the system's emphasis on tribal primacy and parity promises to leave the thorn of ethnic hostility firmly embedded in the country's social fabric. In the absence of fundamental reconciliation, this festering sore puts at risk all of the achievements of the past two years. And it is the Czechs who have the most to lose if their hard-won reforms come to naught.

### In Sickness and in Health

A prognosis for the Czech and Slovak conflict depends upon one's view of the possibilities for social change and the real will of the people.

One popular view of social change holds that events can be manipulated

to change the world. This is the old mechanistic, Machiavellian approach to society, which was also deeply ingrained in Marxist/Communist thinking. Against this, there is another, fundamentally different approach: an organic, Darwinian view which recognizes that society is an organism, with its own inner logic that results from its systemic structure and functional composition. If society is an organism, then we must act with some humility. Though we may struggle to understand those organic processes, we must recognize that our ability to manipulate society is severely limited; we may sometimes support some parts or suppress mildly other parts, but our control can only be partial, and we always risk doing harm.

The question of popular will requires understanding the basic sources of Slovakian discontent. Perhaps Slovak agitation only reflects the aspiration to be recognized and acknowledged. If so, those desires are valid and can be accommodated within a strong and unified Czech and Slovak federation.

Then again, the separatist movement may reflect only the desires of a small, ambitious elite at the top of Slovak society, an elite skilled in using vocal, disaffected minorities. Polls have shown that most Slovaks want to live in a federation with the Czechs. But at the same time, a majority of Slovaks also support those political parties and groups that advocate separation.

It may be, however, that the Slovakian discontent constitutes a real, authentic, revival of the 19th-century tradition of romantic nationalism — the same impulse that caused Czech patriots to labor zealously to create their own state. If that is so, and even if it goes against the grain of the general unifying tendency of modern Europe, the only solution is to respect it, to tolerate it, and to proceed with a fast, decent divorce.

And this divorce must proceed despite the cost, no matter how irrational it may seem, regardless of its grave economic, geopolitical, and psychological impact. Why? *To avoid the ghastly consequences that could occur if it is resisted.* □

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## Travel

# Eastern Eyes

by J. Peter Saint-André

The soul of man, under socialism, undergoes transformation. The result is not a triumph of the human spirit.

During the fall of 1990 and the winter of 1991, I was the first Western employee of a nuclear power plant in Temelin, Czechoslovakia. My job was to teach English to the engineers and technicians there, in preparation for a possible buyout by Westinghouse.

I went to Czechoslovakia because I wanted to find out, first hand, what it was like to live under socialism. I knew that, by arriving in Czechoslovakia so soon after the revolution, I would still be able to experience the imprint of forty-five years of totalitarian socialism, even though the dictatorship itself had been eradicated.

I wanted to learn more than a casual tourist would, and did so with a vengeance. I lived in socialist housing, the kind that makes Harlem housing projects look sturdy by comparison. I ate socialist meals in the company mess hall — grub that was terrible but, to be honest, was no worse than the dorm food at most American universities. I breathed socialist air filled with the acrid smoke of burning coal. I watched socialist television, read socialist newspapers, and flirted with socialist women.

Correction: to be accurate, there were no women in socialist Czechoslovakia. It took me a while to come to that paradoxical conclusion, but the evidence of my senses revealed only girls and mothers. Czech men would often ask me: "What do you think of our Czech girls?" And I would in-

variably reply: "Well, they're fine, but I like women." The girls were all very nice, mind you, but they were — well, girlish. Thanks to state control of housing and full nationalization of the construction industry, there were really only two ways for any of them to gain a coveted apartment: find a job guaranteeing state housing (usually in a "company town" whose population was up to 90% female), or find a mate who'd found a job guaranteeing state housing. The result was some strange matches, both to spouses and to companies. But that was the socialist way.

Feminism, in case you're wondering, never seems to have made its appearance in socialist society — after all, men and women were supposed to have been equal under socialism. Unfortunately, some were more equal than others. Women were, of course, expected to add their labor to society ("Those who do not work, shall not eat," said Lenin), and it seemed to me that just about every woman who wasn't either very old or with child was in the work force. The catch was

that women performed all the traditional "women's chores" at home, too. It made for a busy day, but thankfully no one was really expected to do much work at work anyway, so there was no problem taking time off to shop. Besides, the socialist workday ran from 6:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., so that left plenty of time after work for housework in home sweet housing project, or what they affectionately call a *králíkárna* — literally, a rabbit warren.

There was an ever-so-slight amount of private property allowed under Czech socialism, but the emphasis is on the word *slight*. Even the kiosks selling newspapers and cigarettes (which in New York and other Western cities are hallmarks of small, private enterprise) were state-owned under socialism. Still, many houses did remain in private hands, especially in the countryside. This allowed people the opportunity to tend a little garden and to produce a supply of fruits and vegetables not available from the socialist collectives.

These private plots also afforded



the chance to build what people everywhere covet: their own home. In Czechoslovakia, if you had a relative with a private house, you could build a new house that shared the same plot of land. It was difficult but not impossible. The only problem was, you had to build it yourself. Thus, many of my Czech friends knew how to build a house from the ground up. And "from the ground up" meant just that. At the time I was in Czechoslovakia, it was virtually impossible to find bricks, the main ingredient of a Czech house. The only solution: manufacture your own.

When you have to manufacture your own bricks in order to build your own house, you are living in a society that has no effective division of labor. Just one more sign of how low human time and energy — human life — is valued under socialism.

The amazing thing is that Czechoslovakia was once a wealthy country. Czechoslovakia was no Russia or China, backward at the time of the Communist takeover and backward today. Czechoslovakia — especially the Czech portion — was industrially

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*Long-held traditions of craftsmanship were forgotten under Marxist rule. Many of my colleagues simply no longer knew how to work.*

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advanced and materially well-off, even as late as the Stalinist *putsch* of 1948. Times have changed. Once richer than their Austrian neighbors, today the Czechs must bear the sight of Austrian tourists' expensive cars on Czechoslovakian roads. The terrible swift suddenness with which this reversal took place testifies to the sheer destructive power of socialism. Unwittingly, the country has proven that it doesn't take long to destroy the physical and human capital of an advanced nation. And it has the scars to show for it.

My friends hungered for material goods. *How much does a car cost in America?*, they asked me constantly. *How much for a bottle of beer?* Once,

under this barrage, I asked myself how long would it take an American worker to earn enough money to buy a car, versus the same figure for a Czech worker. The average American must work 32 weeks to earn enough for an automobile; a Czechoslovakian worker of the socialist era had to slave away for 5 or 6 years. And even if you did own a car in Czechoslovakia, there wasn't much you could do with it: during the time I lived there, gasoline cost the equivalent of \$50 a gallon. So much for a Sunday drive in the country.

After making similar comparisons of various other commodities, I concluded that the standard of living in the United States was at least five or six times better than that in Czechoslovakia.

My calculations, however, took into account only the quantity of goods, not their quality. In my experience, there was only one Czech product clearly superior to the American equivalent: beer. (One Communist leader was famous for having said, "Beer is our bread!") I lived in a town whose German name is Budweis, home of the original Budweiser beer. Czech Budweiser is far superior to American Budweiser. But the superiority of Czech products pretty much ended there. Examples abound, but my favorites were the paper products; I fondly recall writing pads made of what felt like (but wasn't) recycled paper, and especially the toilet paper, which gained added value because it could be used for fine sanding jobs around the *králíkárna*.

Service, too, remained of the standard socialist variety, which is why my Czech friends had a tremendous fascination for private shops, to the point that they knew the exact order in which the new private shops in town opened. They did not always understand the workings of such shops, however. Witness the continuing, unshakeable belief in the "just price," a relic one would think went out with the Middle Ages. When prices for some basic foodstuffs were liberated, there was especial controversy over eggs. Shoppers were shocked, not at the fact that there was a price increase — that would have been accepted under the old system, if it had been de-

creed by the government — but at the inexplicable fact that there were different prices for eggs at different locations around town. How in the world could a dozen eggs cost 1.09 *koruna* in one store and 1.06 *koruna* just down the street? People shook their heads, dumbfounded.

But the damage caused by socialism runs deeper than the price of eggs. Since the fall of the Iron Curtain, many have decried the litany of destruction

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*There were no women in socialist Czechoslovakia, only girls and mothers.*

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in Eastern Europe. Visitors invariably comment on its unrelieved grayness. Very few buildings in the East look as if they have been painted or maintained since World War II, and when you do stumble upon a recently renovated building, it seems strangely out of place, a glimpse into another world.

Long-held traditions of craftsmanship were forgotten under Marxist rule, and knowledge of how to function in a market economy vanished. Many of my colleagues simply no longer knew how to work. Young people always worked hard for the first few years, my friends told me — until they realized the futility of effort.

Socialism destroyed the environment, too. Northern Bohemia is perhaps the most ecologically blighted region on this Earth. Even in my town in the relatively pristine region near the Austrian border, you didn't just see the coal smoke hanging in the air — you smelled it, breathed it, tasted it, felt it in your hair and clothes.

Throughout Czechoslovakia, the air and water have become so polluted that many women have trouble bringing pregnancies to term. My students would disappear for three weeks at a time, bedridden with nothing more serious than the common cold. Whole generations here have gone through life in what amounts to a state of malnutrition.

But the hunger that I found most disturbing was not of the body, but of

the soul. The overall effect of Communist dictatorship was not merely physical. It was a deeply spiritual degradation.

It is difficult to put that degradation into words. To me, its most striking sign was what I call "Eastern eyes." I could see and feel the resignation, the defeat, the despair, in the eyes of people I knew. It was all too rare to come upon a person with a spark of life in his eyes. If the eyes are windows onto the soul, then the soul of man under socialism is all but dead.

I also observed a reverse phenomenon: "American eyes." Americans stood out in Czechoslovakia for many reasons: their clothes, their gait, their manner of speaking, their energy. But the most apparent difference was in the eyes. One night, watching a diving competition on television in which some Americans were competing, I found that I could tell immediately which divers were Americans just from the spark of life in their eyes. Despite the ongoing encroachment of the state, we still live in what is, more than any other, the land of the free.

The spiritual destruction suffered by people in the East was further evident in the two emotions that sometimes seemed to color their entire existence: envy and guilt. The sheer amount of envy directed at those who were successful amazed and disturbed me. Again and again, I heard the refrain: "only crooks and communists can possibly succeed" — from which it followed that anyone who succeeded must have been one or the other. When a friend of mine applied for jobs in England and Saudi Arabia, he became bitterly resented by his co-workers for his ambition and desire for a better life, even though he hadn't even been hired. The simple fact that he wanted to be successful was considered a sin — and not a minor one, either. The experience made me realize for the first time how deeply embedded envy is in the radical egalitarianism of socialism.

Yet deeper even than the envy was the guilt. The Czech people I knew felt an ineffable regret over what had happened to their country — or, as they expressed it, what they had allowed to

happen to their country. *How could we have allowed this degradation?*, they asked themselves. *How could we have accepted such inhumanity for so long?*

There were exceptions, of course. Those who fought openly against the old system, dissidents such as now-President Vaclav Havel and a small number of others who risked their lives signing Charter 77 and demanding that human rights be respected in Czechoslovakia, didn't feel this guilt. These very few remained pure, and consequently are respected and revered for their uncommon courage, the kind of courage that should never have to be displayed. Yet they are at the same time envied and hated, for the simple fact of their purity.

When I was in Czechoslovakia, the

vilest epithet one Czech could hurl at another was *jsi stára struktura*: "you are old structure." It means: you sold out to socialism, you were an active part of the socialist power structure, you abetted the destruction of our lives and our country. It was reserved for the most diehard Communists, and in all my time in Czechoslovakia I never heard it addressed directly at any person, except in jest between good friends. It was too horrible a thing to accuse someone of in person. Yet once, in conversation, a Czech friend said to me, "You know, each one of us has a little bit of the *stára struktura* deep in his heart, and it will remain there for the rest of our lives."

That is the most damning indictment of socialism. □

## Search

# Little Czech Man

by Frank Fox

The communists prophesied the coming of a New Socialist Man. What they got, however, was not quite what they had in mind.

"MCC": *It is pronounced* am-che-che and is short for *Maly Cesky Celovek*, or Little Czech Man. It's an appropriate term for a person in a small, landlocked country, where Franz Kafka chose but the single letter "K" to designate an anti-hero, and Karel Capek used just three, "R.U.R.," for the title of his play about an automated society. It came into vogue in the late 1960s, and although no one that I have talked to in Czechoslovakia seems to know how it started, it was used by old and young. It referred to smallness of mind, a constriction of the spirit. And it seemed to fit the kind of person who represented the rank and file of the Communist society.

The acts of an MCC were mean-spirited, made in reprisal for another's

good fortune, a furtive act of revenge meant for nighttime anonymity. If a restaurant made some money and mysteriously burned to the ground, it was probably the act of an MCC. If someone built a private pool and suddenly diesel oil was found sloshing and befouling that free enterprise project, it was very likely the deed of an MCC. It was like the joke frequently told about life in the Soviet Union, where a farmer hoped to see his neighbor's cow dead, rather than work to improve the milk yield of his own.

I have been to Czechoslovakia twice since the *Sametove revoluce* of 1989 (the "Velvet Revolution," so named by the country's current President, Vaclav Havel), and I have wondered about that infamous MCC in a society where

sharp humor, individual creativity, and attachment to democratic traditions were the norm. How could such a country become a place where malice to fellowman and obsequiousness to those in authority are now so commonplace? How could a land known for its dedication to hard work become a place of MCC shoddiness?

I tried to pose these questions to my Czech friends when I visited

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*How could such a country become a place where malice to fellowman and obsequiousness to those in authority are now so commonplace? How could a land known for its dedication to hard work become a place of MCC shoddiness?*

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Prague last year. My mention of MCC brought rare smiles to their faces. Yes, they knew many such people. The underachievement of an MCC was only exceeded by his overconfidence. His inefficiency (except in hounding non-conformists and informing on them) was legendary. There were some amusing consequences. In Prague, useless new bridges had been constructed while the old ones were in disrepair. Eventually, denounced by some MCC, a group of dissident writers, lawyers, doctors, and others obviously inexperienced at bridge building, were put to work. As it turned out, the bridges they built were the only ones that were structurally sound. My musician friend, whose passion was raising rare alpine flowers, said that motivation was the answer. An MCC was a passionless person who failed to find fulfillment in his public or private life. I saw my friend's point when he spoke of the flowers he was cultivating at his parents' house in the suburbs of Prague (he rattled off the Latin terms of the alpine plants as if they were his children's names) and said half-jokingly that the only work done thoroughly in his country was related to one's hobby.

His professional duties allowed

him to travel frequently to Russia where the jerry-built socialist construction reminded him of home. In Leningrad, now known again as St. Petersburg, he ventured beyond the picturesque Nevsky Prospekt popular with the tourists, and found a city that was like a giant slum. Many shops were without window displays. Poor people trudged with containers for milk or beer to be filled in shops that were really no more than shacks. He had never seen such "establishments." In the larger stores, one had to pass through several doors to see what was inside. He wasn't sure whether this was an arrangement to keep out the cold or whether it was meant to symbolize the labyrinthine nature of Soviet life. He laughed when he recalled three women at three cash registers in an otherwise empty shop. I told him of an experience I had in a pastry shop in Warsaw where one saleslady put my pastry on a piece of paper, another weighed it, a third wrapped it, and a fourth collected my money.

I tried to analyze the phenomenon of the MCC as one of the more enduring and less appealing aspects of a Communist society. According to my friends in Prague, their home-grown variety of the MCC was a person hardly even conscious of his limited intellectual horizons, someone plodding through life with blinkers, like a horse in a mine. An MCC was described as a village boor who had tried to survive all kinds of regimes, and whose motto was: "we will dislike any government as soon as it touches the plate of food on our table." If he lived in the city and was a little better educated, an MCC was still a narrow-minded person. But was he the real culprit? Was he the true symbol of the degradation of mind that accompanied totalitarian terror? Was it possible that this blanket condemnation of an MCC, more a caricature than a portrait of a human being, was a facile shifting of responsibility from the shoulders of the cultured and educated to the work-bent backs of the *hoi polloi*?

On January 1, 1991, President Havel addressed the question of treachery and revenge in his New Year's greetings to the people of Czechoslovakia. Havel spoke moving-

ly of the "elements of spitefulness, suspicion, mistrust and mutual recrimination [that] are creeping into public life." He conceded that people want to find "a living culprit," because, as he put it, "each of us feels let down, even cheated by the other."

In a number of Havel's plays the character Vanek appears, an "abnormal troublemaker," a man who is disliked because "he is disturbing the peace" of those who prefer promotions to principles, a man who confronts power with powerlessness. Vanek is a man of values, a man who will not betray anyone because he will not betray himself. One suspects that Havel identifies with such a character. The decades of Soviet rule have eliminated many Vaneks, even as they created legions of opportunists, a type of individual that some writers have dubbed *Homo sovieticus*. The Communists did not know very much about economics, but they did have a keen interest in psychology. Few movements in history have been able to enlist in their ranks the very people that were targeted for elimination. The Communists found their supporters among all the classes, in villages and in cities, in garrets and salons. The task for a future civil society, the kind that President Havel urges upon his own people, is one that allows for the transformation of an MCC into a Vanek, that encourages the growth of individuals who can combine simplicity with intelligence and kindness with strength. □

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# The World's Most Successful Price-Fixing Conspiracy

by Gary Alexander

America's most prominent symbol of unbridled capitalism — Wall Street — is nowhere near the model of *laissez faire* it is usually believed to be.

Two hundred years ago this month, on May 17th, 1792, the longest-running price-fixing scheme in American history began. There will be great toasts and celebrations to Wall Street this month, but few will recall the details of how the "Club" — as the schemers called themselves then — met in a private luncheon at Corre's Hotel, on a walled street in lower Manhattan, and agreed to keep their brokerage rates comfortably high.

That spring day, 24 brokers and merchants formed the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE), in order to create a monopoly of business stock trading in New York City. Their purpose was to create a cartel, as the NYSE's Original Charter makes clear:

We the subscribers, brokers for the Purchase and Sale of Public Stock, do hereby solemnly promise and pledge to ourselves, to each other, that we *will not buy or sell* from this day for any person whatsoever, any kind of Public Stock at less than one quarter of one percent Commission on the Specie value and that we will *give preference to each other* in our Negotiations.

Starting with that minimum of only .25% commission, the Club eventually learned that it could demand a uniform price of 8% or 9% or more.

But the arrangement, lacking the coercive power of the State, was unstable. "Curbstone brokers" traded shares outside the NYSE's indoor market; from time to time, rival stock mar-

kets would come into being. Sometimes, these would outperform the NYSE. One, the American Stock Exchange, became quite successful, and prospers to this day. In the face of competition, the NYSE had no choice but to open its doors to new members, adopt innovations, or accept that it would lose business to its rivals. The Club could only preserve its market position by offering the stability, security, convenience, and access to information that a unified market with high standards provides. It followed this course, not out of a desire to perform a public good, but in order to survive and prosper.

Of course, from time to time, the NYSE tried other methods of gaining a dominant market share. During the Civil War, for example, when rival traders enriched themselves through speculation in gold, the NYSE pushed for legislation restricting the gold trade. Laws were passed, but this was the inflationary Greenback era, and demand for the metal was too great. The trade continued illicitly, the trad-

ers received even greater profits, and the laws were eventually repealed.

The Club finally gained state sanction in 1934, with the formation of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). The SEC failed to stop the attempted price-fixing; indeed, its regulations made it more difficult to challenge the status quo. And the courts ruled that, since the SEC was regulating the industry, the latter's price-fixing was not unlawful or harmful.

From then on the stock market and the regulators performed a complicated dance, and the New York Stock Exchange became a cartel in fact as well as intention.

## May Day, 1975

The Wall Street cartel was finally broken up on May 1, 1975, despite decades of stonewalling by the SEC. Today, there are over 100 discount brokerage firms, and 2000 banks which partake in the discount brokerage business on the side. As a direct result of broker deregulation, the cost

for big trades has now reverted to 1792 levels — about .25%.

So who lobbied for deregulation? Two of the biggest name players in the Club — Merrill Lynch and Salomon Brothers. Why would Wall Street blue-bloods like these put an end to their gravy train? Usually, the most powerful players in a game don't change the rules against their advantage. But the members of the Club were no longer the biggest players on the Street.

In the end, the biggest names in the Club were being trumped by an even stronger group of billionaire buyers, the "institutional investors," a relatively new phenomenon on the market.

By 1965 — when the Dow Jones Industrial Average first hit 1000 (a higher mark than its current level of 3200, adjusted for inflation) — Wall Street was in a relative torpor of trading. There were only 2171 trades of 10,000 shares or more for the entire year, representing only 3.1% of reported volume that year. With the rise of institutional investing in the late sixties, there were 17,217 such trades in 1970, representing 15.4% of volume.

Meanwhile, the bottom end of share volume was also growing rapidly (small investors always seem to

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*During the Civil War, when rival traders enriched themselves through speculation in gold, the NYSE pushed for legislation restricting the gold trade.*

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come into the act after major peaks): There were fewer than 20 million U.S. shareholders in 1965, and over 30,850,000 by 1970. This greater demand for stocks by middle-class investors revealed a growing market need for lower stock commissions, but it took the clout of the institutional investors to make it happen.

### Breaking Up the Club

The late 1960s witnessed the growth, and ultimate pre-eminence, of large-block traders who swapped five-

figure share trades almost daily. They bought stocks for pension funds, insurance firms, and other multi-million-dollar accounts. They didn't like the fact that they were being butchered by the high brokerage fees of the Club, so they threatened to set up their own brokerage firms, outside the Club, if the brokerage rates weren't adjusted downward to reflect their economies of scale.

After all, institutions were paying the same high rates for big blocks of 10,000 shares that the little investor was paying for his 100 shares, and that didn't seem fair. At first, the institutional investors got no break on their large trades, but slowly and surely their clout increased. By 1969, they got the rule changed, giving them lower commissions on big block trades.

