

# Liberty

May 1996

Vol. 9, No. 5

\$4.00

Timothy Leary  
on Freedom and  
the Great Beyond

## How Dole Stole the GOP

*by C. A. Arthur*

## The Art of "Hillary Clinton"

*by Stephen Cox*

## Ayn Rand and the Truth

*by R. W. Bradford*

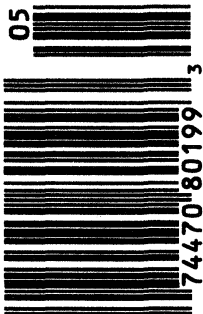
## Dopers in the Hands of an Angry God

*by Robert H. Nelson*

## Wings Over Mongolia

*by Jim Huffman*

Also: *Jesse Walker* on Johnny Cash and the healing powers of Hip; *David Boaz* defends the godlessness of the Constitution; *Michael Levine* puts America first; *Aaron Steelman* resists the draft . . . plus other Articles, Reviews, and Humor



*"The liberty of a single individual implies the emancipation of all." —Mikhail Bakunin*

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# Inside Liberty

May 1996  
 Volume 9, Number 5

- 4 **Letters** Not the alphabetical kind.
- 9 **Reflections** *Liberty's* editors on the radicalism of Rob Reiner, the hidden advantages of global warming, the return of the Cold War, and other news you may have missed.
- 16 **Medianotes** Journalism about journalism.
- 19 **Politics** The return of Ron Paul, the manly virtues of Bob Dole's secret ally (Pat Buchanan), the rhetorical consistency of Bill Clinton, and more!

## Features

- 23 **The Life and Death of the Forbes Campaign** *Chester Alan Arthur* explains why the Forbes campaign mattered — and exposes the stealthy deceit that Bob Dole used to sabotage it.
- 27 **Puritan Overdose** *Robert Nelson* examines the religious persecution of chemistry.
- 33 **Wings Over Mongolia** *Jim Huffman* flies the unfriendly skies.
- 35 **Timothy Leary, Then and Now** Interviewer *Brian Doherty* is on the outside, looking in.
- 39 **The Truth and Ayn Rand** Ayn Rand left the Soviet Union in 1926. *R.W. Bradford* inspects her baggage.
- 42 **Revolution Betrayed** *Kevin Knight* tells how Congress betrayed its mandate to reduce government. *Aaron Steelman* offers a case study: the survival of Selective Service.
- 44 **How Johnny Cash Restored My Faith in the Healing Powers of Hip** *Jesse Walker* testifies.
- 46 **Why I Would Not Vote Against Hitler** *Wendy McElroy* explains why she won't vote not matter what — and why *you* shouldn't either!
- 48 **Kill the Mockingbird!** A cache of secret Hollywood memos, exposed for the world to see by *Jesse Walker*.
- 50 **Peace, Love, and Violence** Quebec's secessionist movement has stumbled on some basic questions about the nature of the state. *Pierre Lemieux* explains.

## Reviews

- 51 **The Woman Who Knew Clinton** *Stephen Cox* reviews the promising debut novel of a writer who calls herself "Hillary Rodham Clinton."
- 55 **Rum, Sodomy, and Christopher Lasch** *Jesse Walker* decries the expropriation of everyday life.
- 59 **Market-Based Miseducation** *Nathan Crow* dissects market socialism in the classroom.
- 62 **Inward Ho!** *Michael Levine* puts America first.
- 64 **Not Right from the Beginning** *David Boaz* defends our godless Constitution.
- 65 **Booknotes** Reviews in miniature.



- 66 **Classified Advertisements** Our sometimes bizarre bazaar.
- 69 **Notes on Contributors** Your identification kit.
- 70 **Terra Incognita** These are the times that try men's souls.