The institutions began to feel their oats with that first victory. Their next step was to bypass the NYSE whenever they could, in order to trade over-the-counter, with lower commissions. Trading in the secondary market saved them loads of money, even on their discounted high-volume rates. By 1971, the handwriting was on the wall — the institutional investors were the tail that wagged the dog. Only then did the Big Board and the Big Boys (Merrill Lynch and Salomon Brothers) agree to try to deregulate the exchange, and lobby the SEC for reform.

At first, the government tried to change the rates through evolution, not revolution. For instance, in 1971, the SEC allowed commissions on orders of \$500,000 or more to be "negotiable." The next year, the SEC dropped the threshold for such negotiation to \$300,000. The SEC wanted to move slowly in order to preserve the "orderly nature of the market" (and the Club's monopoly), but the investor's learning curve was rising too fast for the SEC to take such baby steps toward market freedom.

So, commissions were fully deregulated in 1975. In retrospect, the SEC was not the investor's friend. They waited until the big players lobbied for a change, and only then acted. Deregulation came about after seven years of angry recriminations between all involved players.

Some NYSE member firms claimed

that their price structure was "absolutely essential for orderly business." They warned that chaos would break out on exchange floors if rates became negotiable. Such dire warnings are the eternal cry of the poked pig. More than a decade later, the major stock exchanges are still operational, in the face of all these warnings.

### May Day Comes and Goes

Indeed, after all the prophecies of imminent doom, May 1, 1975 was something of a letdown. The day afterwards, *The Wall Street Journal* presented the following headline: "Revenues on Big Stock Orders Fall Only an

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*The Club finally gained the ability to fix prices in 1934, when the Securities and Exchange Commission was established.*

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Estimated 10%; Small Investors Just Yawn." All the scary premonitions evaporated in a fizzle once the feared event took place.

A few new discount brokers emerged from the Club on May Day itself. Muriel Siebert, at the time the only female member of the Big Board, enraged her comrades in the Club by charging 40% less than the fixed fee on transactions up to \$300,000, with the fee on the portion above that level being negotiable. Siebert's *Wall Street Journal* ads in May of 1975 showed a picture of Ms Siebert cutting a \$100 bill in half to dramatize the level of savings at her firm.

The reaction of the Club was swift, and stern. Bear Stearns, which had previously cleared transactions for Siebert, cut her off, refusing to deal with a deep discounter who had the audacity to mock the Club. Siebert simply found a new company to deal with, and remains a leading broker to this day.

Once the laws were changed, brokerage price competition was led by the likes of Siebert, Charles Schwab, Marquette de Bary, Jack White, Barry Murphy, Leslie and Thomas Quick, and others. Taken together, these pioneers



have saved American investors billions of dollars in commissions over the past 15 years. A few decades from now, some of these names may carry the same venerable ring of the old masters of 19th-century Wall Street — Merrill Lynch, Shearson, Hutton, and the rest.

As deregulation slowly took root in the investor's mind, an amazing thing began to happen. Almost immediately, the big institutions — who were still in the driver's seat, with the lion's share of cash and stock certificates — came into the big brokerage firms and demanded huge discounts of up to 90% on their trades. If they didn't get a big discount, they said, they would shop around for the lowest bidder among the newly-arisen discount firms. Of course the institutions got what they wanted, but the sad irony of deregulation is that the small investor had to pay a higher rate to rescue firms that were losing money on some of their institutional trades.

The small investor couldn't storm into a Wall Street brokerage firm, walk into the CEO's office, and demand a tiny 10% cut — much less 90%. So the fixed rates not only stayed high for the little guy, but the "full service" rates went higher than ever, in order to cover institutional losses. Though the old NYSE-fixed commission rates hit a maximum of around 7.5%, many big brokerage firms raised their full commission to 8.5% after the 1975 deregulation. Most small investors, creatures of habit, paid these rates, feeling more comfortable with big name brokers.

By 1985, a decade after deregulation, less than 20% of retail stock trading, by volume, was conducted by discount brokers. After the 1987 crash,

however, the perception of the financial strength and market savvy of the big broker firms began to erode. None of the big firms warned their clientele about the dangerously high blow-off in the market after its peak in August, 1987. Investors weren't even warned to get out in mid-October, as the market began to careen out of control. When the crash came on October 19, they couldn't even reach their "safe, secure" broker on the phone.

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*As a result of the last few years' mass exodus from full-price to selected discount firms, many big brokers have raised prices and reduced services, just to stay alive. Hidden fees multiplied on their brokerage statements like hidden taxes do on the 1040.*

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The investor fallout was catastrophic to both discount and full-price brokers. In the three months between August and November, the number of individual share owners dropped from 53 million to 33 million. Many of the remaining investors became inactive. As a result, many big brokerage firms laid off thousands of employees in the late 1980s. One of them, Drexel Burnham, failed, largely due to government harassment over their junk bond financing.

Discount brokers also suffered, with several smaller, lightly-capitalized firms merging with bigger

discounters, and some even going under. But that proved healthy for the industry, as the strongest survived and thrived. The surviving discount brokerage firms began to rake in new customers who felt betrayed by the constantly super-bullish "buy, buy, buy" mentality of the bigger firms. Why pay 8.5% for "good advice" to a broker who didn't even have the sense to get out before Black Monday?

As a result of this mass exodus from full-price to selected discount firms in the last few years, many big brokers have even raised prices and reduced services, just to stay alive. Hidden fees multiplied on their brokerage statements like hidden taxes do on the 1040. Almost every day's business section seems to tell of staff cuts or turmoil at a major brokerage firm. Still, there is plenty of room in the market for several full-price, full-service firms — and the discounters keep them honest. It could have been that way all along, if the Market had believed in the market.

### The Mutual Fund Solution

One way the small investor has avoided commissions has been through mutual funds. By pooling all their small amounts of money into one large trading bloc, investors were able to get the advantages of institutional investors. As a result, there are now more mutual funds than stocks trading on the NYSE, and more than one new fund debuts each day. Fund assets have grown by more than 20% per year in each of the last ten years!

No scandal has accompanied this basically free-market growth. But now, we see a batch of new regulations considered by the SEC to further restrict competition between mutual funds. Of course, when regulations become more complex, regulated companies don't necessarily bleat — it gives them *carte blanche* to confuse their customers!

For instance, under planned SEC regulations, "no-load" funds will be able to charge a small (.25%) load and not disclose it to investors, and then tack the same fee on, year after year, as long as the investor holds the fund. Funds love that kind of regulation.

With the SEC in charge, that is precisely the kind of regulation they are apt to get. □

**If you agree with Robert Hutchins...**

*"... knowledge without wisdom has brought us to the edge of destruction and may at any time push us over the brink."*

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## Essay

# The Cost of Kids

by Karl Hess

We live in a "consumer society" with strange ideas on production and distribution. These ideas are nowhere stranger than when concerning the production and distribution of children.

To some parents, children are about as important as a new suite of furniture or a car. They are decorations, possessions, little more than animated dolls: cute, cuddly, and cost-free. Where unwanted offspring were once seen as a burden or even a disgrace, they have become status symbols.

But unlike most status symbols, they can be had by the very poorest. There are few government programs to subsidize cars for people, but many to subsidize children.

Somewhere along the line, it has become conventional wisdom that children are a national resource. They aren't, of course. Nor are they social assets, public property, or "society's responsibility." They are individuals who, until self-sufficient, are the responsibility of those who produce or adopt them.

But don't expect to hear much about that responsibility today. Where children are considered a public resource, it is the public that ends up subsidizing children. Government assistance now guarantees the right of the poorest and the youngest to be fruitful and multiply, price tag be damned. There are notorious cases in which women on welfare, ordered to halt their seemingly endless production line with contraceptive implants, have refused, claiming their "reproductive right." That right, of course, is also the right to burden an entire community with the support of those children.

This attitude is by no means confined to the welfare-client poor. Middle-class and professional parents can be heard on talk shows every-

where, calling on the taxpayers to pick up the tab for the day-care facilities they see as essential to the collective welfare. Businesses are expected to help foot the bill for female employees' pregnancies by providing paid leaves of absence and a guarantee of job security once the child has been weaned. Now fathers are beginning to raise similar claims against employers, in order to be more involved in early child-rearing. Childbearing thus becomes another cost of doing business, not unlike a coffee break. Just another turn in one's career path.

The process continues, from birth, through day care, to school. The public school system, busy provider of entertainment for the pampered young and containment for their vicious peers, has taken on more and more of the costs once involved with raising children, not only during the school hours but into the evening and through the weekends. Education is only a small part of the modern school's mission; when push comes to shove, "socializing" children is the central function of the schools. Witness "social promotion" — a revealing phrase indeed — the practice of passing students along from grade to grade regardless of whether they can read or write.

Reduced, lumplike, to mere social statistics, the children may thus be socialized, but they are neither educated nor cared for. Thoughtless parents tumble all over themselves to support this system, lest their status symbol be "held back" and thus reflect badly on them. That the child might be having difficulty learning is clearly secondary.

And at every turn, someone is bound to be shouting that hoary cliché: *Children are the responsibility of society.* Many parents, to their credit, protest this abrogation of their obligations, but others welcome it greedily. Having essentially declared their children public property, such people should not be surprised when the nation-state starts treating their offspring exactly that way, by drafting them for whatever adventure the politicians may have at hand.

Against all this, I maintain that children are *not* "social assets." Productive adults can be said to be a social asset in the sense that productive work is what makes a society possible and usually defines it. But not children. They are unproductive and very costly. Their *social* value is that they can grow up to be productive adults.

The real value of children comes, not from that grand abstraction

Society, but from their family, their neighbors, and, when they become capable of self-reflection, their selves. A community in which parents bear children without care or thought is one in which children are rudely stripped of their value. A community that subsidizes this behavior finds its young not just cheap, but worthless.

Who, then, should take care of the children? Who should try to keep them alive?

A sensible starting point would be to say that the cost of bearing children

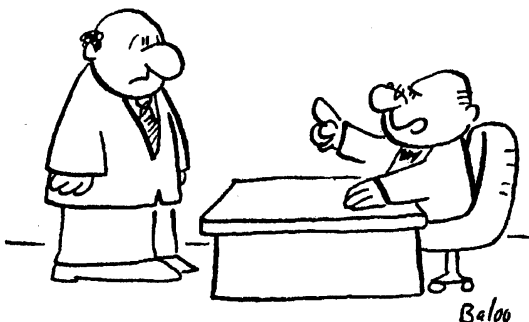
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*To some parents, children are about as important as a new suite of furniture or a car. They are decorations, possessions, little more than animated dolls: cute, cuddly, and cost-free.*

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should be paid by those who bear them. It is this anchor of primary responsibility that has been torn away by the concept that, at the very outset, children are a social obligation and should not present a cost to parents, even those who are not poor. In the case of a truly abandoned or abused child, it could be said that the neighbors should pitch in and help out the victim. But the most fundamental, humane, and prudent approach should make sure that we don't overlook the point of primary responsibility, the first line of caring.

CIA



"A lot of agents get their covers blown, Barstow, but because they forgot and whistled 'Secret Agent Man'?"

Today, the rate in unwanted births, reflected in the statistics for abortion and illegitimacy, is at a remarkable high. So are the programs that make careless birthing relatively cheap. Ending these subsidies would not end unwanted pregnancies; it would, however, make the prospect of such pregnancies a more serious matter for the young and potentially irresponsible. With time, it would effect a change in social behavior.

But wouldn't making parents bear the full cost of their actions penalize innocent children? There is that risk, of course. There is always that risk when children are unwanted or unloved. And it can be argued that there are more, not less, of them at risk today because of the subsidization of their birth and upbringing. Removing the programs that make having unloved children a matter of little concern should at the very least make birth options more serious and, thus, more likely to be thought about in advance.

Beyond that, there is a way to help the innocent without providing subsidy for their upbringing. The traditional recourse for unwanted children always has been and remains adoption — making children available for people who actually want them and would be willing and able to bear the burden of bringing them up. Opening up the adoptive possibilities for more people, especially the working-class people who today are so often snubbed by the heavily regulated adoption agencies, would ease the pains of many unwanted children. A free market in adoptions is needed, so that adults who want children can bid for them openly and so

that careless parents, not social workers, can receive the full price of letting their children go to a presumably happier home.

Fears that children bought on the open market would be subject to abuse should not be greater than the fear that children who remain with their biological parents will be abused. The current statistics on the abuse of children by birth parents are horrifying. Why should a person

who puts up cold cash for a kid be more vicious than someone who refuses to? So long as private watchdog organizations exist, and so long as a child's freedom to refuse a parental relationship is protected — that is to say, so long as he or she is allowed the liberty of *running away* from an oppressive parent, biological or adopted — there is no more, and arguably less, to fear from a child-buyer than a child-seller. Being a child is a risky proposition no matter how you look at it. With a free market in adoption, unwanted children will have a better shot at finding a home where someone *does* want them.

But no adoption policy can be expected to provide relief so long as pregnancy is seen as a casual matter, and birth, merely an option for which others will have to pay. The first step toward reform remains the most vital: parents must bear the full cost of their children, and *know* that they will have to do so — *before* they become parents.

As callous as these comments may seem at first glance, they must be contrasted with the whining, loveless cat-erwauling of those who, suddenly

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*A community in which parents bear children without care or thought is one in which children are rudely stripped of their value. A community that subsidizes this behavior finds its young not just cheap, but worthless.*

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having children, feel that what may have been a simple reproductive error should be elevated to the status of an unyielding demand on the public treasury. For parents who truly love their children and who would bear privations willingly to have and to raise them, the spectacle of such careless and cost-free childbearing must be particularly depressing.

Children are people. Bringing them into the world should be seen for the serious responsibility it is. Kids are costly. If they aren't worth it — don't have any! □

## Explanation

# "Where Everyone Has a Job"

by Mark Tier

There are few cows more sacred than minimum wage laws, and few riper for slaughter.

Recently, on a ferry crossing Hong Kong's harbor, I struck up a conversation with a black musician from Seattle, who told me how much he preferred Hong Kong to the States. What impressed him most about Hong Kong was that "everybody has a job!" Each time he repeated this comment his eyes would almost caress the Hong Kong skyline. He spoke as if a place where everyone has a job was alien to his experience, as if he thought of Hong Kong as a fantasy land, a place that simply could not exist on Earth. Back home, he told me, unemployment, especially for blacks, is high.

He was also puzzled at the widespread influence of the United States here, and the evident esteem in which his country was held when his personal experiences were quite at variance to this image. Something he definitely did not miss, he said, was his treatment by the Seattle police. Back home, most blacks were poor and, therefore, treated badly by the police. Those who appeared to have money weren't much better off. The police assumed they were drug dealers, and treated them badly, too.

I don't have anything to add to the barrage of words written about the drug problem, except to observe that whenever and wherever prohibition has been tried it has failed. And it's failing again now. This man's sense of despair when discussing his life in Seattle led me to reflect that one reason

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people turn to drugs is the hopelessness engendered by the impossibility of finding a job. And that happens whenever minimum wage laws bar the unskilled from *ever* finding a job.

A minimum wage law is simply a form of price control: it prevents anyone from selling his labor below a certain price. Whenever a minimum price is established, some portion of the good or service involved will not find a buyer. Just as the European Community's establishment of a minimum price for butter has resulted in a huge surplus (the "mountain of butter" that the E.C. buys from its dairy farmers), the establishment of a minimum wage inevitably creates a surplus of labor, called "unemployment."

Politicians and some economists claim that a minimum wage raises wages for all workers at the lower end of the pay scale. All the evidence is to the contrary: every country with minimum wage laws (or high unemployment benefits, which have the same effect, establishing a minimum below which it is unprofitable to work) also

has high *and persistent* levels of unemployment. Only in countries with no minimum wage laws is there little or no unemployment.

The reason is simple: an employer will only offer someone a job when the value of his work *exceeds* the amount of his salary. When a minimum wage is set at, say, \$4 an hour, only those people whose value to a company is greater than \$4 an hour will find employment.

### **The Security of the Free Market**

But without minimum wage laws, without unions, wouldn't the workers be "exploited"? Wouldn't they be at the employers' mercy? Not necessarily. In fact, when there are no minimum wage laws and no specially privileged unions, employees actually have far greater job security — a security provided by the market. This is demonstrated by the job market in Hong Kong, where there are no minimum wage laws, where there are no laws granting special privileges to unions, and, as this man put it so eloquently,

where "everybody has a job."\*

Many years ago I employed a girl named May as a messenger and "gofer." This was her first job: she was 16 years old, she had finished four years of high school, her English was poor, she had no job skills of any kind, and she could not type, keep books, or anything else that might be demanded in a business. Indeed, she only had one qualification: she was eager to work.

She was hired to deliver messages, open the mail, make coffee, lick stamps, put things in envelopes, go to the post office, and do other menial tasks of this kind. I paid her the princely amount of

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*Legislating the U.S. minimum wage in Bangladesh would not raise anybody's wages; it would raise the level of unemployment to somewhere between 98% and 99%.*

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HK\$800 per month, about US\$170 at the time, or 95¢ per hour.

In many respects, employing May was a luxury. It was a luxury not to have to make or get my own coffee; even more importantly, it was a luxury not to have to plan ahead. If I suddenly realized that I was short of cash, I could send her down to the bank rather than go myself. Similarly, at the last moment I could send her out to pick something up or drop something off. Many of the things she did could have been simply not done at all or done by other people in the company — or, with a little thought and planning, done far more efficiently. Employing her was not essential to the survival of the business.

### The Best Kind of Training

By the time she'd been working with me for 12 months, her salary had doubled to HK\$1,600 a month. Why? Because in that 12 months she'd learned many job-specific skills that made her far more valuable to the com-

pany than when she was fresh from high school. She was now keeping some records, typing labels, managing the petty cash, and other things she was unable to do when she started. Alone, none of these specific skills are of great significance. Taken together, her 12 months' "on-the-job training" had given her an education that she could receive nowhere else.

She also learned other things in that year: how to look after herself, how to manage her own time and money. She was also able to reward herself with things that only money can buy. In a word, she was learning *independence* — she was becoming *self-sufficient* in the real world. She learned a lesson the reverse of what she would have received on welfare, which reinforces the dependence experienced as a child and teenager.

### Reinforcing Dependence

By denying unskilled teenagers the opportunity to work at their market value, however low, minimum wage laws interrupt the essential developmental process of *slowly* gaining independence from one's parents — and inevitably some people remain "stuck" in the child/teenager state for the rest of their lives, with devastating social consequences.

If there'd been a minimum wage set at, say, HK\$1,600 a month, there'd have been no job for May in my company. May might *never* have received that one year of on-the-job experience she needed to learn the skills with which she could command that minimum wage of \$1,600 per month. Instead, 12 months out of school, May could have still been unemployed and, worse, despairing of ever finding employment.

Perhaps she dropped out of school because her parents could not afford to keep her there any longer, as is often the case. For these people, no other form of training is affordable. A minimum wage law would have not only denied her a job at her market value, but denied her the opportunity to *rise above it* as well. Instead of being rewarded for her eagerness to work, and so increasing her market value by learning new skills, she could have been consigned like so many poor Americans to a life of never-ending, soul-destroying unemployment, the

psychological experience of being told by society that you have no value, that you are *worthless*.

One government intervention entails another. In countries with minimum wage laws, governments often try to alleviate the resultant unemployment with all manner of training schemes. Such schemes have serious drawbacks, aside from increasing the tax burden on those in employment. Most importantly, they can never replace the experience of simply having a job, however menial that job may be. Part of the experience of your first few jobs is discovering what's possible, and what kind of things you'd like to do, things you can only find out in the real world, never in a classroom.

In Hong Kong most employees take night classes of one kind or another; and from these courses they learn something that will increase their market value in their current employment, or prepare them for their next. When you are paying for your own education, your motivation is far higher, and you choose something relevant to what you need or want. Being employed enhances that ability.

An argument often used in support of minimum wage legislation is that wages under the selected level are "too low," "below the poverty line," or in some other sense thought to be dehumanizing.

But the overwhelming majority of people who'd be employed below any minimum wage level are people like May, who quickly graduated from her low pay. The *turnover* of workers at that wage level (in a free labor market) is very high. There is a very big difference between someone who is working for the first time — who is probably living with her parents, and whose income, however low, is almost entirely available for discretionary spending — and the "average" worker who has to support 2.2 (or is it 2.3?) children. A wage that would certainly spell poverty to this "average" worker spells luxury to someone in May's position.\*

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\* For example, the biggest tourism market in Japan is girls in their early twenties in exactly this position. Having no responsibilities, they can spend all their relatively low incomes on themselves — and, therefore, have the highest available spending power of any group for such luxuries as travel.

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\* In fact, the current unemployment rate in Hong Kong is 1.5%. That's the general estimate of what economists call "frictional unemployment" — people voluntarily looking for another job.



You might ask, why did I increase May's salary so that within 12 months it had doubled? I can assure you it was certainly not out of the goodness of my heart, though I do figure myself as a good employer. (Not all my employees will agree with that statement.) The reason was very simple: having discovered her increased worth, May was now in a position to seek another job at a higher salary if I did not raise hers.

This brings me to an amazing feature of the Hong Kong labor market, and of any labor market where there are no restrictions on the employment of labor: employees know their own worth — their market value — and if you don't pay them what they are worth, they find someone who will.

### The Security of Knowing Your Worth

A free labor market provides workers with far more job security than any union-devised scheme. In Hong Kong, where "everybody has a job," every worker knows he can find an alternative job within a few weeks. And how

do workers know what they are worth? They read the classified ads in the newspapers.

It used to worry me that the classified section of the newspaper appeared to be the most popular reading material in my office — until I realized that

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*Most employees in Hong Kong, if they feel underpaid, will sign a contract for another job and only then give notice. So the employer must be sure the wages he is paying are in line with the market — otherwise, he'll lose his employees.*

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my staff was not planning to resign *en masse*; they were merely checking their market value and keeping themselves aware of the alternatives available. In a free labor market, each employee is responsible for his or her own welfare. The alternative to union- or govern-

ment—"guaranteed" job security is knowledge of one's value in the marketplace, and that knowledge is freely and continually available from newspaper classifieds, employment agencies, and discussions with friends and associates, where the state of the job market is a continual topic of interest.

Of course, exploitation can occur under any system. But the possibility of exploitation is far lower in a free labor market, so long as the law of contract is respected and redress for any grievance is available (to *either* party — the employer can also be exploited). A free labor market fosters employees' psychological independence. The market "forces" them, as it were, to assume responsibility for achieving their own self-worth. Obviously, some people are more self-assertive than others; but the free market encourages the growth of self-assertiveness in all. Compulsory unionization, by contrast, is a reverse form of indentured servitude. Today, unions achieve power by government edicts suspending or modifying employer-employee contracts. The "closed shop," for example, enforces union



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**"The security of Social Security continues to depend entirely on stealing from the younger generation."** — Jacob G. Hornberger, founder and president, The Future of Freedom Foundation: April 1992 *Freedom Daily*.

**"The welfare state has been the great perpetrator and perpetuator of poverty in our century."** — Richard M. Ebeling, Ludwig von Mises Professor of Economics, Hillsdale College, Michigan, and academic vice president, The Future of Freedom Foundation: April 1992 *Freedom Daily*.

**"Governmental intervention is always dangerous. But nowhere is it more so than in the health-care industry."** — Sheldon L. Richman, senior editor, Cato Institute: April 1992 *Freedom Daily*.

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membership as a prerequisite to employment in a particular industry or company, revoking freedom of choice, not only for the employer, but for all those who cannot get union membership as well.

Normally, such a union has "achieved" higher-than-market wages for its members through its ability to restrict the employers' choice of workers. Even the more highly-paid employees lose out; their options are severely limited, since it's impossible for them to command anywhere near the same salary in any other employment. And the longer they've been in this situation, the less able they are to adapt to the changes that inevitably occur in the marketplace: witness the recent example of New York's *Daily News*, where union intransigence (plus managerial misjudgment) looks like it will permanently end its members' sinecures.

Where the law of contract prevails, unions have no privileges beyond those freely and voluntarily granted by its members. Similarly, employers are free to refuse to deal with any union. It's interesting to note that in the United States, where the legal powers establishing unions have been eroded over the past decade, as people have

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*You might ask, why did I increase May's salary so that within 12 months it had doubled? I can assure you it was certainly not out of the goodness of my heart.*

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become freer to choose they have generally chosen not to act through unions.

In Hong Kong, Western-style unions exist only in government, and as professional associations of lawyers, doctors, and so on. Private-sector unions are more like general welfare, watchdog, or mutual aid associations, having no state-granted powers of exclusion from the law of contract.

Cultural attitudes in Hong Kong impose an additional burden on the employer. Few people here will "con-

front" their boss and say, "Look, the going rate for my services according to the market is about 20% more than you are paying me. I think I deserve a pay raise." To avoid a confrontation of that kind, most employees in Hong Kong, if they feel underpaid, will sign a contract for another job and only then give notice. So the employer must also read the classifieds to be sure the wages he is paying are in line with the market — otherwise, he'll lose his employees.

In Hong Kong's free market for labor, wages are set by the impersonal forces of supply and demand. Most in the job market would report that wages are negotiated on an individual basis, between an employer and an employee. However, while this appears to be the case, the reality is different. The actual "negotiations" are taking place between competing employers, as a job-seeker considers a number of different job offers at the same time. The employer who fails to fill a vacant position has no alternative but to increase his offer to win over the potential employee, or another one.

For some people, other considerations are as important as wages, or even more important. With no government unemployment benefits or pensions, an employee can seek companies offering such benefits. Or if security is of paramount importance, an employee can seek that ultimate in job security: "work" for the government. A free market is a smorgasbord of possibilities, where government, by keeping out of the way, enables consenting adults to creatively and imaginatively achieve their potential (to the extent they desire to).

Clearly, the simple absence of minimum wage laws does not ensure jobs for all — the presence or absence of such laws in the middle of the Gobi desert would have no effect on the size, extent, or nature of the job market. Legislating the U.S. minimum wage in Bangladesh would not raise anybody's wages; it would raise the level of unemployment to somewhere between 98% and 99%.

### ... And Wages Can Fall

In any free market, prices can fall as well as rise, and that applies to the price of labor. In an inflationary envi-

ronment, wages tend to rise more slowly or not at all during a recession; where price inflation is low or non-existent, wages fall during a recession as a growing number of people compete for a declining number of jobs. This decline in jobs is inevitable as businesses lay workers off as sales slow; and some companies go bankrupt.

However, such a decline in wages leads some employers to create new,

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*It is no coincidence that countries with free labor markets have far higher rates of economic growth than the U.S. or Europe.*

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lower-paying jobs that were uneconomic at higher wage levels (as in the case of May). Such adjustments always take time, and during that time the level of unemployment will rise. In countries with a free labor market, unemployment usually peaks in the middle of the recession — at a rate that is normal during American and European booms.

An economy-wide decline in wages reduces all businesses' costs, allowing the economy to adjust much more rapidly to a recessionary environment. In countries with no minimum wage laws, as is the situation in Hong Kong and most other Asian nations, recessions start later and end earlier than in the U.S. and Europe. This is partly the result of free markets for labor, but is primarily due to the fact that low or no government intervention in the labor market goes with less government intervention overall. Asian economies are thus far more flexible, and, therefore, adjust far more rapidly to changing world circumstances than the more rigid economies of the west.

It is also no coincidence that countries with free labor markets have far higher rates of economic growth than the U.S. or Europe. Slower economic growth is the inevitable price of government intervention. Minimum wage laws are a prime example of such destructive interference. □

## Theory

# The Economics of the Emergence of Humankind

by Vernon L. Smith

Tools, investment, cost-accounting, and mass killings of non-human animals are not limited to history's great civilizations: they are a part of prehistory as well. And economics can help us understand why.

This is about who we were in prehistory, and how we were shaped by economic principles. It is an exciting story, perhaps humanity's most important story; it may even be true!

### **Life Emerged Early, *Homo* Very Late**

The Earth and our solar system are about 4.5 billion years old. Elementary life forms appeared 3.8–3.5 billion years before present (B.P.), about as early as life as we know it could have emerged. But multicellular animals are not found in the fossil record until 650 million years B.P. Those of modern form that are antecedents of humankind appear about 550 million years B.P.

In Africa, sometime between six and ten million years ago, bipedal protohumans split off from the fore-runners of today's chimpanzees and gorillas. This is indicated by the fossil record and by genetic comparisons between living people and other primates. During this period a globally cooler and drier climate shrank forests, expanding grasslands and savannas. Grassland ungulates increased in number and diversity as the cost of harvesting their food declined; the resulting economic stress on forest dwellers brought the extinction of many ape species — although at least one ape species in Africa adapted by becoming more of a ground dweller.

Bipedalism may have been an econ-

omizing response, in several ways: it made carrying food and young offspring easier; it reduced heat stress by exposing less body surface to direct sunlight; it lessened the energy requirements of locomotion; it improved creatures' ability to see over obstructions, grass and shrubs; and it freed the hands for using, carrying, and later fabricating, tools. Although bipedalism predates the earliest recorded stone tools, early humankind may have used wood, bamboo, and other perishable material for simple tools, much as chimpanzees use sticks to reach for food.

If, as grasslands expanded, our ancestral protohumans were adaptively attempting bipedalism, then mutations favoring bipedalism would have economic value. The cooler, drier trend in climate that is associated with the emergence of bipedalism accelerated from 2–2.5 million years B.P. This coincided with a rapid evolutionary change in hominids and other African mammals leading to a more carnivorous, larger-brained, and more tool-dependent lineage of *Homo* whose ex-

panding niche may explain the decline of other African carnivores. The earliest firmly documented stone tools are found at the Hadar site in Ethiopia, adjacent to the Red Sea; they are dated at 2.4–2.5 million years B.P. This and other sites show that stone tools were widely used in Southern and Eastern Africa by two million years B.P. Early tools were diverse, but the diversity appears to have been controlled by the random shape of the original blank, not by deliberate design. The combination of such stone tools with animal bone artifacts demonstrate the increased interest in meat by *H. habilis* over earlier hominids.

At the beginning of the Pleistocene, approximately 1.7–1.8 million years ago, *H. habilis* was replaced by *H. erectus*, generally thought to be the direct ancestor of *H. sapiens* and of you and me. We are still in the Pleistocene Epoch, enjoying a warming interglacial period that began about 17,000 years B.P. Within the past one million years interglaciations as warm as the one we are now experiencing have lasted only about 10,000 years whereas the periods

of glaciation have lasted more like 100,000 years. (Perhaps this will comfort those concerned with global warming.) Consequently, our ancestral development occurred under mostly glacial conditions, to which we adapted well. During these cycles of glaciation a world-wide redistribution of plants, animals, and humankind occurred.

## Exodus I

A contemporary view of the emergence of humans is the "out-of-Africa model" in which humankind first evolved in Africa and then spread throughout Eurasia; the initial wave began about one million years B.P. In Africa the displacement of *H. habilis* by *H. erectus* may be explained by an increased emphasis on tool use and by

human capital probably applies with comparable force to the last two million years of hominid development. The tool kit now includes hand axes, cleavers, and other large bifacial tools used for butchery, bone-breaking, and perhaps woodworking. It is likely that *H. erectus* could control the use of fire; the oldest evidence of its use date back 1.4 to 1.5 million years.

A longstanding puzzle is the geographical distribution of these tools in Southeast Asia. There the tools are less standardized and few hand axes appear. At one time this led to the conclusion that *H. erectus* was culturally retarded. A solution to the puzzle is now offered by the observation that the line across Southeast Asia below which one finds alleged "cultural retardation" corresponds to the distribution of naturally occurring bamboo. This area today contains over 1000 species of bamboo, which can be fabricated into knives, spears, projectile points, and traps. It would appear that *H. erectus* was not culturally degenerate in bamboo-land, but was simply substituting a lower-cost raw material for stone.

## Exodus II

Up to about 400–500,000 years B.P., most human fossils are those of *H. erectus* in Java, China and Africa. Exceptions are assigned to early *H. sapiens*, which, in Europe, suggest an anticipation of the Neanderthals. The trend was different in Africa, where *H. erectus* appears to have evolved in the direction of modern *H. sapiens*. Neanderthals — traditionally believed to be our immediate ancestors — are thought to be a Eurasian descendant of *H. erectus*. They appeared 130,000 years ago or earlier, had a brain case at least as large as that of modern people, and, judging from the skeleton and muscle-ligament markings on the bones, had exceptional physical strength. They were adapted to cold climate, and made tools of wood and stone. They cared for family members who were handicapped or incapacitated, and were the first people who practiced burial. But they disappeared about 30,000 years ago.

Although modern *H. sapiens* or Cro-Magnons were once thought to originate 40–50,000 years ago, recent claims place them as early as 90,000 years B.P. Thus, Neanderthals may have over-

lapped Cro-Magnons for over 50,000 years, and are probably not central stock but a side branch. Prior to Cro-Magnon times, body form and behavior evolved together. Subsequently, behavioral evolution accelerated within a constant bodily form. 35,000–40,000 years ago, artifact assemblages began to vary tremendously across neighboring regions, and the pace of change accelerated dramatically. Cro-Magnons fashioned bone, ivory, and antler into projectile points, awls, punches, needles, and art objects. Their stone crafts included numerous shouldered projectile points of the kind suitable for spears, arrows, and darts. Graves, houses, and fireplaces became more elaborate. Ceramic-fired clay appears about 28,000 years B.P. Eurasian Cro-Magnons hunted in savannas and grasslands, principally for mammoth, bison, reindeer, antelope and horse that provided meat, hide, and sinew, as well as bone, antler and ivory. After 20,000 years B.P. the artifacts include spear throwers, stone inserts in antlers, harpoons, leisters, eyed needles, all manner of clothing, and the bow and arrow.

In Europe, between 34,000 and 11,000 B.P., there is widespread evidence that humankind had the means of making multiple kills. The staples were reindeer, red deer, horse, ibex, and bison. Evidence of the mass slaughter of horses and reindeer suggest they were forced into cliff-enclosed canyons, or driven off "jumps." The Cro-Magnon were adept at driving or stampeding game and using pit traps.

## Super-predation and World Expansion

Modern *H. sapiens* spread from Africa through Europe and Asia in the last 50,000 years, jumped to Australia by about 35,000 years B.P., entered Alaska by 14,000 B.P., spread into the United States by 12,000 B.P., and in the next 1000 years reached the southern tip of South America. The last stages of this worldwide expansion were Madagascar and New Zealand in the last 1000 years.

A plausible hypothesis is that North America was discovered by advanced Paleolithic people who crossed the exposed Bering land bridge connecting Asia with Alaska about 14,000 years ago. Their descendants found an ex-

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*Within the past one million years periods as warm as the one we are now experiencing have lasted only about 10,000 years whereas the periods of glaciation have lasted more like 100,000 years. (Perhaps this will comfort those concerned with global warming.)*

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meat-eating. *H. erectus* was much better endowed with a locomotor skeleton, and had a larger brain and the typically human external nose. These endowments suggest improved exertion capacity and hunting and gathering skill.

The greater adaptability of *H. erectus* is demonstrated by these creatures' colonization of previously unoccupied dry regions of Africa about 1.5 million years B.P. and by their dispersal to Northern Africa and thence into colder regions such as Eurasia and China, and to Java after one million years B.P. In the African and eastward expansion paths of *H. erectus* one finds evidence of tool use which required more investment in human capital — planning, foresight, and preparation effort — than is associated with *H. habilis*. Thus the finding that most of our current growth results from investment in

posed land corridor into Montana, then spread south and east throughout the United States. As suggested by Paul Martin (Agenbroad et al. 1990), they entered a continent that was an unprecedented "home-on-the-range" for now extinct mammoth, mastodont, ground sloth, giant beaver, horse, tapir, camel, llama, stag moose, pronghorn, shrub ox, yak, dire wolf, two species of extinct bear, two species of peccary, two species of extinct deer, two species of musk ox, two subspecies of bison, a cheetah, a saber-toothed and a scimitar-toothed "tiger," and more. Many of these animals, such as the ground sloth, were slow and would have been easily hunted, or like the mammoth, mastodont and horse were large gregarious herding animals. The herding behavior of these great animals implied low search cost for hunting parties armed with stone projectile points and strategic knowledge of animal behavior. Their great size meant high value per kill. Some prey such as the extinct plains bison may have been easy to stampede into arroyos.

Since there was no property in live animals, only in harvested animals,

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*Since there was no property in live animals, only in harvested animals, there was no incentive to stay the spear in anticipation of tomorrow's reproductive value.*

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there was no incentive to stay the spear in anticipation of tomorrow's reproductive value, as there is with modern domesticated cattle. The resulting mass harvesting pressure on animals may have caused or contributed to the megafauna loss that occurred on the North American continent after 11,000 years B.P. Hunting parties left behind the fine-crafted Clovis fluted point found from Florida to Nova Scotia, in the high plains, the Southwest, across the Midwest, and in the South. That Clovis hunters killed mammoth is well-documented; it is also well known that these animals, which had been in America for over one million years, became extinct by 11,000 years B.P. Some

sites contain the bones of camel and horse, although no incontrovertible evidence exists that these animals were hunted in North America. The horse became extinct in North America only about eight to ten thousand years ago. It was reintroduced by the Spanish in the 16th century and has thriven in the wild to the present day.

Between 11,000 and 9,000 years B.P. the Clovis point was replaced by smaller points, which were used to kill the *Bison antiquus*, and *Bison Occidentalis*, both larger than the surviving bison. It appears likely that Paleoindians killed bison in masses, sometimes of several hundred animals at a time. At the Olsen-Chubbuck site in Colorado where, 8500 years B.P., 200 *B. Occidentalis* were stampeded into an arroyo five to seven feet deep, and dispatched with projectile points. Apparently, at least 50 of the animals represented a wastage kill, since their remains show no evidence of butchery for consumption. Dozens of such kill-butcher sites are found in Colorado, Wyoming, Montana and Nebraska. Many are stampede jumps or traps with several thousand years of use. But the bison endures in the form of the smaller plains bison. It is possible that it survived by dwarfing, an adaptive response to the greater vulnerability of the larger subspecies to predation. In any case, by historical times the enormous carrying capacity of the land from Alberta to Texas supported far fewer species than before, but among them were perhaps 60 million bison.

Martin has summarized the evidence for the worldwide extinction of late Pleistocene megafauna. In Africa and Asia 15-20 percent of the genera disappeared from 80-60,000 B.P.; in Australia, 94 percent were lost from 40-15,000 B.P.; North and South America experienced a 70-80 percent loss in the last 15,000 years. This worldwide pattern correlates suspiciously well with the chronology of human colonization, leading to Martin's hypothesis that extinction was directly or indirectly caused by "overkill" conducted by exceptionally competent hunter cultures. This explains the light extinctions in Africa and Asia, where modern humankind "grew up"; this allowed gradual adaptation to humankind's accumulating proficiency as a super-

predator. It also explains the abrupt, massive losses in Australia and the Americas — the only continents that were colonized suddenly by advanced stone-age humans (Martin 1984).

But the control cases for this "experiment" are the large oceanic islands, Madagascar and New Zealand. Both were colonized roughly 1000 years B.P., and both suffered a wave of extinctions then. If extinction was due to climatic change, why did Madagascar's extinct-

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*Hunting and gathering provided the first affluent society.*

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tions not coincide with those of Africa 220 miles away? Why did European and Ukrainian mammoths become extinct 13,000 years B.P., while they survived another 2000 years in North America? Previous great extinction waves had affected plants and small animals as well as large animals, but the late Pleistocene extinctions were concentrated in the large gregarious herding, or slow-moving, animals — ideal prey for human hunters. Such large genera are also slower growing animals, have longer gestation periods, require longer periods of maternal care, and live longer than many other animals. Consequently they are more vulnerable to hunting pressure because reductions in their biomass require more time to recover.

It may seem incomprehensible that bands of men could have wiped out the great mammoth and two subspecies of bison, since modern bison and African elephants react violently when threatened. But such observations may simply tell us that these particular subspecies have survived because they were selected for these defensive characteristics. We know nothing of the behavioral properties of extinct species. While the African and Indian elephants are both members of the same genus, their fossil similarities fail to inform us that the Indian elephant is docile and easily trained for circus display, while the African elephant is much too unruly for this occupation. No one has successfully domesticated

the zebra, though the horse has been domesticated since ancient times.

## Interpretations and Hypotheses

1) *Hunting and gathering provided the technology and institutions for the first affluent society.* One of the great myths of modern humankind is the belief that life in the Paleolithic was intolerably harsh, or as presumed by Hobbes, "solitary,

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*The aboriginal practice of awarding more wives to the most successful hunters would have favored the genetic selection of these traits.*

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poor, nasty, brutish and short." It may have been none of these. What is more likely is that hunting and gathering provided the first affluent society, sustaining and promoting humankind for almost all of their 2.5 million years of existence. The Hobbesian belief obscures the striking continuity in the ability of prehistoric humans to adapt to changes in their environment by substituting new types of capital, labor and knowledge for old, and by fabricating new products when effort prices were altered by the environment or by new learning. Malnutrition, starvation and chronic diseases have been rare or infrequent among the hunting and fishing peoples of the world. Studies of the African !Kung bushmen show that these people worked only 12-19 hours per week, that their hunting and gathering scored well on several measures of nutritional adequacy, and that their labor bought much leisure in the form of resting, visiting, entertaining, and trance dancing. Similarly, the African Hazda hunters worked no more than two hours per day, with plenty of time left for gambling and other social activities.

2) *Opportunity cost conditioned the cultural and economic development of the human race.* This principle was articulated succinctly by the !Kung bushman who was asked by an anthropologist why he had not turned to agriculture as his neighbors had done. His reply: "Why should we plant when there are so many mongongo nuts in the

world?" Why indeed, unless tastes and opportunity cost combine to demand it? The great migrations out of Africa, the invention of weapons for big game hunting, Eskimo adaptation to hunting sea mammals, humankind's eventual turn to agriculture: these can all be interpreted as responses to changes in opportunity costs, whether driven by environmental changes, by human learning, or by both.

A telling example of the influence of effort prices on prehistoric human choice is found in R. S. Lee's 1968 study of 58 of the world's extant hunter-gather societies. He shows a strong correlation between a society's distance from the equator and the importance of hunting over gathering in its diet. In the Arctic, hunting of land and sea mammals predominated, while in temperate latitudes up to 39 degrees from the equator, gathering was much the more important economic activity.

Economic models of human development are often held suspect because they appear not to account for the richness of culture. But culture can be interpreted as providing a system for transmitting information useful in responding to opportunity costs. Hunter cultures use elaborate ceremony to enhance recognition of the significance of the chase and its technology — to form in the young an indelible impression of the hunt, and to transmit human capital from one generation to the next. The magnificent Cro-Magnon art preserved on the walls deep in the narrow crawl spaces of French and Spanish caves have been interpreted as a means of "piling special effect on special effect in an effort to ensure the preservation and transmission of the tribal encyclopedia" (Pfeiffer 1982, p. 132).

Another example of the hidden economic function of culture is the magical practice of the Naskapi Indians of Labrador, who, when the caribou were scarce and the tribe hungry, resorted to scapulimancy, a divination in which the shoulder blade bone of a caribou was heated by fire until it cracked. As cracks appeared they were interpreted by a diviner as caribou trails, one of which the hunter should follow if he was to be successful. All this is commonly interpreted as showing the capacity of the Naskapi for belief in magic. But is scapulimancy functional?

It sharpens the hunter's concentration and impresses the need for dedication. It also causes the hunter to choose a random hunting route, steering him away from previously successful ones, thus preventing the caribou from being sensitized to regularities in hunter behavior. This is precisely the argument for using mixed strategies in certain games of conflict. The Naskapi discovered that reading shoulder blades had survival value. "People are capable of formulating any number of strange ideas, not necessarily directed towards any particular end, but if they do have a practical application and are successful, they may persist. And if they persist long enough people will begin to believe in them" (Reader 1988, p. 139). They will also be incorporated into educational rituals so that the tribal learning is not lost to each new generation.

3) *Prehistoric H. sapiens accumulated crucially important human capital.* Economic success in hunting and gathering required an endowment of human capital normally associated only with the agricultural and industrial revolutions: learning, knowledge transfer, skill and design in tool fabrication, and social organization. The aboriginal use of fire for game and plant management demonstrates that prehistoric humans possessed intricate knowledge of the phenology of trees, shrubs, and herbs; they used fire to enhance the growth and flowering of food plants and to discourage the growth of competitors. Effective game and wild plant management required people to know where, when, and how to burn. Aborigines knew that the growing season for wild plants can be advanced by spring burns designed to warm the earth, that in dry weather fires should be ignited at the top of hills to prevent wildfires but in damp conditions should be set in depressions to avoid extinguishment, that the burning of underbrush aided the production of acorns and attract moose, deer, and other animals that feed on the tender new shoots that follow a burn. It also prevented buildup of kindling and forest fires. How sad that this knowledge was unavailable for the management of Yellowstone Park in the half-century preceding the holocaust of 1988.

The life of a hunter-gatherer de-



mands skill, technology, a division of labor, knowledge of plant and animal behavior, climate, seasons, and winds, the habit of close observation, inventiveness, problem solving, risk bearing, and high motivation. These demands would have been selective in human-kind's cultural and biological evolution, helping to develop the human capital and genetic equipment needed to create modern civilization. The aboriginal practice of awarding more wives to the most successful hunters would have favored the genetic selection of these traits.

It was as hunter-gatherers that people learned to learn. Young hunters needed to learn goal-oriented observation, to learn that ungulates often travel in an arc so that success could be increased by traversing the chord, and so on. Knowledge of animal behavior could substitute for weapon development. From knowledge of animal anatomy it was but a short step to curiosity about human anatomy, and to the first practice of medicine.

4) *Property rights are likely of ancient origin.* Although aboriginals everywhere have been observed to possess

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*Property rights precede the state. Evidence for the existence of property rights and social contracting in stateless societies is incontrovertible.*

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sophisticated property rights and trading traditions, there is no direct evidence about these matters in prehistory. But similarities between the cultural materials of late-Pleistocene and aboriginal peoples suggest that such social traditions originated at least as early as the period 40–20,000 B.P. The archeological record shows, before the first agriculture, a vast increase in property: spears, atlatis, seed-grinding stones, boiling and storage vessels, kilns, boats, houses, villages, bows and arrows, animal-drawn sledges, and domesticated wolves. New tools and techniques allowed new products of the hunt to substitute for the loss of big game. Gathering emphasized the seeds

and plants that could be eaten while on the move. Now seeds were gathered that were inedible without soaking, grinding and boiling. This upsurge in personal paraphernalia implies more sedentary, and less nomadic, hunting and gathering. Knowledge of the seasonal cycles of plants and animals, of the use of fire in resource management, of techniques of storing, drying and preserving foods, all combined to make life more sedentary.

But with the accumulation of personal property and real estate would come more complex property rights and contracting arrangements. George Dalton has summarized the economic and important political functions of the ceremonial exchanges of Northwest America and Melanesia, such as the potlatch, kula, moka, and abutu, which in substance are elaborate multilateral contracting mechanisms (Dalton 1977). The valuables exchanged bought kinship ties, military assistance, the right of refuge if homes and property had to be abandoned, and emergency help in the event of poor harvest, hunting or fishing. They bought political stability in stateless societies and a property-rights environment that facilitated specialization and ordinary exchange. Property rights precede the state.

Evidence for the existence of property rights and social contracting in stateless societies is incontrovertible. In North America, private ownership of fishing and hunting grounds, nut trees, and seed-gathering areas was common. Owning the right to fish a particular eddy or channel of a river did not depend on who owned the land along the river. The right was transferable by bequest or sale. Similarly, an individual could own sealing rights to a particular coastal rock. The Eskimos had a simple incentive-compatible rule of allocation among hunters when the prey was the dangerous polar bear: "The hunter who fixed his spear first in the bear gets the upper part. That is the finest part, for it includes the forelegs with the long mane hairs that are so much desired to border women's kamiks (boots)" (Freuchen 1973).

5) *Humankind was an intense user of the environment for self-interested ends.* Although today we associate environmental damage with the advent of industrial society and human population

growth, it is likely that prehistoric humans had a comparable if not severer impact on their environment. Humans were probably responsible for the wave of animal extinctions beginning with the "invasion" of Australia 40–30,000 years B.P. and ending with the occupation of Madagascar and New Zealand. The losses were of species that had inadequate defensive capabilities. The winnowing left the more stubbornly resistant species, able to survive all but major destructions of habitat.

A second source of ecological change induced by prehistoric peoples

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*Although today we associate environmental damage with the advent of industrial society and human population growth, it is likely that prehistoric humans had a comparable if not severer impact on their environment.*

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was their transportation of seeds in hunter-gatherer migrations throughout the world. The introduction of botanical exotics into new regions has often been noted by archaeologists who have observed the association of various plants with campsites and dwellings. Finally, human use of fire had profound ecological effects. Authors who have studied patterns of land-burning by primitive peoples have concluded that many of the great grasslands were produced by periodic burning. The disappearance of grassland areas in Northern Alberta is attributed to Canadian restrictions on traditional Indian burning.

6) *Long plateaus without change are punctuated by revolutionary leaps in biological and economic development.* There were three prehistoric revolutions in the development of mankind, before the agricultural revolution: bipedalism; the invention and development of tools, including fire; and the explosive accumulation of human capital by Cro-Magnon peoples. The Cro-Magnons produced an astonishing creative outburst — in tools, art, and hunting-

gathering techniques — beginning sometime after 40,000 B.P. This great acceleration in human capital formation and Cro-Magnon's rapid spread through the major continents set the stage for the agricultural revolution. Our ancestors gained the knowledge of animals and seeds required by the agricultural way of life. The megafauna that were the favored game of the

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*If we are a "kinder and gentler" species than were our ancestors who slaughtered the great mammoth and bison, it is because we can now afford to be.*

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chase were eliminated, thus tipping the opportunity cost balance in favor of tilling the soil.

What accounts for the sudden acceleration of human economic and cultural development of 30–10,000 B.P.? Cro-Magnon people had already been firmly established in Africa for perhaps 60,000 years and had already begun their spread throughout the world. The most likely cause is the emergence of language, which would make possible the accumulation and diffusion of knowledge on an unprecedented scale. The experience and knowledge of the elderly would be a valued source of information. This explains why older and incapacitated people were cared for, and their value recognized by proper burial and enshrined in art. In aboriginal societies the medicine man or woman was often a person handicapped from birth or crippled by injury. Kokopelli, widely commemorated by Southwestern and Mexican rock art, is depicted as a hunchbacked arthritic figure who plays a flute. With the advent of spoken language, the relative value of information to physical strength would have changed dramatically.

The affluence made possible by improvements in food acquisition methods would have provided the released time necessary to give attention to language development and to the rituals and social interaction that demand communication capacity. Big game

hunting placed new demands on planning and cooperation; memory, operated on by ritual, allowed knowledge to be preserved and accumulated. Writing, invented by 5000 years B.P., vastly accelerated the human capacity to preserve and accumulate thought. But by this time humankind's vast knowledge of seeds, eggs, and animals had already fomented the agricultural revolution, which was made all the more necessary by the disappearance of so many of the great game animals.

### The Agricultural Revolution

In the Near East, beginning about 10,000 years ago, our ancestors abandoned the hunter-gatherer way of life that had served them so well for at least 3 million years. Plant cultivation in this area also coincided closely with the domestication of sheep and goats, followed later by that of cattle and pigs. Domesticated plants first consisted of eight or nine species of local grains, but about 3000 years after grain agriculture, various fruits — olive, grape and fig — were cultivated. All these plants were domesticated forms of the wild varieties indigenous to the area. Evidence for agriculture in New Guinea, where there were no animals suitable for hunting, is dated to 9000 years ago. In North America the earliest evidence of agriculture appears in Mexico 9–10,000 years ago, but products were added slowly, one by one, over thousands of years, as if cultivation were a hobby used to supplement hunting and gathering. When Europeans arrived in the 15th and 16th centuries, there was great variability among the North American tribes in their dependence on agriculture or on hunting and gathering. In California acorns and hunting were important means of subsistence. In the Pacific Northwest salmon fishing supplemented by gathering was paramount. On the Great Plains many tribes, such as the Pawnee, Cheyenne and Arapahoe, had well-developed horticulture and pottery arts. The peaceful Pueblos of the Southwest grew cotton, corn, beans, tobacco, and squash.

The influence of opportunity costs on tribal choice of culture is well illustrated by the effect of the reintroduction of the horse to North America by the Spanish. The Spanish mustang — a

docile and easily domesticated member of the *Equus* family — was a revolutionary innovation to the Plains Indian, causing many tribes to revert to the bison hunt as a permanent way of life. The Cheyenne and Arapahoe abandoned their villages, agriculture, and pottery arts to become bison hunters.

Although Coronado and other *conquistadores* lost or abandoned horses in the 16th century, it was not until the permanent colonization of New Mexico in the first half of the 17th century that peaceful Indians, forced to tend their horses, learned horsemanship from the Spanish. During this period, horses and knowledge of them were acquired by various tribes, and by the 1650s the colonial settlements faced the formidable Apaches, on horseback. All the power of Spain in America failed to subdue them. Then out of the Rocky Mountain headwaters of the Arkansas River appeared a little-known tribe of hunter-gatherers who abandoned their homelands and took to the Plains on horseback. They became great bison hunters and by 1725 invaded the Apache lands of Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma and West Texas. Entire tribes of Apache, who had been the scourge of the Spanish, disappeared. The invading Comanches exterminated the Eastern tribes and drove the Western tribes into Arizona and New Mexico. The Comanches were the greatest warriors ever to ride the high plains and plateaus of Texas, and were without peer on horseback, with men, women and children skilled in the saddle. Their raiding parties ranged up to 1000 miles, and across the Rio Grande into Mexico; their loot sometimes consisted of hundreds of horses in a single moonlight raid. They were known for their boast that the warrior tribes permitted Spanish settlements to exist on the fringes of Comanche territory only to raise horses for them. The Spanish were never again to control West Texas, nor were the Americans able finally to control bison country until 1875 when the remnants of the Comanche tribes finally surrendered at Fort Sill, and the bison were all but exterminated and replaced by the long-horn steer. For a century and a half the history of the American West was a

*continued on page 51*

## Clarification

# There Is No Such Thing as the Environment

by William C. Dennis

But there is a *human* environment, and it ought to include wilderness *and* civilization.

There is no such thing as *the* environment. Instead, there are an infinite number of environments — one best for the liver fluke, one for goldenrod, one for the timber wolf. In ecology, these are called niches, but even this word is too much a static mental construct. The environments in which individual creatures actually live are in a continuous state of flux; to be alive is to make a continuous adjustment to these ongoing changes. Stasis is death. Thinking about environment as a *thing* is sloppy thinking, and hinders us from thinking about the relevant environment for the discussion at hand.

The only environments we humans know much about are our own environments. Talk about trees having legal standing or non-human animals having rights is nonsense. We do not know enough about the interests of trees and animals to know what their rights are, and what we do know indicates how difficult coherent thought on the matter is. When we cut down an oak, we make room for lawn grass. The self-interest of a lion is not the same as that of a gazelle. And office towers make good homes for pigeons — and peregrine falcons — if not for chickadees and shrikes. It is difficult enough to deal with conflicts among human beings; we don't even know how to talk to the animals. In thinking about environmental issues, we had better stick to the things we know something about.

### The Environment of Liberty

We actually know quite a lot about the best overall environment for

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human beings. The important point has been made simply and eloquently by the noted ecologist Paul Colinvaux:

I suggest that the work of philosophers for centuries has given us an understanding of what a desirable human niche must be. It was written down most clearly for us two hundred years ago in America by a group of literate men who thought profoundly about it, even as they fought for the right of their people to have it. We may say that a satisfying human niche is bounded by a set of unalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. (Paul Colinvaux, *Why Big Fierce Animals are Rare*, p. 232.)

In other words, the most favorable environment for human beings is the environment of liberty: limited government, secure property rights, entrepreneurial endeavor, and domestic tranquility. In the last few years, all over the world, we have seen that if people are given a chance they will choose some variation of this environment to live in. It is an environment that kings and priests and emperors and dictators and generals and their minions and dependents and intellectual apologists have long decried. But

it is an environment that has proven to be popular with the people at large. And it is a fragile environment, discovered slowly and serendipitously over time.

The environment for liberty is an ecologically sound system as well. It makes room for the great variety of human tastes, desires, and beliefs. It encourages diversity. It avoids the "putting everything in one basket" syndrome of governmental centralism. It takes advantage of the complex social orders in which humans actually live.

Consider how much of the familiar rhetoric of the ecologist sounds like that of the classical liberal. The notion of the "tragedy of the commons" more than resembles the public choice analysis of government failure. Both ecologists and libertarians know that small changes may have big effects, and understand the impossibility of changing only one thing when so many complicated and hidden linkages of events are afoot. Both recognize that resources are limited — or, in economic language, that things have prices. Both know that needs are not demands, that it is not possible to satisfy all needs at

once, and that trade-offs must be made at the margin. And both comprehend the limited power of rationality (or "wisdom of nature") resulting from the local and subjective aspects of knowledge.

When we come to consider environmental policy questions, we should seek to enhance and expand the environment of liberty and, in doing so, we should think ecologically as well. This means that the scientific, command-

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*The human animal is a highly adaptable species. It is in our nature to be manufacturers, hand-users, creating by art places to live, expanding and improving our niches in the process of building. In Darwinian terminology, we have developed a successful breeding strategy.*

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and-control, central management model of much contemporary public policy is a highly suspect way of dealing with environmental concerns.

### The Real "Speciesists"

The human animal is a highly adaptable species. It is in our nature to be manufacturers, hand-users, creating by art places to live, expanding and improving our niches in the process of building. In Darwinian terminology, we have developed a successful breeding strategy.

Some of the people who call themselves environmentalists accuse humans of being aggressors against nature. But since it is in our nature to be artificers — to create artificial worlds — the exercise of this characteristic cannot be unnatural. This cannot be aggression; it is the way we are. And we are most successful at being builders when we are good stewards of those natural resources that we find or create. Economic efficiency and good stewardship go hand-in-hand. Thus, the institutions that support free exchange are likely to be ecologically sound as well.

These same accusers often claim that those who hold views like mine are engaging in "speciesism": favoring one species (in this case, *Homo sapiens*) at the expense of all others. But this is a misleading charge. Given the land mass of the world and whatever combination of available water, carbon dioxide, and temperatures may exist, evolutionary theory states that at any one time the biomass of the planet, though in continual dynamic change, approaches the theoretical maximum. Life forms will tend to exploit all available niches until they are full.

This means that as human beings, together with their wild and domestic allies — hybrid wheat, dairy cows, red-wing blackbirds, sheep, cats, cotton weevils, Russian thistle, marigolds, camels, etc. — increase in number (from 5% of the world animal biomass in 1860 to 20% today), this increase must be inversely proportional to the number of species that can share a limited environment and supply of energy. By natural processes, humans and their ancillary species will grow in number and other species will have to give way — a disappointment to some, but from the standpoint of the Norway rat or the Valencia orange, a development altogether worthy of applause. The total biomass of dogs, for example, is already greater than all of their more self-sufficient relatives in the wild.

When certain environmentalists favor certain species over those allied with humans, they are failing to be species-neutral. They are the "speciesists," guilty of precisely the charge they make against the humanist view I advocate.

Despite all our highways and parking lots, humans and their artifacts only cover a small percentage of the Earth's surface. With the intricate construction of our cities, on net we may have actually enlarged the environmental space available to the planet's biota. Some writers, a few of them serious scientists, believe that the human destiny is to spread the species of planet Earth throughout the Solar System and beyond. If so, our presence here will be a boon for all the world's creatures.

Of course there are a number of very good human reasons for preserving a wide and representative variety

of organisms, but the mere reduction in species numbers owing to the expansion of the human population is not one of them. There is nothing apocalyptic about this development, or even anything particularly unusual, other than the probable accelerated rate of its occurrence as our numbers have increased. Humans have *not* been a disaster for this planet.

### Amenities and Trade-offs

A free society is likely to be a relatively rich society as well. Members of a rich, free, sophisticated modern republic generally desire peaceful neighborhoods, bustling urban centers, sports stadiums and concert halls, convenient shopping areas, individually based transportation systems, and much more as part of their environment. Outside the realm of rhetoric, there is little *real* disagreement over this; not many environmentalists are seriously reorganizing their lives to give up these goods. But those who live in such a society will probably wish to have a great variety of environmental amenities as well: golf courses, lawns, public parks, and other forms of local green space; wilderness areas; agricultural vistas; clean air and water;

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*Richer is better, richer is safer, richer is more environmentally pleasing.*

---

projects for species preservation; and other good things.

With these environmental amenities, as with all goods, there are bound to be trade-offs on the margin, disagreements over the proper mix of goods, conflicts over specific resource use, arguments over definition, and collective effects even when there is no common view or interest.

This leads to an important realization: there are few environmental public goods. Most environmental amenities affect people differentially, benefitting some and disadvantaging others in different ways and to different degrees. The preferable mix of environmental features varies considerably from person to person. Even where

agreement is substantial, actual preference often leads to disagreement.

Wilderness is a good example. Most American wilderness is found on public land (or "political land," in Terry Anderson's more apt phrase). It is primarily used by a fairly small group of relatively rich hikers and climbers and a rather larger group of nominally poor, but certainly able-bodied and employable, students. It is primarily *paid for*, not by these people, but by the already-overburdened taxpayer. In addition, other groups of potential users — lumberjacks, miners, cattle ranchers, oil producers — have more direct grievances with the wilderness advocates than those of the general public. So the average taxpayer labors a few extra minutes each year to pay for wilderness and foregone taxes on productive endeavor so that some people can have a free wilderness experience. This doesn't seem fair to me.

But the problem with the political provision of wilderness does not stop with the question of equity. Wilderness advocates are deeply divided on how to manage these lands over such questions as trails, bridges, access roads, hunting, group use, capacity limitations, wildlife management, rescues, campfires, off-trail travel, handicapped access, trail huts, and more. None of these conflicts have "correct" answers

and with each policy decision, some are harmed, others helped. Bureaucrats make decisions about public resources that wilderness users have come to consider for all practical purposes to be their own. So hardly anyone is happy and grievances accumulate about resource use. Dealing with these questions in a political way only furthers the expansion of government at the expense of liberty — ironically, in the name of promoting "the freedom of the hills."

Over time, continued conflicts of this sort weaken the forbearance, goodwill, and republican spirit upon which a free government depends. Perhaps worse, the political provision of environmental amenities allows people to avoid facing up to the ecological principle behind the notion of trade-offs, and teaches the false idea that good things can be free of cost. In my mind, the reliance on the public provision of environmental amenities, as in the case of wilderness, wastes resources, leads to contentious wrangling, satisfies few, and weakens the institutions of liberty.

### Putting Things Into Perspective

A richer, freer, more scientifically advanced world should be able to cope with environmental difficulties. As Aaron Wildavsky might say: richer is better, richer is safer, richer is more en-

vironmentally pleasing. And we know now the best framework for producing these riches: a liberal political order, with secure and transferable property rights, limited government, and freedom of action. With this formula in mind, it is not difficult to imagine how ecological issues should be approached. Create property rights in scarce resources. Turn wilderness areas over to non-political, non-politicized stewardship. Make polluters — not innocent taxpayers — pay cleanup costs. Above all else, unleash human creativity and initiative, so that new environmental problems that emerge can in turn be solved.

Once again, we are back to the environment for liberty.

The whole concept of "environment" is a construct of the human intellect. Only human beings can study the world in which they live and conceive of different and perhaps more desirable alternative futures. Even natural resources, which certainly appear to be hard reality, existed only as what geographer Erich Zimmerman called "neutral stuff" — until the genius of the human intellect saw possibilities for their use that had never been perceived before. The mind is the first and in many ways only resource — and liberty is surely the key to its highest exploitation.

In a free society, the mind need never be a resource in scarce supply. □

## Smith, "The Economics of the Emergence of Humankind," *continued from page 48*

history of fear and terror of the Comanches who, before the arrival of the mustang, were a threat to no one, picking berries, digging roots and hunting miscellaneous game in the Eastern Rockies.

### Finis

All we are today is a product of pre-history. If there is much that is new in historical time it is because we have had many millennia to accumulate the human capital made possible once our hunter-gatherer ancestors learned to learn. If we are a "kinder and gentler" species than were our ancestors who slaughtered the great mammoth and bison, if we can care enough to launch a massive effort to save three great whales trapped under the Arctic ice, if we can debate reintroducing the timber wolf into Yellowstone Park, it is be-

cause we can now afford to do all these things and have learned to treasure the value and power of individual responsibility for natural resources.

But growth has been episodic, not linear. We leaped from one plateau to another less than a half-dozen times after we escaped — so improbably — the primate origins that themselves required three billion years of sporadic change to create. Through all these sweeping changes, there is discernible the blurred, unconscious outline of continuity in humankind's development of the capacity to respond to effort prices, to create cheaper techniques and products to substitute for dearer ones, and to accumulate and preserve knowledge, our most precious capital asset. □

A different version of this article first appeared in the January 1992 issue of *Economic Inquiry*.

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## Challenge

# Why I Won't Live in Disco Bay

by R. K. Lamb

Private property, rule of law, and a culture of responsibility: these are the foundations for a free society . . . according to libertarian theory. But could the "private property" part be wrong?

Years ago, I lived in a mobile-home park in Everett, Washington. It was a "proprietary community," a down-home example of the theory advocated by many libertarians. A private developer had built it. He owned the land, and he set the rules.

Even the streets were private. But the speed limit was 10 m.p.h. — excruciatingly slow, I thought. As a mere resident, I had no vote in the matter. He also banned children. If a couple had a baby, they had to move out within a year.

When I decided to sell the mobile home, I found that there was one real-estate agent: the park manager. Legally he could not enforce his monopoly, though he would have if the law allowed it. In practice, he insisted on a 7% commission, and got it.

He also objected to plants. The entrance to our front door was a tunnel under a broadleaf lilac tree and a vine maple. "These'll have to go," he said with obvious distaste. He'd come around with his backhoe and rip the trees out himself, and bill me a hundred bucks. I had nothing to say about it. He was being lenient: he could have ordered me to dig up the trees any time.

The manager's mobile home had no trees — just a flat lawn and three trimmed camellias shoved up against the side of his tin house. Well, he was the manager, and he set the esthetic standards in his park. Plastic ducks

and ceramic leprechauns were okay, but not vine maples. Too disorderly.

It was a relief to get back to the public streets. Nobody told me what to plant, or dig up. For a couple of lazy years, I harvested the back lawn with a Weed Eater once a year, when the grass dried out and got to be a fire hazard. In the mobile-home park they would've sent a boy to do it and billed me at the end of the month.

In the city where I live now they don't have mobile-home parks, but across the harbor is a proprietary community called Disco Bay, which is reachable only by motor launch. In Disco Bay, the only vehicles you're allowed to have are golf carts. The development company has a monopoly on the sale of these carts — and behaves just the same way theaters do when they set the prices on popcorn. The developer also has a monopoly on the ferry service. Every time it raises the fares the newspapers in town are full of complaints. Residents have staged demonstrations — though at Disco Bay itself, I believe they have no legal right to do so. It's all private property.

Libertarians are all in favor of private property, and a (near?) absolute right of the owner to set the rules. Libertarians are also in favor of such things as freedom of speech, of assembly, demonstrations and picketing, etc. But in a libertarian society, in what *place* are these to be exercised? Where do you see them now: on public streets? or in proprietary shopping malls?

Workplaces are also proprietary communities. Libertarians would be up in arms against any proposal for mandatory urine tests of, say, state university professors. But if a privately owned lumber company ordered drug tests at every one of its sawmills, what then? It's not a hypothetical case. Some companies now insist on testing for nicotine, in an effort to cut down on their health-care costs. This is private sector — if you don't like it, quit and work somewhere else. Completely libertarian.

You want all education to be private? So the private schools say: "Any student who comes here has to have

*continued on page 54*



## Fiction

# The Optimal Number of Criminals

*by J. Orlin Grabbe*

Johnny Latham was the sheriff of Mad Dog, Texas. Johnny had a problem. The boys over at the mayor's office provided him with an allowance according to the number of bona fide criminals he arrested. With this allowance he paid his expenses and kept whatever was left as salary. The way the mayor saw it, if there weren't any criminals, there was no sense in wasting money on law enforcement.

Johnny was sitting on the courthouse steps sunning himself. He rubbed the stubble on his chin, pushed back his hat, and reflected. If you just leave it be, the criminal element breeds like flies. Pretty soon there would be thieves, vagabonds, no-goods, and hell-raisers all over Mad Dog. Why then he could just mosey down the street and pluck 'em off the corners for a fast buck, just like taking whiskey from a Baptist.

No. The mayor wouldn't like it. Johnny knew that a crime wave would induce the mayor to cut back on the bounty per criminal. First, because the budget couldn't take it, and second because he would become increasingly reluctant to shell out good money to a no-good sheriff.

Then there was the matter of deputies. Hiring deputies was one way to keep the jails full. But more deputies meant more ways to split the profits. Also, as crime dried up, criminals would be more costly to apprehend.

In the course of Johnny's meditations a wandering minstrel-economist, possessed of a guitar and a merry countenance, came up the street.

"Hey there, feller, what brings you to Mad Dog?" Johnny demanded.

"I'm a wandering minstrel-economist," explained the wandering minstrel-economist.

Whereupon Johnny explained his difficult problem.

"I'll solve your problem for you," the minstrel-economist said, "but first I'll sing you a little song."

"Never mind that," said Johnny.

"What you've got is a capital resource management problem," the minstrel-economist said. He began to scribble with a pencil on the concrete steps. Johnny got  $m(k)$  dollars per criminal. This amount increased with the number of criminals,  $k$ , but at a decreasing rate, because of the mayor's reaction to the growth of crime. From  $m(k)$  he had to subtract costs per criminal,  $c(k)$ . Costs increased as the number of criminals dropped, because it became increasingly hard to find and catch them. The number of criminals caught was a function,  $f(L)$ , of the number of lawmen,  $L$ . Thus Johnny would maximize the discounted present value of the future profits per lawman:

$$\max_L \int_0^{\infty} \exp(-rt) \frac{1}{L} [m(k) - c(k)] f(L) dt.$$

Johnny looked at the equation in admiration.

"Now, for the next part, think of a fishery," the minstrel-economist said.

"A fishery?"

"Sure. Just think of Mad Dog as a holding tank for potential criminals.

"Now in a fishery," the minstrel-economist continued, "if the number of fish gets too large for the environment, the fish eat all the food and die out. On the other hand, if the number gets too small, well, your cost of catching them goes up. So we have to figure out just the right fishing rate to keep things as lucrative as possible."

Ain't that the truth, Johnny thought to himself. He had always figured that organized crime and organized crime-fighting were two parts of the same dynamic feedback process, but he had never seen it spelled out quite so clearly before.

Since crime breeds crime, the growth of criminals,  $g(k)$ , was a function of the number of criminals. They figured that

the environmental carrying-capacity for criminals in Mad Dog was  $N$ , since that was the population. As the number of criminals  $k$  approached  $N$ , the growth in crime would slow, since no-goods would squabble among themselves and thieves would find fewer things to rip off. So Johnny's state equation looked like this:

$$k = g(k) \left[ 1 - \frac{k}{N} \right] - f(L)$$

The minstrel-economist scribbled some more, eventually writing down optimal control and response equations. "Note," the minstrel-economist said, "that in equilibrium the discount rate  $r$  equals the marginal productivity of criminals, adjusted by a second term. The second term represents the marginal change in profit from an additional criminal, expressed as a percentage of the current-value shadow price of

criminals."

"You got me there," Johnny said.

The minstrel-economist then proceeded to integrate the equations to obtain the optimal number of lawmen and the optimal number of criminals as a function of time, which, Johnny explained, only flowed six days a week in Mad Dog, because everyone liked to take Sundays off.

"I'll be darned," Johnny said with a sense of satisfaction. He was still looking at the figures when the wandering minstrel-economist disappeared into the sunset. This was no small feat, as it was only two o'clock in the afternoon.

Back in the office Johnny unlocked the cash box, took out a roll of bills, and stuffed them in his pocket. He went out and climbed into his Ranchero pickup. He headed down Main Street towards the local café.

He was ready to hire himself some deputies. □

## Lamb, "Why I Won't Live in Disco Bay," continued from page 52

his urine tested once a week." As a parent, I might like that a lot.

The fellow from Stanford University, caterwauling in the July 1991 *Liberty* that he'd been fired, doesn't seem to get this. He'd publicly proclaimed that illegal drugs (MDA) were swell, and he was recommending them to his students; he had taunted the federal drug czar personally; and in effect, he had dared the university to fire him. So it did.

What does this guy expect? By proprietary-community rules, Stanford can set any standard it wants. In a libertarian society it could insist on the right to search any lecturer's backpack — or his toilet bowl — as a condition for employment. In a private-property world, Stanford is just another private employer — and wouldn't your employer fire you if you went around telling clients to eat illegal drugs? Mine would. In a private-property world, any *employee* who insists on "academic freedom" against the management can damn well find another university to work for — or start his own. Only the university — the property owner —

has academic freedom.

Libertarians are quick to denounce public-sector officials, but if it's a for-profit corporation squeezing them, they accept it. I know a guy who's dead-set against government ID cards in his wallet, but spends more than 40

*What do you want? A world where you can do mostly as you like? Or one in which today's public property is carved up into islands of private property, and the landlords have an unlimited right to set the rules? You'll get more rules, not fewer.*

hours a week with a Boeing photo-ID pinned to his shirt. I know another who'd never tolerate the government forbidding him to write, but has agreed as a condition of employment not to write articles like this one.

So what do you want more: A world where you can do mostly as you like? Or one in which today's public property is carved up into islands of private property, and the landlords have an unlimited right to set the rules? You'll get more rules, not fewer. The process won't be democratic. I didn't have any leverage against that mobile-park manager. My friend in Disco Bay is waiting months for his overpriced golf cart.

And if you *are* willing to live with that kind of control imposed by a businessman, what should be the political limits, if any, on the rules he imposes? Conversely, shouldn't the city council be able to impose more rules on public property than it does now? Why is it that in a mobile-home park I have no right to grow a vine maple, but in the publicly owned New York subway, bums have a right to camp out in the corridors, harass the customers and piss against the walls? No private owner would allow that.

You figure it out. Meanwhile, I'm not moving to Disco Bay — or New York. □

### Errata

In the March 1992 issue we inaccurately referred to the late Mr Warren Brookes as "Warren Brooks."

We apologize for this error.

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# Reviews

*The Impossible H.L. Mencken*, Marion Elizabeth Rodgers, ed. Anchor Books, 1991, 707+lx pp., \$15.00.

## H. L. Mencken: Libertarian or Conservative?

R. W. Bradford

Was H. L. Mencken a libertarian or a conservative?

Many libertarians and conservatives claim him as a member of their respective tribe, and it is easy to see why. In a literary career that spanned 50 years and 5 million words (his estimate), it should not be surprising that Mencken would have written passages that would warm the hearts of both groups. Conservatives take pleasure in his suggestion that habitual criminals be executed, libertarians in his rousing defense of first amendment rights. Both can delight in his brilliant attacks on the modern "liberal" state. Libertarians take heart from Mencken's occasional self-description as a "libertarian," conservatives from his self-description as a "reactionary or Tory."

As I read *The Impossible H. L. Mencken: A Selection of His Best Newspaper Stories*, I added to my store of evidence that the correct answer to the question of whether Mencken was a libertarian or conservative is a simple "No."

Throughout his career, Mencken took positions that were anathema to both conservatives and libertarians. Before I will be convinced that Mencken was a libertarian in the sense in which the term is commonly used today, someone will have to explain to me how Mencken's campaign for a municipally owned water system in Baltimore

in 1912 is consonant with libertarian theory. Someone will have to explain away his sorrow in 1948 that the Federal Communications Commission doesn't prohibit ownership of television stations by newspapers, and this praise for tax-supported radio, penned in 1931:

The B.B.C. [British Broadcasting Corporation] is a Government agency, and is supported by a small annual tax on radio outfits. It sends nothing shabby, cheap or vulgar onto the air. There is no bad music by bad performers; there is no pestilence of oratory by ignoramuses; there is no sordid tout-ing of tooth-pastes, automobile oils, soaps, breakfast foods, soft drinks and patent medicines. In America, of course, the radio program costs nothing. But it is worth precisely the same. (pp. 50-1)

And this 1931 observation:

For it is an absurdity to call a country civilized in which a decent and industrious man, laboriously mastering a

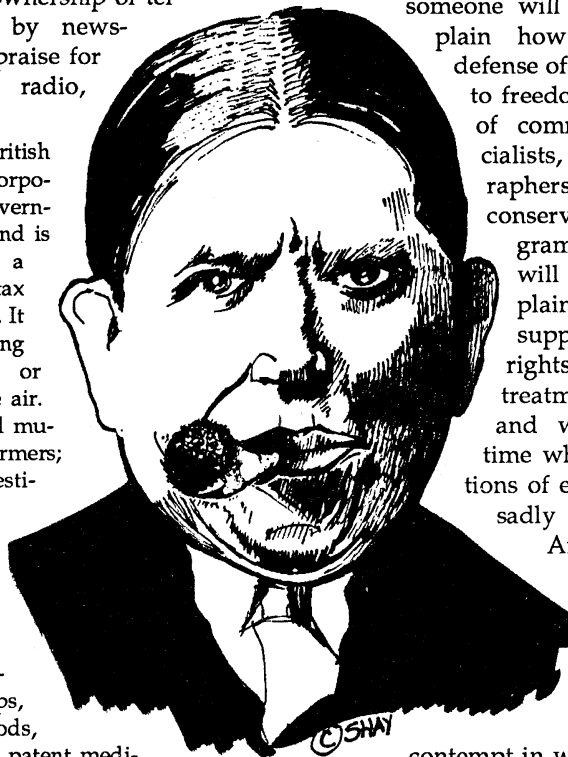
trade which is valuable and necessary to the common weal, has no assurance that it will sustain him while he stands ready to practice it, or keep him out of the poorhouse when illness or age makes him idle.

At the moment, of course, there is no time to discuss these things at length. The pressing business is to relieve actual suffering . . . the immediate problem is simply that of getting enough [money] away from those who have more than they need to succor those who have nothing. (211-2)

There's also lots in *The Impossible H.L. Mencken* that contradicts the claim that Mencken was a conservative. To convince me of his conservatism,

someone will have to explain how Mencken's defense of the the right to freedom of speech of communists, socialists, and pornographers fits into the conservative program. Someone will have to explain away his support of equal rights and equal treatment of blacks and women at a time when such notions of equality were sadly wanting in American public life. In particular, someone will have to explain away the contempt in which he held religion, and his advocacy of such "radical" notions as evolution.\*

In philosophy, Mencken inclined toward skepticism. Whenever he encountered a systematic philosophy or ideology, he expended considerable energy criticizing it. Further, he was in-



clined to characterize the bases of his own thinking as simple prejudices that he had held since childhood. Hence Stephen Cox's claim that Mencken "offered not a coherent ideology but a gift of individual style, insight, and culture."<sup>†</sup> Though Mencken himself would probably agree with Cox's view, I remain unconvinced.

Mencken had a coherent ideology, even though he was inclined to deny it and it does not fit neatly into any contemporary ideological box. Because he was an extremely critical thinker, he preferred not to think in terms of broad first principles. But that does not mean that his thinking lacked a coherent basis.

His political thought was what we would today call classical liberalism, modified by Darwinian and (curiously) Nietzschean influences. He advocated a coherent view of what government ought to do: it should defend people in the use of their own property and provide for the common welfare regarding what today would be called "public-goods" issues and in certain emergency situations. Although the range of government activities he advocated was not much by today's standards, it was far wider than most libertarians would gladly tolerate. This political philosophy is not very pleasing to those libertarians or those conservatives who claim him as one of their own. But it is consistent with virtually all of his policy recommendations and comments on political issues, including those that convince libertarians and conservatives that he is one of them as well as those that convince me that he is one of neither.

## The Joy of Mencken

The publication of an anthology subtitled *A Selection of His Best Newspaper Stories* sounded like wonderful news to me. I have enjoyed reading Mencken since I was a teenager, and over the years I have read virtually all

of his writing that is easily available and much that is not. In the former category are his books and the collections of his magazine writing that remain in print or are available at libraries; in the latter category are his very substantial contributions to *The American Mercury* (1924-1933).

But until the publication of *The Impossible H. L. Mencken*, his very considerable writing for the daily press was

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*Although the range of government activities Mencken advocated was not much by today's standards, it was far wider than most libertarians would gladly tolerate.*

---

mostly beyond my grasp. Aside from a few pieces included in anthologies, I had to be satisfied with brief quotations that have appeared in various critical essays and biographies. The bulk of his newspaper writing was done for the Baltimore Sunpapers, which have never been available in libraries where I have lived.

Furthermore, Marion Elizabeth Rodgers, who put together the volume, had already demonstrated very considerable talent in her edition of the letters between Mencken and his wife, Sara Haardt. And the book was big: more than 700 oversized pages. I salivated for it as a Catholic schoolboy lusts for his first candy after Lent.

When I first leafed through *Impossible*, I was disappointed. A lot of it was easily available in other anthologies. Here is "The Sahara of the Bozart," Mencken's evaluation of the culture of the American South and certainly his most widely anthologized essay. Here is Mencken's memorable translation of the Declaration of Independence into American, which is also found in *The*

*American Language* and *A Mencken Chrestomathy*. Here is "A Neglected Anniversary," his totally fictitious "history" of the bathtub, anthologized in the *Chrestomathy* and rechristened as the title essay of *The Bathtub Hoax*. And "A Gang of Pecksniffs," the title essay of another anthology of Mencken's writing, and "A Carnival of Buncombe," the title essay of yet another Mencken anthology. Here also are his portraits of Coolidge and of Aimée Semple McPherson (both in *Chrestomathy*) and of Valentino (in *Prejudices* and *Chrestomathy*). Plus several selections from his writing on presidential races, previously anthologized in *The Carnival of Buncombe*. And on and on. All wonderful stuff, but why bother to anthologize such easily available material?

Nevertheless, I heaved *Impossible* into my baggage when I left for Hawaii last month. While other *haoles* sat burning on the beach enraptured in the latest Danielle Steele or Robert Ludlum, I would read Mencken. Surely I would find *something* that was new to me.

And I did. There was lots and lots of new Mencken. Mencken on radio, on the history of the Sunday school, on the telephone, on the hot dog, on the automobile. Mencken on life in New York City, bald heads, San Francisco, the comics, Cuba, traffic jams, Israel, the American countryside, domestic life, the 1904, 1940, and 1948 presidential elections (missed in *The Carnival of Buncombe*).

The collection sparkles. It dazzles. It amuses. It provokes. It angers. Mencken is so lucid, so full of life and joy that reviews of his books usually consist almost entirely of long quotations from the book under review. Try as I may, I am unable to resist this temptation.

Here we have Mencken the reporter, describing a Ku Klux Klan rally:

In the klieg lights and other dignitaries, of course, this new voluptuousness went to great lengths. Some were clad in billowy gowns of sea-green satin, with turbans on their heads set with synthetic rubies. Others were swathed in yellow, red and blue. They were, in the main, men of girth and so there was plenty of room for showing off their finery. One imperial profligate rode upon a coal black charger, and had a slave to lead his mount by the bridle. His uniform was

\* Mencken's politics are sometimes mischaracterized in even more bizarre ways. In 1934, Elizabeth Dilling, in her classically paranoid *The Red Network* (p. 306), identified him as a radical leftist. When questioned about her accusation, Mencken responded, "I was hoping this wouldn't get out, but now that Mrs Dilling's researches have exposed me, I might as well confess. I have been receiving \$100,000 a year from Moscow since 1920, and for the past several years have been printing inflammatory propaganda in the papers . . . Woof! Woof!" (*Disturber of the Peace*, by William Manchester, 1961, p. 310)

† "Albert Jay Nock: Prophet of Libertarianism?" *Liberty*, March 1992.

a mass of glittering gems, the love-offering, no doubt, of his lieges sweating on foot behind him. He acknowledged the huzzahs of the rabble with graceful sweeps of the left hand. A regal fellow, and much happier in patriotic work, you may be sure, than he ever was in the lime and cement business. (60)

Mencken reports from Dayton, Tennessee, on the famous trial of John Scopes, who was accused of teaching evolution in violation of state law:

To call a man a doubter in these parts is equal to accusing him of cannibalism. Even the infidel Scopes himself is not charged with any such infamy. What they say of him, at worst, is that he permitted himself to be used as a cat's paw by scoundrels eager to destroy the anti-evolution law for their own dark and hellish ends. There is, it appears, a conspiracy of scientists afoot. Their purpose is to break down religion, propagate immorality, and so reduce mankind to the level of the brutes. They are the sworn and sinister agents of Beelzebub, who yearns to conquer the world, and has his eye especially upon Tennessee. . . . (573)

The 50 pages of Mencken's reports on the Scopes trial is worth the \$15 cover price of the book by itself.

We also see a bit of Mencken the prophet. It took a half century for Mencken's prediction about federal insurance of bank deposits to come true:

The Federal insurance scheme has worked up to now simply and solely because there have been very few bank failures. The next time we have a pestilence of them it will come to grief quickly enough, and if the good banks escape ruin along with the bad ones it will be only because the taxpayer foots the bill. (208)

We even see Mencken in a reflective mode:

A home is not a mere transient shelter: its essence lies in its permanence, in its capacity for accretion and solidification, in its quality of representing, in all its details, the personalities of the people who live in it. In the course of years it becomes a sort of museum of those people; they give it its indefinable air, separating it from all other homes, as one human face is separated from all others. It is at once a refuge from the world, a treasure-house, a castle, and the shrine of a whole

hierarchy of peculiarly private and potent gods. (126-7)

In all, *The Impossible H.L. Mencken* includes 685 pages of Mencken's newspaper writing, plus a foreword by Gore Vidal, an introduction by Marion Elizabeth Rodgers, and an index. Rodgers offers a brief biography that serves as a useful introduction to Mencken's writing. About Vidal's Preface, one can only surmise that the publisher figured it might sell books, though why Vidal would be thought helpful to sales of Mencken only God knows. On the very first page, Vidal makes an egregious error of fact: "From 1906 to 1948, [Mencken] was connected with the Baltimore

*Sun*, as a columnist, feature writer, editor." In actual fact, for twelve of these 42 years (between March 1915 and February 1920, and again from February 1941 until sometime in 1948), Mencken wrote virtually nothing for the *Sun*, because of his disagreement with the *Sun* over matters of World Wars I and II and Franklin Roosevelt. But who, faced with the opportunity to read Mencken, would want to take the time to read Vidal?

The rest of the book recovers some of Mencken's best — and hitherto least accessible — writing. It's an excellent *hors d'oeuvre* for the uninitiated and a satisfying entrée for the longtime enthusiast. □

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*Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, by Richard Rorty. Cambridge University Press, 1989, 208 pp., \$37.50 hc, \$11.95 sc.

# Irony, Cruelty, and Liberty

Daniel B. Klein

Most libertarians show essentialist or foundationalist turns of mind — “there is an absolute truth and an absolute right out there, and I’m putting my chips on libertarianism.” Some theorists, notably Rand and Rothbard, would have us believe that “natural rights” or “self-ownership” or “consent” are essential, eternal moral Truths that they have discovered. There are profound problems with this approach, however, and those enmired in it might consider thinking *without* absolutes, essences, and foundations.

Libertarians seeking to unload the philosophical dead weight might do well to consider pragmatism. The chief articulator of pragmatism in America today is Richard Rorty, whose most recent volume, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, expresses the pragmatist view of selfhood and political belief and relates these matters to the broader goal of avoiding cruelty.

## The Pragmatist View of Selfhood

The pragmatist advises giving up the idea of a “real” or “permanent” or “essential” you. The way you have come to describe yourself is the product of blind contingencies — what family, neighborhood, tribe, or nation you were born into, what friends you happened to make, what books you happened to read, what schools you happened to attend, what jobs you happened to get. These contingencies affect the doings of the physical you — and, more importantly, the way you have come to describe those doings. They also bring you in touch with different cultures, from whole nationalities down to two-person relationships,

each cohering by virtue of its own particular vocabulary. When theorizing about yourself, you snip shreds from these vocabularies and reweave them, creating something familiar yet new.

The way you describe yourself may be at great variance with how others describe you. Thorstein Veblen, for example, probably thought of himself as a revolutionary social theorist advancing the cause of humanity and equality. H.L. Mencken described Veblen as a “doctor obscurus,” a peddler of platitude, nonsense, and unconscionably bad English. Neither description, nor any other, has a privileged, metacultural status.

Selfhood is not only contingent, but changing. Over the course of your life you buy into, or create, different vocabularies to describe yourself. Some people change self-descriptions like others change automobiles. I used to describe myself as a “natural-rights libertarian”; now I describe myself as a “pragmatist libertarian.” I used to describe myself as an “Austrian economist”; now, I don’t.

The individual aware of the contingency of his own selfhood Rorty calls an “ironist” — an apt and charming term. The ironist sees no description of himself as having a privileged, metacultural status. The ironist is never very grave about himself, just as the pragmatist is never very grave about his message. The ironist doesn’t claim to have a glimpse of his Real Self in his diary, just as the pragmatist doesn’t claim to have a droplet of Truth in his working paper. The ironist has a self-description that is self-consciously contingent, is largely narrative-based, and will probably be superseded by a new self-description.

The person intent on developing a self-description that has never fit anyone else Rorty calls “the strong poet.”

The strong poet is not satisfied to wear prefabricated self-descriptions. He wants to fashion his own unique wardrobe, sewn from materials he finds in the cultures he moves in. To wear these self-crafted outfits, however, he must make clothes that fit properly. He can hardly fancy himself an innovative architect if he has never designed a structure. So to wear a new outfit, to describe himself as something new, the strong poet must *do* something new; otherwise, others will call him a loon. Nietzsche was able to think of himself as “the last philosopher” because, to his mind, he had debunked the Plato-Kant

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*The pragmatist advises giving up the idea of a “real” or “permanent” or “essential” you. The way you have come to describe yourself is the product of blind contingencies.*

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canon and laid that enterprise to rest. People who don’t think Nietzsche accomplished this call Nietzsche a loon.

In fashioning this unique wardrobe the strong poet must weave old material into new cloth — otherwise, he has no claim to newness. This entails a redescription of that which the strong poet stands in relation to; thus, for example, Nietzsche had to redescribe his predecessors in order to dress himself as the last philosopher. This process of redescription is the process of producing theory.

When a strong poet is also an ironist he faces a certain tension. As an ironist, the strong poet must fashion his wardrobe knowing all the while that there is nothing final about his description of things. He knows that his description will be superseded, that it will be the common cloth of future describers. Rorty refers to the product of ironist strong poets as “ironist theory.”

Much of Rorty’s book is devoted to exploring how ironist theorists have dealt with this knowledge that they will ultimately be superseded. Rorty exam-

*continued on page 61*



*Richard Rorty, still fellow-travelin' after all these years.*

## Utopian Passions

David Horowitz

The monuments have fallen now; the faces are changed. In the graveyards the martyrs have been rehabilitated, and everywhere the names are restored. In a revolutionary eyeblink, a bloody lifetime has passed into history.

During the climactic hours of the Communist fall, someone — Boris Yeltsin perhaps — observed that it was a pity that Marxists had not triumphed in some smaller country, because "we would not have had to kill so many people to demonstrate that utopia does not work."

What more is there to say?

Nothing, if we could be sure that this was truly the end of it. If we could really close the book on the long, sorry episode of human folly and evil that the socialist experiment has turned out to be. If we could look on this futile tale of human suffering and deprivation as a tragic detour in the march of progress, now safely left behind. But to do so would be to court yet another illusion: That the chronicle of misfortune that makes up the socialist chapter in the human epic was indeed an aberration — the result of mistaken ideas now painfully corrected, rather than passions rooted in the human heart.

In some sense, of course, the entire episode of this failed utopia can reasonably be viewed as a colossal mistake. Few doctrines have been proven so wrong as the socialist doctrine of Karl Marx. None, by the very force of its error, has been the cause of so much human misery and heartbreak. Yet this merely identifies the paradox: How could such error inherit such power? What can account — even now, after the fall — for the continuing presence of Marxist paradigms and socialist val-

ues in America's universities and in other institutions of its intellectual culture?

At least a part of the answer lies in the oft-noted affinity of Marxist ideas for much of what is held to be modern and intellectually valuable in the cultural heritage of the West. It is for this reason that, through its entire bloody history, Communism has been able to draw on the support (and count on the forbearance) of many who were not themselves members of the radical faith. Here is a cold war balance sheet of their service recently drawn:

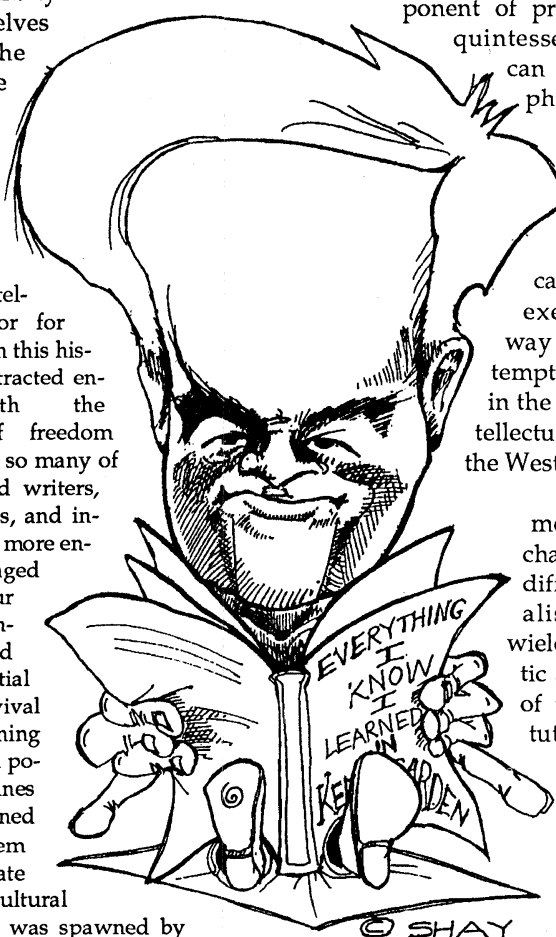
It will always be a mark of moral and intellectual dishonor for the West, that in this historic and protracted encounter with the adversaries of freedom and democracy so many of our most gifted writers, artists, scientists, and intellectuals were more energetically engaged in opposing our own political institutions and the ideas essential to their survival than in questioning either the lethal political doctrines that were designed to destroy them or the elaborate edifice of cultural mendacity that was spawned by the Communist movement for the express purpose of bringing down the democratic societies of the West. (Kramer 1991)

Now that Communism is buried, the same "progressive" voices are proclaiming that it is not "real socialism" but only a Soviet version that has died, that free-marketeers have not been vindicated by their Cold War victory, that the radical ideals of the socialist Left are not implicated by the crimes conducted in their name. Although Marxism itself is inevitably in retreat, a rainbow of parallel ideologies has emerged to take its place. The new paradigms are built on gender and race instead of class, but at their core is the same old utopian project: to create a world of perfect equality and human unity. At a moment when the wounds of whole continents lie open and bleeding in the East, in the West the utopian passion is being born again.

The extent of its progress is manifest in recent writings of the philosopher Richard Rorty, one of America's foremost academics, and the chief living exponent of pragmatism, the quintessential American philosophy. A philosophic skeptic and political liberal, Rorty's response to current radical enthusiasms exemplifies the way the totalitarian temptation still lives in the heart of the intellectual culture of the West.

Rorty's "post-modern" posture characteristically differs from liberalism past in wielding a nihilistic axe to the root of the very institutions and traditions that make liberal society possible. As a result, his liberal faith — whose sincerity is not in

doubt — comes to seem merely sentimental and thus provokes suspicions of hypocrisy from friends and enemies



alike. One of Rorty's students, New Left professor Cornel West, head of the African-American Studies Department at Princeton, puts the question to Rorty directly. How can Rorty "kick the philosophical props from under bourgeois capitalist societies and require no changes in our cultural practices?" West asks in *The American Evasion of Philosophy*. In the same book, he condemns Rorty for his "barren" philosophizing and his "fervent willingness to preserve the prevailing bourgeois way of life in North Atlantic societies. . . ."

In his reply to West, Rorty demonstrates the continuing attraction of the prophetic fantasies of the political left

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*Rorty's response to current radical enthusiasms exemplifies the way the totalitarian temptation still lives in the heart of the intellectual culture of the West.*

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for American liberals. Far from recognizing an ideologue like West as a political enemy, Rorty instead apologizes for his own ineffectuality in promoting a radical agenda: "Unless we pragmatic philosophy professors find some prophets who can serve as auxiliaries, we are not of much interest." Seeking to excuse any vigilance he might be seen to be exerting in defense of bourgeois society, Rorty explains that his concern is "largely a matter of urging that we hang on to constitutional democracy — the only institutional aspect of the 'prevailing bourgeois way of life' about which I get fervent — while patriotically striving to keep social protest alive" (Rorty 1991).

For Rorty, America's constitutional order is only an "aspect" of its existence, without organic relation to other institutions like free markets, private property, and the unpragmatically self-evident truths of a Judeo-Christian tradition. The radical assault on America's foundations is, in this view, a benign surgery, without radical consequences for the political liberty those founda-

tions have made possible. In this way, Rorty can still think of himself as an apostle of American liberalism while embracing a project that is its radical negation.

In the end, Rorty's posture is that of the classic fellow traveller — to will the ends of revolution but not the means. Starting from the premises of universal skepticism and nihilistic doubt, he concludes with hope for the victory of believers of the radical faith:

Pragmatism in the professorial sense is just a repudiation of the quest for certainty and foundations, which West has described as "the evasion of philosophy." This evasion is socially useful only if teamed up with prophecies — fairly concrete prophecies of utopian social future. (Rorty 1991)

This social utopia, Rorty had explained a year before the communist collapse, should be built on radical egalitarian foundations: "Suppose that somewhere, someday, the newly-elected government of a large industrialized society decreed that everybody would get the same income, regardless of occupation or disability. . . . That country would become an irresistible example. . . . Sooner or later the world would be changed" (Rorty 1988).

Indeed — as all the suffering of this revolutionary century attests — it would.

Rorty's wish to be "socially useful" is really a form of the religious desire that the modern temper denies, and that radical messianisms, like the Marxist faith, come forward to satisfy. This is the common aspiration that creates the popular front between the revolution and its apologetic liberal allies. For the abiding root of the revolutionary impulse lies not in the frailty of the human intellect, but in the weakness of the human heart.

For the Left, it is not socialism, but only the language of socialism that is finally dead. In the universe of post-modern relativists, there is no truth, no lesson that can be derived from this terrible experience, only competing "stories" of the past and future. To be reborn, the Left has only to rename itself in terms that do not carry the memory of insurmountable defeat, to appropriate a "narrative" in which the Leftist utopia can still propose itself as a

moral "solution."

It is a task already well under way. In a Los Angeles *Times* essay that appeared one month after the dissolution of Communism in the Soviet Union, the head of the sociology department of one of America's leading universities proposed this revised version of the socialist myth:

The grand social narrative of American life is what we might call the Drama of Democracy: a messianic, at times apocalyptic, struggle to secure a world where all people will be free, equal, independent and without want. (Alexander and Sherwood 1991).

In this way the same utopian fantasy that has filled the world with so much treachery and unhappiness in our time is being revived as a patriotic vision.

The conflict that now divides America's political culture is a familiar one. According to the radical myth, new style: "The dramatic tension (in America's social narrative) arises from the struggle to make this 'American

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*For the Left, it is not socialism, but only the language of socialism, that is finally dead. In the universe of post-modern relativists, there is no truth, no lesson that can be derived from this terrible experience, only competing "stories" of the past and future.*

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Dream' available to everyone." But contrast this with the conservatism of *The Federalist* #10, which found solace in the geographical vastness of the new republic because of the obstacles so many factions would pose to a party bent on socialist redistribution:

A rage for paper money, for an abolition of debts, for an equal division of property, or for any other improper or wicked project, will be less apt to pervade the whole body of the Union than a particular member of it, in the same proportion as such a malady is more likely to taint a particular county or district than an entire State.

In the post-Communist era, the dra-

matic tension of the American narrative differs in name from what it has been until now. But does it differ in substance? Can we not hear in these voices the same discordant agendas that have led to the tragedies of the past: the tension between democracy which is understood as limited government — the flowering of a diverse and inchoate humanity — and democracy as a total state? □

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Daniel Klein, "Irony, Cruelty, and Liberty," *continued from page 58*

ines this tension in Proust, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida, and, to a lesser extent, Hegel, Freud, Habermas, and Foucault. Rorty celebrates these theorists, and ironist theorists in general. It is a kind and noble act on Rorty's part. These poor guys want to live on, and we're the only hope they've got.

## The Pragmatist View of Political Belief

Pragmatism applied to political philosophy suggests that you abandon, if you haven't already, the search for foundations for your politics. A political philosophy, the pragmatists say, has meaning only to a community that recognizes its vocabulary. The ideologies we recognize — *New York Review of Books* liberalism, Heritage Foundation conservatism, Cato Institute libertarianism, and so on — have meaning to us by virtue of the cultures we belong to. But just as selfhood is contingent, so are these cultures. Forget the idea of there being a Political Truth, of which each political philosophy is a reflection or distortion. The interest in, language of, institutions of, and feelings expressed by each political philosophy originate and operate in culture, not God or His latter-day surrogates.

Every political community has its words beyond which justifications are not given. I say, for example, that video stores should be permitted to carry pornographic films because to do otherwise would circumscribe individual choice. If you ask, "Why should we value individual choice?" I ignore your question. The set of words beyond which the culture cannot give justification Rorty calls "the final vocabulary"

of that culture. Every culture has a final (not permanent) vocabulary.

A pragmatist sees his political comrades not as superior beings from the planet Krypton holding up the torch of Truth and Justice, but as human beings engaging in discourse amongst themselves and seeking to expand their number and might. The attitude is similar to that of an athlete: winning is good, but most of the fun lies in playing the game. Truth and Justice are no more needed for what goes on in the intellectual-political arena than they are for what goes on in Dodger Stadium.

## Cruelty

But Rorty is chiefly concerned, not with the pragmatist views of selfhood and political belief, but with "the worst thing we do," cruelty. Unfortunately, he never provides a concrete picture of cruelty, but he does make a helpful distinction. "The books which help us become less cruel," he writes, "can be roughly divided into (1) books which help us see the effects of social practices and institutions on others, and (2) those which help us see the effects of our private idiosyncrasies on others" (p. 141). Rorty deals only with the second realm of cruelty.

Both ironism and avoidance of cruelty are precious to Rorty, so not surprisingly he is concerned about the relationship between them. Do they conflict? Or are they complementary?

The ironist, Rorty explains, has his own redescription project to perfect (and keep on perfecting). Sensitivity to cruelty need not figure in at all. In fact cruelty may be the ironist theorist's goal, as it was for O'Brien in Orwell's

*Nineteen Eighty-Four*. O'Brien saw himself as the master humiliator, the one who tortured others by redescribing them and coercing them into believing his redescrptions. When O'Brien made Winston say, "Do it to Julia," he obliterated a sacred piece of Winston's selfhood. Rorty sees Orwell as an ironist writer trying to socialize us against cruelty.

Rorty portrays Nabokov as also writing against cruelty, but a subtler form of cruelty. In *Lolita* and *Pale Fire*, Rorty tells us, Nabokov shows us characters who are not O'Brien-style sadists but who are unconcerned with the painful effects their behavior may have on others. Nabokov, like Rorty, urges us to be curious about the feelings of others. As Rorty points out, the ironist can leave a lot of distress in her wake since she is redescribing things — things which will usually include people's lives. Nietzsche said that greatness flows not from the willingness to endure pain but the willingness to inflict it. Rorty asks that the ironist be curious about and indulgent in the self-descriptions of others, taking great pains not to humiliate them. He emphasizes that even if we do not share a vocabulary with a fellow human being, that person still feels pain and suffers humiliation.

Despite this possible conflict between ironist theorizing and cruelty avoidance, Rorty sees no *necessary* conflict between the two. Any sort of theorizing threatens to redescribe and, therefore, to humiliate. A curiosity about and sensitivity towards others can be (and, Rorty feels, should be) part of our notion of self, part of our enterprise of self-perfection.

Rorty offers no integrated picture of

"The point is not that plundering the rich is immoral, but that it doesn't pay, doesn't reduce but increases inequality..."

## UP from LIBERTARIANISM

by D. G. Lesvic

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maintaining a pragmatist/ironist attitude of self and community while avoiding cruelty. He invents no overarching theory capable of guaranteeing both of these. He does point out, however, that even if the two cannot be linked in theory, they can be linked in a person.

Again, Rorty's discussion of cruelty is limited to "seeing the effect of our

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*To promote the word "liberal" for the ideas of tolerance and human decency is an abuse of language. Why not just use the words tolerance and human decency?*

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private idiosyncrasies on others." Rorty's ideas here are penetrating and useful. But even in this narrower realm, I'd like to see his idea of cruelty, which clearly extends beyond the dictionary definition, made more concrete. In particular, I'd like to see a less vague discussion of "cruelty avoidance." What do we do when our actions reduce pain for some and increase pain for others? Do we weigh types of cruelty? If so, how? Is Rorty prepared to consider pain that has nothing to do with humiliation? If so, cruelty becomes quite broad. What about very indirect, unidentified pain, as when someone lets his dog crap in the middle of the sidewalk, or when a defense contractor milks the taxpayer with cost overruns? Since all of these sorts of pain are mixed together in practice, it would seem that we need to get quite beyond cruelty. Otherwise we make a shameless platitude of it.

### The "L" Word

My only serious dissatisfaction with Rorty's book is the label he uses for the belief that cruelty is bad: "liberal."

Rorty's cruelty discussion is entirely about cruelty in the realm of personal behavior. He is urging us to believe that it is bad to be cruel, that we should be kind, humane, generous, curious, sensitive, decent. I am not suggesting that he descends into bathos — he is quite effec-

tive. My dissatisfaction is with his *characterization* of his task; that is, in admonishing us to behave without cruelty he is urging us *to be liberal*. This is an audacious use of language. The term "liberal" has diverse meanings, but is most importantly saturated with a particular political meaning. To promote its usage for the ideas of tolerance and human decency is an abuse of language. Why not just use the words tolerance and human decency? With Rorty's terminology, gentlemen who write for *National Review* become liberal conservatives.

The result is a problem of sheer breadth. Suddenly a twelve-year-old boy who refrains from humiliating his peers becomes liberal, a woman who indulges her husband's notion of self becomes liberal, and a colleague who snickers at our ideas becomes illiberal. Furthermore, if cruelty goes beyond humiliation, if it means any kind of pain, a man might become illiberal for forgetting his daughter's birthday, a driver might become illiberal by making a rash maneuver on the road, a neighbor might become a liberal by maintaining a well-kept lawn.

It might be reasonable to use the term "liberal" to describe opposition to the cruelty of "social practices and institutions" — the cruelty realm that Rorty is expressly *not* concerned with — since this, at least, is a political matter. But then other problems emerge. Cruelty is an unworkable and desperately platitudinous guide for evaluating the desirability of social practices and institutions. As we move from personal conduct to social institutions the varieties and degrees of pain alluded to earlier are raised to the fourth power. What does cruelty tell us about the wisdom of the public school system, of the welfare state, of the 55 mph speed limit?

### Beyond Rorty, Towards Liberty

Rorty's use of the term "liberal" is an attempt to breathe political interest into a superb work of philosophy and literary criticism. Wanting perhaps wider attention, he succeeds only in making a platitude of "cruelty." But if pragmatism has taught us anything, it is that we should steer away from platitudes. In expressing our political credo we should strive for concreteness. This entails using a vocabulary meaningful

to others. In the words of William James, "A pragmatist . . . turns away from abstraction and insufficiency, from verbal solutions, from bad *a priori* reasons, from fixed principles, closed systems, and pretended absolutes and origins. He turns towards concreteness and adequacy, towards facts, toward action and toward power."

In the same spirit, libertarians should resist any temptation of seeing libertarianism as the valid political system of individual rights, of morality, or of justice. To outsiders such platitudes only obscure; to insiders such platitudes only self-congratulate. Libertarianism is the hope for freer markets, wider personal choice, less government intrusion, and less American military presence abroad. Libertarian intellectuals should be prepared to break down these phrases into concrete issues and to argue the virtues of libertarian positions on some of them. Anything less is just cant.

The players in the intellectual and political arenas must be able to talk is-

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*Cruelty is an unworkable and desperately platitudinous guide for evaluating the desirability of social practices and institutions. What does cruelty tell us about the wisdom of the public school system, of the welfare state, of the 55 mph speed limit?*

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suess and institutions — and this means knowing some of the stuff of the social sciences. The pundits who spin and sanctify foundational theories of natural rights are not only bores, but are a curse to the impressionable ones who pick up their way of thought. Libertarians should meet and join the intellectual institutions of our setting, carrying hunches and predispositions, not philosophical systems. They should learn to resist whatever lingering tendency they may have to use philosophy as an excuse for failing to meet the real demands of politics.

Rorty challenges us to do just this. □

*The Dance of Life: Courtship in the Animal Kingdom*, by Mark Jerome Walters. Morrow, 1989, 208 pp., \$17.95.

## Invitation to the Dance

Kyle Rothweiler

Maybe there's something wrong with me, but I can't get too excited about the wonder and mystery of the wooing and mating of birds, beasts, and bugs. They just look stupid to me, with inflated parts of themselves sticking out while they spasmodically dance — a dance of life, to be sure, but haven't those eagle-eyed nature-lovers yet noticed the essential silliness of life? Life is not evil, wicked, or vile; just cheesy, ill-made.

Once on gover'ment teevee I saw a nature show (I think it was the same program that had the bat-eating frog, one of nature's gruesome little wonders that will haunt me for the rest of my days) in which some tropical bird put on an exhibition worthy of the Fourth of July, complete with whirlings, whirlings, feather fireworks, orgiastic minuets — the works. It was not only jaw-droppingly gaudy, it was deafening. Meanwhile, the female (the exhibitionist was a male, of course — throughout the animal kingdom males are the undisputed masters of making asses of themselves) sat unmoved. She might even have dozed off.

It was hilarious and painful at the same time — even for a male of the

species *Homo sapiens* — and the only thing awe-inspiring about the episode was its mammoth vulgarity.

The strange thing about it, though, was its parallel with human courtship. It was an old tale and an instructive one to those capable of learning. Whether as a cause or an effect of my jaundiced view of zoological courtship rituals, I turn the same eye towards the similar rituals of humans — the lipstick and codpieces and bustles and spats and purple hair. Every generation guffaws at the ridiculous methods the preceding (and succeeding) generations

also deals with the mystery and wonder of intercourse itself. For example, some graphic portrayals of praying mantises mating bear the following caption: "During copulation, which takes up to half an hour, the female may tear off the male's head and eat it. Relieved of his brain and its inhibitory centers, the male will begin to mate with abandon, rocking his body with a fervor impossible while the brain is intact." This says more about the nature of the good old orgasm than anybody will care to admit.

Nerds and philosophers should find the chapter on "unconventional courting" encouraging because it deals with the weirdos and creeps of certain species and catalogs their success outside of the mainstream of the tacky mating display — for example, how Mike, one of Jane Goodall's chimps and a weakling, used technology to improve his "charging display." He didn't use credit cards, as might be expected, but three empty cans, "jingling them in front of him as he charged."

Walters even goes so far as to quote Edward O. Wilson, who says that "outcasts are the cutting edge of evolution."

That's a noble thought, but why is it that those at the cutting edge of human evolution — Beethoven, Thoreau, Nietzsche, Mencken, Rand — left no genetic traces? Evolution was fine while it lasted, but it seems to have long since been superseded among humans by a form of willed de-evolution, a willed stupidity,

and a good portion of that decadence is based on our inability or unwillingness to transcend the silly and superficial mating procedures of our animal origins. It is grotesque that human evolution hinges on the ability of females to look like Madonna and of males to flash wads of fiat currency. □



use to attract the opposite sex, and each generation does not hesitate to implement its own, equally risible ones. That the use of superficial criteria might in itself be laughable does not occur to anyone.

The present book deals with more than just mating rituals, however; it

*The Best of the Missouri Review: Fiction, 1978–1990.*  
University of Missouri, 1991, 322 pp., \$32.50, \$15.95.

## The Triumph of the Indistinguishable

Richard Kostelanetz

I have a taste for literary magazines' self-retrospectives, not only because they purportedly collect the best from what previously appeared in their pages (which I also enjoy reading) but also because such self-selections enable me to see, far better than a single issue, what a magazine is doing (and wants to be known as doing). And so I eagerly opened *The Best of the Missouri Review: Fiction, 1978–1990*, just as I have opened many books like it, only to be disappointed this time — worse, to be quickly reminded why, of all the elements in most literary magazines, fiction has become the last to grab my attention.

What's missing from this collection is stylistic distinction. Indeed, in the absence of such quality, the contributors tend to resemble one another to an appalling degree. In lieu of quoting entire stories, let me illustrate my sense of uniformity by quoting, in sequence, the opening sentence (and in a few cases, two) from most of the stories in *The Best*:

To begin, then, here is a scene in which I am the man and my friend Sarah Cole is the woman.

"I think it's the other way around," the boy said. "I think if the quake hit now the bridge would collapse and the ramps would be left."

The darkness completed itself around them, bringing the horizon to their feet.

I'm trying to sing the most popular song of the year, "The Hop," by Danny and the Juniors, as I whip the towel around my arms and legs.

Everybody who knew about it — and that was everyone in Breemsburg — told somebody else about the Ferguson place.

Is there anything in any of these sentences that would prompt you to read on? Any flash of style or perception or vision that would lead you to expect a special reading experience? Don't most of us assume that triviality of style is a sure index of triviality of content?

When it became clear that I didn't know how to do anything to make a living, in other words when it became clear that the promise of my sensibility was not a lucrative promise, Daddy kindly sent me off to Tulane to get my M.S.W., it being agreed on all hands but my own really that social work was an appropriate field for a young woman who had insisted for many years that she was interested only in the nature of experience and what it meant to be human.

"Next slide," the astronaut says. For a second the auditorium is as void and dark as space itself.

At Gardner's Labor Day Barbecue in Cos Cob, Rangold suggested, after a few gin and tonics, that we form a consortium.

My moment of truth, said Steadman, was when I told them how rich my family was, and I got in the fraternity.

Read these sentences aloud to friends and colleagues, as I have, and you will hear more guffaws than sentiments of praise. Do any of these stories get better after their initial sentences? Not as far as I can tell, though I am willing to assume, perhaps charitably, that this book's editors (and proofreaders) read them from beginnings to ends.

"Oh, Haze," Sombra said. "Aren't you excited about tomorrow? Our new dresses and the school all decorated with flowers?"

Lieberman had his eyes on his chicken salad and so at first didn't see the woman.

I think the worst coward can ignore

fear even when it sweeps over and over you like the second hand of a clock.

That autumn when the young man came, there was a deep blue sky. Vera's car was there, no others, and Burt gave thanks for that.

He is one of the boys from this school, so he wears a green military uniform and has a shaved head.

It's late in the day, time to start thinking about where to hole up for the night.

On that Saturday afternoon before the ice and while the exterminator was still roaming around her house, Jane phoned Diana Turnbridge to tell her that she was coming over, after all.

Say what you will about John Dos Passos, William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, Mark Twain, Gertrude Stein, or even Charles Bukowski and Donald Barthelme, but they have style, an instantly recognizable signature, that

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*Do any of these stories get better after their initial sentences? Not as far as I can tell, though I am willing to assume, perhaps charitably, that this book's editors (and proofreaders) read them from beginnings to ends.*

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would grab the reader's mind from their opening sentences. Defend as you might such anthologies for the social virtue of "providing opportunity," such dreary uniformity wasn't so prevalent before the age of grants and creative writing programs. If you don't believe my sense of historical decline, compare this book with *Transition Workshop* (1949), *Best Short Stories from the Paris Review* (1959), or two mass paperbacks of fiction from *Partisan Review: Stories in the Modern Manner* (1953) and *More Stories in the Modern Manner* (1954).

Need I mention that the authors of these sentences are, in sequence, Russell Banks, Amy Hempel, Bob Shacochis, Ron Carlson, Barton Wilcox, Stephanie Bobo, Wally Lamb, Kent Nelson, Alice Denham, Connie Willis, Francois Ca-



moin, Kevin McIlvoy, Raymond Carver, Kathy Miller, Michael O'Hanion, and Robb Forman Dew? The only distinguished stories in the book are by David Ohle and Naguid Mahfouz, the latter not an American but an Egyptian who won the Nobel Prize. One hears about the flood of stories invading the offices of literary magazines, about the high ratio between those offered and those accepted. However, after reading a selection like this, it is fair to ask what editorial principles (or lack of them) animate the publishers of the *Missouri Review*. They seem no more successful at selecting "the best" than the literary fellowship panels at the National Endowment for the Arts, for perhaps the same reasons.

The back-of-the-book biographical notes tell us that many of these stories were reprinted in *The Pushcart Prize*, *Best American Short Stories*, etc., creating the impression of contagious plague. No, no, no, you say to yourself; this can't be true. But it is. And just how important is this secondary approval? The back flap says of one of the book's editors, "His fiction has been mentioned in *Best American Short Stories* and in the *Pushcart Prize* anthology." Note it was not included, just "mentioned." The second curious characteristic of the biographical notes is the persistent absence of any academic affiliation. (Isn't it pretentious to pretend that most of these writers might earn their livings in more interesting ways?)

How is it, why is it, in this land of cultural freedom, that aspiring fiction writers try so hard not to be idiosyncratic but undistinguished? Why is it that the powers-that-be are so eager to reward mediocrity? Americans don't play basketball this way; we don't do business this way. Why should the fiction world be such an aberration? Why should Thomas McGuane contribute this blurb: "An important anthology from an important place. . . . *The Missouri Review* has found the heart of American fiction"? Is McGuane insidiously urging expatriation? Defection? (To where?) There are no standards anymore, only colorless individuals competing for common power and common rewards in lieu of uncommon excellence. □

*Ted Koppel's ABC interview show seems the paragon of unbiased television opinion journalism. But appearances can be deceiving.*

## The Line on "Nightline"

Eric C. Banfield

It was "live," but unreal.

On February 6, ABC-TV's Ted Koppel told the 1000 people packed into Mandel Hall at the University of Chicago that he wanted audience members to go to the microphones and get a little controversy going on the health-care issue. At 10:30 p.m. CST, *Nightline's* "Emergency! Health Care in America" started, and Ken Prazak went to a microphone. He was the first one there, but ended up standing and waiting for over two hours. It didn't take long to realize that *Nightline* had no intention of letting him speak.

Before the show, Mr Koppel had told the audience that, although it was impossible to get everyone's comments, he would go around and call on people from the five audience microphones. But once the show started, it became apparent that almost every audience speaker was not spontaneously or randomly chosen. ABC staff determined when certain people, mostly with pre-approved comments, would go up to the microphone. The staffer by Prazak's microphone repeatedly asked him to let those other audience participants speak first. He waited patiently.

For two hours ABC paraded a pathetic bunch of sob-story cases (recall the overweight diabetic), all demanding that someone else pay for their problems. Koppel occasionally "balanced" those comments with banterings from special interest groups and lame responses from token targets like insurers, doctors, lawyers, and politicians. The game was obviously rigged. The unrepresentative audience invited by ABC was heavily skewed in favor of "National Health Insurance" or "Universal Health Care." No libertarian

views would be discussed. No one wanted to consider where the money would come from. No spontaneous comments would be allowed, no new ideas permitted.

The viewing audience at home missed the highlight of the evening. During almost the last intermission, Prazak ran up to the stage and yelled, "What about the free market, Ted? What about small businesses? All you've been doing is pandering to liberal crybabies." Mr Koppel politely asked him to go to the microphone, saying he would call on him.

Surprisingly, he did, and Prazak said something to this effect: "I'm self-employed, I'm one of the uninsured, and I don't want Universal Health Care. If you want to see an example in action, look at any V.A. hospital. That's Universal Health Care — government-provided and universally hated." (Maybe those scenes from the movie *Born on the Fourth of July* made an impact; the crowd was silent.)

Prazak pointed out that he didn't want to pay for others' drug abuse, alcoholism, and in-vitro fertilization. He pointed out the mistaken premise of both liberals and conservatives: that we're in any kind of free market system now, adding that the problem is government, which has turned health and insurance into socialist systems that the rest of the world is abandoning.

The "experts" denied our system is socialist, apparently because the government doesn't actually own the businesses. They ignore, of course, that taxation, regulation, and other interventions amount to *de facto* control. After other weak challenges from the "experts," Prazak referred to the new book published by the Heartland Institute in Chicago (*Why We Spend Too Much on Health Care*) and mentioned the idea of

Individual Medical Accounts. Only light applause followed.

Maybe "Nightline" means "standing in line all night" — waiting for a door that will never open. Ken Prazak deserves congratulations for busting down that door. Why did he finally run up to the stage? In his words, because he "got the idea that the only way to get attention was to act like a jerk." But once he started talking, Ted Koppel and his audience learned that the libertarians they ignore are intelligent, articulate, and passionate. The incident might make the host even more wary of taking unplanned audience comments, however.

This edition of *Nightline* demonstrated that a debate can be held at one of the world's finest schools and still be set up to go almost all night without an intelligent comment. "Emergency! Health Care in America" was an insult to the University of Chicago, as well as all Americans.

Koppel deserves maybe one hand-clap for letting Prazak speak, but ABC gets a big thumbs-down for the farcical ceremony it calls a "town meeting." The whole event showed that *Nightline* has no intention of putting on a rational debate with diverse opinions, preferring instead to pander to the emotions of the audience and feed them pap. □

childhood in revolutionary Mexico, a book I sometimes feared no one but me had ever read.  
— R.W. Bradford

### *The Devil and Henry Kissinger*

— There are, generally speaking, two sorts of conspirary books worth reading: those that present plausible conspiracies, and those that are really funny. The first group includes volumes by fairly respectable historians and journalists, on such topics as Pearl Harbor, Watergate, Italy's P2 affair, and CIA covert actions. Into the second category go the books about NASA faking the moon shots, the Bavarian Illuminati killing Joseph McCarthy, and Freemasons controlling the Vatican.

I had no doubt from the start that 700 Club host Pat Robertson's new tome, *The New World Order* (Word Books, 1991, \$16.99), would not belong to the first group. Robertson is, after all, the man who claims *The Smurfs* is Satanic propaganda. But I had high hopes for a conspiracy rant of the second type, a laugh-a-minute piece of unintentional science fiction I could enjoy between more serious readings. But no; it's not even that. There is a decent helping of pleasant nonsense here, and even a few bursts of intelligent commentary, but for the most part, this is simply boring.

Robertson argues that "humanist-occultic" thinkers, globalist planners, international bankers, multiculturalists, New Agers, and high-level Masons are plotting a One-World Government, and that Satan is behind it all. This is not only silly, it isn't even original. Right-wing cranks have been making claims like this for years, and usually with a lot more funky pizazz. *The New World Order* has none of the inappropriate capitalizations, claims of personal persecution, or poorly reproduced letters of warning to national leaders that make a good nut book.

Not everything he says is crazy. There does exist an eminently condemnable intellectual current that calls for a decidedly statist form of globalism: "collective security" enforced by the United Nations; single currencies for Europe, the Americas, and the Pacific, with fixed exchange rates; "free" trade that amounts to centrally managed trade. And perhaps, one day, a single world government, or at least a global central bank and powerful U.N. that together amount to a *de facto* world superstate.

But to link this with the New Age

## Booknotes

*Of the Renaissance* — The individual seeking to understand the development of libertarian thinking in the middle of this century doesn't have many books to consult. George Nash's *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America* (Basic Books, 1976) and John Chamberlain's memoir *A Life in the Printed Word* (Regnery Gateway, 1982) are about the only good treatments.

Nash's book is far the more important. Although libertarian thinking has not been terribly influential on the *lumpen* conservatives, it has been enormously influential among intellectual conservatives. Between 1945 and 1975, the period about which Nash writes, libertarian and classical liberal ideas were woven into the fabric of conservatism.

That fabric began to unravel in the late 1960s, as libertarian intellectuals began to distance themselves from conservatism. There were three reasons for this: libertarian ideas had become far more popular, the issues of the time (the Vietnam War and the military draft) had radicalized many libertarians, and conservatives had recruited elements from the religious and racist right that were downright hostile to liberty.

Nash provides a first-rate intellectual history of the right for the entire period. His account of the origins of its revival ("The Revolt of the Libertarians") and of the libertarian-conservative divorce ("Things Fall Apart") are especially interesting to those seeking to understand

the history of the libertarian intellectual movement. Virtually all the important libertarian thinkers are discussed: Mises, Rand, Chodorov, Hess, Nock, both Friedmans, Rothbard, Hospers, Hayek...

If Nash is the historian of conservatism and libertarianism, Chamberlain is its chronicler. Chamberlain's memoir fills in some of the gaps in Nash's account. Chamberlain was a journalist and book reviewer. Always competent, seldom brilliant, he was in the midst of it all, adding flesh and detail to the *dramatis personae* that Nash so ably exposit. He played an important role in *The Freeman*, both when it was a libertarian fort and in its duller incarnation as the *Reader's Digest* of economic freedom, and in *National Review*, founded in 1955 and quickly becoming the center of conservative thinking.

Now there is a third book to add to that very small shelf. *The Turnabout Years* (Jameson Books, 1991, 254 pp, \$12.95) is an anthology of John Chamberlain's writing from the version of the *Freeman* published between 1950 and 1953. It is a collection of 54 short book reviews and literary essays, discussing everyone from Ayn Rand to Whittaker Chambers to H.L. Mencken to Edmund Wilson to John Dos Passos to Edna St Vincent Millay to John T. Flynn to Henry David Thoreau, almost always with insight. A special pleasure to me was his review of *A Violent Innocence*, Alice-Leone Moats' delightful memoir of her

"movement" (a misnomer: "New Age" is more a publishing category than a movement) by way of Freemasonry(!), is to enter the realm of logical ga-ga. Henry Kissinger calls for "one world"; the Ba'hai faith calls for "one world"; therefore, Henry Kissinger and the Ba'hai faith are part of a common one-worlder conspiracy. Or, more accurately: Pat Robertson does not care for Henry Kissinger; Pat Robertson does not care for the Ba'hai faith; therefore, Pat Robertson decides that both are out to get everybody. And writes a book about it. — Jesse Walker

**Terrible Slow Bore** — The cover of *Reagan's Terrible Swift Sword* (Jamestown Books, 1992, \$19.95) made it sound like it would be interesting. So I started reading it. I quickly began to wonder

when I was going to get to something interesting, or even intelligible. By the time I finished the introduction and first chapter, I had read too much already. Have you ever read a bureaucratic manual? That's Donald Devine's writing style. Yuck. —Kathleen Bradford

**The Ego and Her Own** — I am the ideal reader for send-ups and satires of Ayn Rand and Objectivism; having never succumbed to the charms of what seems like every other libertarian's favorite dogmatist, I am not in the least offended when her inflated reputation is punctured. Indeed, I rejoice. And so it was that I eagerly plunged into the pages of Mary Gaitskill's first novel, *Two Girls, Fat and Thin* (Simon & Schuster Trade, 1991, 304 pp., \$18.95), which had

been reviewed elsewhere as Ayn Rand's worst nightmare, as something that definitely *did not* "take her values seriously."

The first chapters deliver on this expectation. Justine Shade, a journalist, is interviewing followers of "Anna Granite," author of "*The Bulwark*" and "*The Gods Disdained*," and formulator of her own, individualistic philosophy, "Definitism." This is fun, but facile, and the novel quickly moves away from satire and on to its main theme: women who were sexually molested as children.

Much to my surprise, the novel is surprisingly sympathetic with its putative target. After three hundred or so pages relating the rather sordid stories of Shade and her chief subject, Dorothy Never, a fat, somewhat defensive Definitist, Shade discovers that Dorothy has handled the legacy of sexual abuse much better than she has (though she tends to feel superior, since Dorothy still defends much of Anna Granite's peculiar philosophy). The moral of the story seems to be that a cultish ideology can help a person cope with the sufferings and indignities some young people must endure. Broken egos can be repaired by a healthy dose of egoism, fragile selves strengthened by selfishness.

But Gaitskill does not moralize. She tells a story. She begins the book by quoting Vladimir Nabokov, and apparently emulates that Russian-American novelist, not Alice Rosenbaum (Ayn Rand): there are no Galt-like sermons. She is a fine writer, though not in Nabokov's league. For most readers, however, her novel pleases in ways that Nabokov's never do: it is much more straightforward, written in non-quirky language, and attentive to humdrum depths rather than the glittery surfaces and subtle ironies that the Russian-American made his stock in trade. Gaitskill elicits her reader's sympathies for her protagonists, something Nabokov occasionally toyed with, but never without a twist. *Two Girls, Fat and Thin*, for all its playfulness, is in no way avant-garde.

The biggest problem with the novel is its rather odd construction: Dorothy's story is told in the first person, Justine's in the third person. I found this confusing and pointless. Maybe I missed something, but I suspect that Ms Gaitskill was simply trying for some effect that is not yet within her powers to obtain.

— Timothy Virkkala

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## Final Words

**An Intellectual Giant** — F.A. Hayek was the most important social thinker of the 20th century. *The Constitution of Liberty* and associated writings in which Hayek developed the principles of liberty in a spontaneous order are now the point of departure for theorizing about order and liberty in modern complex societies. It is no accident that the brightest minds of the recently freed Soviet bloc states are today Hayek's most avid students. *The Fatal Conceit* — an essay he completed in his 90th year — is not only a profound meditation on the reactionary and tribalistic nature of the socialist enterprise but also establishes a framework for thinking about social evolution that is unrivalled.

There is more wisdom about modern complex societies in a single chapter of one of Hayek's major works — *The Constitution of Liberty, The Road to Serfdom, or Law, Legislation, and Liberty* — than in the complete Marxist oeuvre. It is a tragic irony of our present condition that a wrong-headed ideologue like Marx, whose false conceptions have led to millions of unnecessary deaths, unimaginable poverty, and countless wasted lives, should still be a basic intellectual text for American academics, while Hayek, who understood far better than anyone else the connection between intellectual planners and the tragedies of our times, should be all but invisible on college campuses.

Those who value liberty will take the occasion of his passing to dedicate themselves to reversing this indefensible state of affairs. —David Horowitz

**The Road to Freedom** — I was a graduate student at Columbia University when I heard another student mention a book by an author of whom I had never heard named Hayek. "*The Road to Serfdom*," he said. "Should I read it?" I asked. "No," he said, "don't read it. The guy's a fascist."

Since I was not into political philosophy at that time and was busy writing a dissertation on aesthetics, I postponed any follow-up on Hayek. I did hear how "reactionary" the book was, and wondered how anyone could say such things as were reported. But it was not until several years later that I actually

### Friedrich A. Hayek

May 8, 1899 – March 23, 1992

bought the book and sat down to read it and comment in the margins.

I came to it with a chip on my shoulder, prepared to dislike it. But the book was written so clearly and so elegantly that I read it at once from cover to cover. I was quite overwhelmed. *Why have I never heard this before?* I thought. *And why did those students at Columbia have such nasty things to say about it?*

Later when I came to know Ayn Rand, I learned from the fountainhead about the politics of envy. But by that time I was an ardent devotee. On three successive weeks Mises, Hayek, and Hazlitt gave talks in New York. Hayek was not quite pure enough for Rand, but I loved every minute of it.

I read some of his later works and I still use *The Constitution of Liberty* as one of the texts in my political philosophy course. But it is *The Road to Serfdom* that turned my head around, and from which I still quote passages, which I kick myself for not having been able to quote at the time they were written: "Once you admit that the individual is merely a means to serve the ends of the higher entity called society, most of those features of totalitarian regimes which horrify us follow of necessity."

—John Hospers

**The Revolutionary Economist** — Notwithstanding his great contributions to political philosophy, F.A. Hayek was first and foremost an economist. As an economist, his most significant and enduring contribution was to show how the success of an economy depends crucially on its ability to make productive use of the knowledge possessed by all its individual members.

Neoclassical economics long rested, and to an unfortunate degree still rests, on ridiculous assumptions about what people know. Often, the assumption is that everybody knows everything. Hayek stressed that nobody knows very much and each person knows different things. This "division of knowledge" is, for Hayek, the basic reason why central planning must fail, and only the free market can succeed in productively co-

ordinating the actions of huge numbers of individuals. Conditions as specific times and places, known only to dispersed individuals, can be given due consideration only through a free market system, where changing prices direct individual plans toward mutual compatibility. Hayek expounded these ideas in his classic 1945 article, "The Use of Knowledge in Society."

Hayek also revolutionized our understanding of the nature of competition. For neoclassical economics, the competitiveness of the market depends on its structure: basically, the number and size of firms. Knowledge of demand and cost conditions is taken as given, either directly or via fixed probability distributions, to everyone in the market. Hayek maintained that this approach obscures the essence of how markets operate. His key insight is expressed by the title of a 1968 lecture, "Competition as a Discovery Procedure." He explained that competition consists in the attempts of market participants to find out (and act upon) what demand and cost conditions really are. No simple task, in a constantly changing world.

Although only the Austrian school has accepted Hayek's economic contributions fully, mainstream economics continues to absorb and build on them. Eventually, the result will be a much deeper understanding of how markets operate and why bureaucratic planning systems cannot replace them successfully.

—Robert Higgs

**The World Beyond Economics** — I understand that the Second World War was important. I was involved briefly in it and at the time I thought it would have an imperishable effect on my life. But there was a contemporaneous event that has outweighed it and which *has* had an imperishable effect on my life: the publication of F.A. Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom*.

It was the respected conservative journalist, John Chamberlain, who brought the book to my attention. I wish that all conservatives would be as aware of the value of classical liberalism as that conservative always has been. Think of the difference it could make in the thinking of such quasi-cons as

## Notes on Contributors

George Bush! Oh, well. Hayek's thoughts will persist as inspiration and instruction for people far longer than the lipreading and lip-flapping of all the quasi-cons put together.

While not for a moment taking a back seat to anyone in admiration of Ludwig von Mises, I find myself referring to Hayek in my mind more than even Mises because I am convinced that there is a aspect of human action and of classical liberalism that must be considered along with the economic: the social aspect that Hayek illuminated as clearly as anyone so far. We need never slog along the road to serfdom if we just keep remembering what this glorious man has taught us. —Karl Hess

**How He Will Be Remembered** — Has anyone happened to comment on the *elegance* of Hayek's writing? It's not just an elegance of style (though he had that, too); it's an elegance of thought. And it's not the kind of elegance that comes merely from reducing the complex to the simple; it's the kind of elegance that comes from seeing through all the lumbering simplicities that can block one's vision of a complex but fully comprehensible world.

Consider Hayek's treatment of the problem of evil, as evil manifests itself in the modern political world. He published *The Road to Serfdom* in 1944, when many falsely elegant solutions to the problem were selling briskly in the marketplace of ideas. Evil arose (so prominent intellectuals speculated) from the inherent authoritarianism of certain nations, or from the inborn tendency of the masses to be dominated by exploiters, or from the inherently ruthless competition of nation against nation and class against class, or from the inevitably tragic fate of Man the Overreacher, ever struggling against himself.

Hayek defined the problem, in his apparently easy, commonsensical way, as a problem of "why the worst get on top." He applied to it an elegantly complex analysis of evolutionary processes in society. He saw that the modern socialist state, motivated by various more or less radical ideals of material and spiritual progress, makes promises to its citizens that it cannot even try to fulfill without employing means that frus-

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trate their own ends. As the gap widens between promise and fulfillment, honest people in the political leadership tend to disassociate themselves from their experiment, leaving it to those who are unscrupulous enough to maintain their position by force or fraud. As the state extends its power, increasingly callous practices are required of increasingly callous people. The worst get on top, and try to stay there.

Political evil is therefore intricate but not mysterious, formidable but not invincible — because, although it is the product of terrifying economic, political, national, and psychological "forces," it is not rooted ineradicably in any nation, class, or inherited psychology. It is rooted instead in certain naive ideas about the way in which progress happens, and these can be replaced by better ideas. And to Hayek, in that great book *The Road to Serfdom*, there can be no question

about the existence of "better" and "worse" ideas and conduct, just as there can be no question about the existence of a "top" and a "bottom" of society. Hayek indulges in no ornate and spurious skepticisms; he is fully at home with the language of commonsense morality; he shows that common sense is still capable of applications that are both hopeful and intellectually challenging.

What future ages will remember best about the intellectual life of the twentieth century may not be its astonishing affronts to common sense and decency. That sort of thing is never what any age willingly consents to study in its predecessors. What will recommend itself to memory will be this century's intervals of elegance and straightforward goodness, and Hayek will be remembered with them.

—Stephen Cox

# Terra Incognita

## Greenfield, California

Environmentally conscious legislation, as reported in *The Wall Street Journal*:

Under city policy, builders of new housing developments now must agree to provide "two new adult-sized bicycles free of charge." City Manager Arturo de la Cerda explains the law will help reduce air pollution and traffic congestion.

## Syracuse, New York

Advance in the war against the sexual abuse of children, as reported by *Associated Press*:

After Denise Perrigo called a volunteer help line and asked whether it was normal to be sexually aroused while breast feeding, social workers arrested her for child abuse and put her infant daughter Cherilyn in an institution.

## Ottawa

New government employment opportunities, reported by the *Milwaukee Journal*:

When Britain's Princess Diana toured a new unit at the Ottawa Heart Institute, there were no patients, so the hospital called in former patients to fill the beds.

## Romania

Innovative problem-solving in the former Communist bloc, as reported by *Reuters*:

Three Romanians sat their dead uncle on a train seat for a 300-mile journey to the family graveyard because carrying the body in a hearse would have cost 30 times more than a train ticket. The relatives doused the clothed body with cheap alcohol to conceal the smell and told the conductor of the unheated, unlit train that the uncle was drunk.

## Coeur d'Alene, Idaho

Progress in the war against vice, reported in the *Globe and Mail*:

Rose Christian has been the target of several undercover operations during the past year. Local zoning officials suspect the arthritic 70-year-old of being an Avon Lady.

## Cortez, Colorado

Entrepreneurship in action, as described by the *Associated Press*:

Gary Balfour hates to see prairie dogs killed, so he developed a vacuum system powerful enough to suck the small mammals from their burrows, and is trying to market them as pets. The idea came to him in a dream.

## Tezpur, India

The progress of anarchism in the animal kingdom, as reported in the *San Francisco Examiner*:

Several monkeys drove officials out of the Public Works Department and spent 25 minutes destroying government documents. Police were summoned but made no attempt to intervene. Monkeys are regarded as sacred by many Indians.

## Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

The criminal mind in action, as reported by the *Bethlehem Express-Times*:

A man accused of participating in a robbery was so upset by a witness' identification that he blurted out, "How can he say it was me? I had a mask on."

(Readers are invited to forward newspaper clippings or other items for publication in *Terra Incognita*.)

## Los Angeles

The pitfalls of the unregulated market, as reported by *Reuters*:

Seventeen inmates at the Peter J. Pitchess Honor Rancho Jail were injured in a riot that broke out when two inmates' negotiations of the sale of a bag of potato chips broke down.

## Vancouver, British Columbia

Cultural observation from America's kinder, gentler northern neighbor, as reported by the *North Shore News*:

"What appeals to me about art in toilets is the element of surprise," said new North Shore cultural development officer Brenda Beck.

## Berkeley, California

The perils of politically correct paint, as reported by the *Associated Press*:

"It smelled like really bad compost and body odor all mixed up together. It's like about 20 guys were in a room who hadn't taken showers for weeks." That was City Councilperson Nancy Skinner's explanation of why she had hired a contractor to tear out and replace the walls of her home after she had had them painted with all-natural, milk-based paint. "Our product is very simple," explained paint distributor Eugene Dunlap. "We don't put preservatives in it, so it has a very limited shelf life."

## Houston

Prejudice lives in the Old Confederacy, as reported by *United Press International*:

State District Judge Carl Walker, Jr. rejected a bid from 4'6" Jeffrey Leibengood, 25, to arrange a pool of short juror prospects. Leibengood is scheduled to stand trial in the shooting death of his grandfather, 5'5" Robert ("Shorty") Shofner.

Leibengood's court-appointed lawyer initially wanted 50 juror prospects, all five feet tall or less, to keep his client from being tried by "giants." But Carrigan later changed his request and asked only for a "representative number."

## New York

A new concept in cultural exchanges, reported in the *Milwaukee Journal*:

Marcello Alencar, mayor of Rio de Janeiro, came to Manhattan this week to persuade New Yorkers that his city, despite its reputation for high crime rates, is a safe place to visit. While there, his daughter-in-law, Patricia Alencar, was mugged in Bloomingdale's.

## Collinsville, Ill.

Advance in the art of law enforcement, as reported in the *Detroit News*:

Sgt. David Jung apprehended 43 speeders in two hours by posing as a farmer astride a tractor in a field near a highway here. Illinois State Police routinely send police undercover as farmers to apprehend speeders.

## New York

A new tactic in the War on Drugs, initiated by State Representative Guy J. Velella, as reported by the *34th District Report*:

Velella has introduced legislation to ban the sale of pencils that look like hypodermic syringes. Parents should join the fight against "these pencils," said Velella. "Since we have just finished another holiday season — one that is filled with plenty of gift-giving, even among children — please check with your children to ensure they did not receive any of the 'pencils' from friends."



# Stimulate Your Mind!

There is a world of good reading in **Liberty**! Whether you want to catch up on what you missed, provide intellectual relief to your friends (or enemies!), or complete your collection, now is a good time to buy. Enjoy!

## Back Issues of Liberty

### September 1988

- "Scrooge McDuck and His Creator," by Phil Salin
- "Liberty and Ecology," by John Hospers
- "The Ultimate Justification of the Private Property Ethic," by Hans-Hermann Hoppe

Plus reviews and articles by Douglas Casey, David Friedman, Karl Hess, Douglas Rasmussen, Murray Rothbard, L. Neil Smith and others; and a short story by Erika Holzer. (80 pages)

### November 1988

- "Taking Over the Roads," by John Semmens
- "The Search for *We The Living*," by R.W. Bradford
- "Private Property: Hope for the Environment," by Jane S. Shaw

Plus articles and reviews by Walter Block, Stephen Cox, John Dentinger, James Robbins and others. (80 pages)

### January 1989

- "AIDS and the FDA," by Sandy Shaw
- "Property, Population and the Environment" by John Hospers
- "Ronald Reagan's 'Revolution'," by William Niskanen

Plus articles and reviews by Karen Shabetai, Jane Shaw, Jeffrey Tucker, Leland Yeager, William Wingo and others; and a short story by Jeffrey Olson. (72 pages)

### March 1989

- "Ronald Reagan: An Autopsy," by Murray N. Rothbard
- "What if Everything We Know About Safety Is Wrong?" by John Semmens and Dianne Kresich
- "What Do You Do When Your Mother Asks You to Kill Her?" by Michael Endres

Plus articles and reviews by Stephen Cox, Jeffrey Friedman, David Ramsay Steele, Sheldon Richman and others. (72 pages)

### May 1989

- "Man, Nature, and State: Free Market Slogans are not Enough," by Karl Hess, Jr
- "A Conspiracy of Silence: Uncovering the Media's Election-Night 'Coverage' Policy," by Margaret M. Fries
- "The End of the Secular Century," by Murray N. Rothbard

Plus articles and reviews by Stephen Cox, David Gordon, Justin Raimondo, and other. (72 pages)

### July 1989

- "Viking Iceland: Anarchy That Worked," by David Friedman
- "The Myth of the Rights of Mental Patients," by Thomas S. Szasz
- "Fetal Rights: The Implications of a Supposed Ought," by Tibor Machan

Plus articles and reviews by R.W. Bradford, John Hospers, Jane S. Shaw, Jeffrey Tucker, Leland Yeager and others. (80 pages)

### September 1989

- "Holocausts and the Historians," by Ralph Raico
- "My Expulsion from the Rand Cult," by Murray Rothbard
- "Abortion Without Absurdity," by R.W. Bradford
- "Saving Yellowstone From Its Friends," by Larry Dodge
- "Libertarians and the Avant-Garde," by Richard Kostelanetz

Plus articles and reviews by David Friedman, Loren Lomasky, Gary North, Jeffrey Tucker and others; and a poem by Brett Rutherford. (72 pages)

### November 1989

- "The Lost War on Drugs," by Joseph Miranda
- "Goodbye, Galactic Empire," by J. R. Dunn
- "Life With (and Without) Ayn Rand," by Tibor R. Machan
- "Capitalism Comes to Poland?" by Krzysztof Ostaszewski
- "Fear and Loathing in New York City," by Murray N. Rothbard
- "The New Racial Orthodoxy," by William P. Moulton
- "Libertarians in Philadelphia," by Chester Alan Arthur

Plus articles and reviews by Loren Lomasky, Michael Christian, Richard Kostelanetz, R.W. Bradford and others; and an interview with Russell Means. (72 pages)

### January 1990

- "The Greenhouse Effect: Myth or Danger?" by Patrick J. Michaels
- "The Case for Paleolibertarianism," by Llewelyn Rockwell
- "How Roosevelt Soaked the Poor," by Richard Kostelanetz
- "In Defense of Jim Baker and Zsa Zsa," by Ethan O. Waters
- "The Death of Socialism: What It Means," by R.W. Bradford, Murray Rothbard, Stephen Cox, and William P. Moulton

Plus writing by Andrew Roller, David Gordon and others; and an interview with Barbara Branden. (80 pages)

### March 1990

- "The Case Against Isolationism," by Stephen Cox
  - "H.L. Mencken: Anti-Semite?" by R.W. Bradford
  - "Hong Kong Today," by R.K. Lamb
  - "Libertarian Intellectuals on Welfare," by George H. Smith
- Plus articles and reviews by Sheldon Richman, Richard Kostelanetz, John Hospers, Loren Lomasky, James Robbins, Leland Yeager, Timothy Virkkala and others. (80 pages)

### May 1990

- "Conservatism in Its Latter Days," by William P. Moulton
- "A Population Crisis?" by Jane S. Shaw
- "The Death of Thinking in the Schools," by Karl Hess
- "Bork's Law," by Leland Yeager
- "A Tribute to Edward Abbey," by Bill Kauffman
- "Killing as Therapy," by Thomas Szasz
- "We Will Bury the Environment," by R.W. Bradford

Plus articles and reviews by Richard Kostelanetz, Robert Higgs, Bart Kosko, Loren Lomasky and others. (72 pages)

### July 1990

- "Conversations with Ayn Rand (part 1)," by John Hospers
- "The Orwellian University," by Charles Thorne
- "Why Public Enemy is Number One," by Brian Doherty
- "Strange Subcultures of the Right," by John Baden
- "Smokers' Rights," by R.W. Bradford
- "If You Believe in Dentistry, Would You Mind Having Your Teeth Knocked Out?" by William P. Moulton

Plus articles and reviews by John Baden, David Friedman, Bill Kauffman, James Robbins, Mark Skousen and others. (72 pages)

### September 1990

- "Conversations with Ayn Rand (part 2)," by John Hospers
- "Is Environmental Press Coverage Biased?" by Jane S. Shaw
- "The Pro-Life Case for the Abortion Pill," by Dr Ron Paul

*continued on back cover . . .*

# Stimulate Your Mind!

## Liberty's Back Issues

continued from previous page

- "Fighting the Draft in World War II," by Jim Bristol
  - "2 Live Crew's Bum Rap," by Brian Doherty
  - "Elitism in Defense of the State is No Vice," by R.W. Bradford
- Plus articles and reviews by Michael Krauss, Greg Johnson, Ethan O. Waters, James Robbins, Richard Kostelanetz and others; and a *fiction* by Harvey Segal. (72 pages)

### November 1990

- "Smokes, But No Peacepipe," by Scott Reid
  - "You, Too, Can Be a Junior G-Man," by David Hudson
  - "Sex, Drugs, and the Goldberg Variations," by Richard Kostelanetz
  - "Why is Anyone Virtuous?" by David Friedman
- Plus articles and reviews by Robert Higgs, Leslie Fleming, Alexander Tabarrok, Sheldon Richman and others; and an interview with Ed Crane. (80 pages)

### January 1991

- "Meltdown: The End of the Soviet Empire," by David Boaz, James Robbins, Ralph Raico and Jane S. Shaw
  - "Skatepunks, UFOs, and Guerilla Capitalism," by Lawrence Person
  - "Gordon Gekko, Mike Milken, and Me," by Douglas Casey
  - "The Hope in the Schools," by Karl Hess
- Also: articles and reviews by Michael Christian, Ralph Raico, Loren Lomasky and others; plus special election coverage. (80 pages)

### March 1991

- "The Myth of War Prosperity," by Robert Higgs
- "The Life of Rose Wilder Lane," by William Holtz
- "The Unintended Consequences of Jesse Helms," by Richard Kostelanetz

- "Old Whine in New Bottles," by Jan Narveson
  - "The Strange Death of the McDLT," by R.W. Bradford
- Plus articles and reviews by Jane Shaw, Richard Weaver, Linda Locke, Krzysztof Ostaszewski and others. (72 pages)

### May 1991

- "Christiana: Something Anarchical in Denmark," by Ben Best
  - "Rescind Gorby's Peace Prize," by James Robbins
  - "Journalists and the Drug War," by David Boaz
  - "California's Man-Made Drought," by Richard Stroup
  - "The Gulf War 'Victory': What Does it Mean?" by R.W. Bradford, Robert Higgs, James Robbins, Sheldon Richman, Stephen Cox, Matt Kibbe, and Loren Lomasky
- Plus writing by John Baden, Scott Reid, Leland Yeager and others; and a short story by Lawrence Thompson. (72 pages)

### July 1991

- "Say 'No' to Intolerance," by Milton Friedman
  - "I Am a Casualty of the War on Drugs," by Stuart Reges
  - "Depolluting the USSR," by James Robbins
- Plus articles and reviews by David Friedman, Loren Lomasky, Sheldon Richman, Karl Hess, Richard Kostelanetz, William P. Moulton and others; and Mark Skousen's interview with Robert Heilbroner. (72 pages)

### September 1991

- "AIDS and Marijuana," by Robert O'Boyle
  - "Stalking the Giant Testes of Ethiopia," by Robert Miller
  - "The Unraveling of Canada," by Scott Reid
  - "GNP: A Bogus Notion," by R.W. Bradford
- Plus articles and reviews by Bart Kosko, Mark Skousen, Frank Fox, John Hospers, James Taggart, Karl Hess, William P. Moulton and others. (72 pages)

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  - "Women vs. the Nation-State," by Carol Moore
  - "Thelma and Louise: Feminist Heroes," by Miles Fowler
  - "Libertarians Meet in Chicago," by Chester Alan Arthur
  - "The Boycott of *American Psycho*," by Panos Alexakos and Daniel Conway
  - "Correcting the 'Politically Correct,'" by Karen Shabetai
- Plus writing by Robert Higgs, Leland Yeager and others; and a short story by J. E. Goodman. (80 pages)

### January 1992

- "The National Park Disgrace," by R.W. Bradford
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  - "Beyond Austrian Economics: Bionomics," by Michael Rothschild
  - "America's Bipartisan Apartheid," by Brian Doherty
  - "Peikoff's Objectivism, R.I.P.," by David Ramsay Steele
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  - "Who Really Wrote *The Little House on the Prairie*?" by William Holtz
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