# Letters

## Endangered Speciousness

Randal O'Toole's "Learning from Environmentalists" (March 1996) was a useful exercise. In his analysis, though, O'Toole missed one of the most important ingredients in the environmentalist success story — their willingness to lie in order to create hysteria. From Alar to global warming to the thinning of the ozone layer, organized environmentalism has pursued what might be called a big lie strategy. The approach is to fabricate evidence or distort existing science to scare people into believing some disaster is imminent. The unquestioning media then disseminate the lie, which stimulates contributions to the eco groups. This money, in turn, gives them the clout they need on Capitol Hill.

Hopefully, libertarians will not stoop to emulating this aspect of the environmentalist strategy.

Roy E. Cordato  
Buies Creek, N.C.

## Biting the Arm That Fed Him

John McCormack ("The Conspiracy Bugaboo," March 1996) sets out to refute the most common misconceptions about the Fed, starting with: "The Federal Reserve is privately owned." Let me quote from his next paragraph: "shares in the Fed were sold to member banks at its establishment," "shareholders elect only six of the nine Fed directors" (let's see, six-ninths is the same as two-thirds), "holding shares in the Fed is not a very profitable activity," "Dividends to member shareholders are limited to..." And then, as if proven by the foregoing statements: "The Fed is, and always has been, an arm of the U.S. government."

Gee, I didn't know that you could purchase shares in various arms of the federal government. I'd like to buy some shares of IRS, FBI, ATF, and perhaps some NSA and Justice Department.

Then I could sleep better at night, knowing that, since I was a shareholder, they'd leave me alone. I wonder if they pay dividends, too.

If the Fed is an arm of the U.S. government, that must mean that all the people at the Fed are government employees. They must get paychecks from Uncle Sam. So those guys who head up the Fed banks are civil service employees on regular civil service payroll. Boy, some of those bank directors live in really nice homes to just be civil service employees.

I only have one question though. Who are those shareholders who own this arm of our government? And are they all U.S. citizens?

Jim Showker  
Eugene, Ore.

## Paranoid Free

In a mere six pages, McCormack debunks thousands of hours of conspiracy talk radio and tens of thousands of pages of conspiratorialist tomes. Bravo!

For years, conspiracy theorists have co-opted libertarian economic arguments. Alas, the cross-pollination has gone both ways.

One of Murray Rothbard's last works, *The Case Against the Fed*, contains more pages devoted to railing against the Rockefellers and Morgans who started the Fed than to presenting cogent arguments against central banking. The Ludwig von Mises Institute is presently promoting a posthumously published Rothbard monograph, *Wall Street, Banks, and American Foreign Policy*, as "Rothbardian 'power elite' analysis at its best."

And Rothbard isn't alone. Ron Paul has been known to speak of the "Eastern banking elite" in terms reminiscent of Pat Robertson. Conspiracy theorists now seem the dominant force on libertarian Internet newsgroups.

We libertarians have a hard enough time being taken seriously without having our arguments tainted with conspiratorialist paranoia.

T. Franklin Harris, Jr.  
Athens, Ala.

## Conspiracy: The Evidence

John McCormack makes a serious mistake by sloughing off the conspiracy theory about "secret" international

bankers. He offers no evidence to arrive at his cavalier conclusion; he disregards the theory, using the rhetoric of politicians: *bizarre, crackpots, silly, political fringe, absurd*...

But look at the evidence submitted by conspiracy theorists:

The Federal Reserve Bank is as "federal" as Federal Express! Of the original 203,053 shares of Federal Reserve stock, 65% is owned by foreign banking interests and 35% is owned by domestic banking families — the Rockefellers and Morgans — 36,000 shares each. Who are the other stockholders? Rothschild Banks of London and Berlin, Lazard Brothers Banks of Paris, Israel Moses Sieff Banks of Italy, Warburg Bank of Hamburg and Amsterdam, Lehman Brothers Bank of New York, Kuhn Loeb Bank of New York, and Goldman Sachs Bank of New York.

The following editorial appeared in the *London Times*, a newspaper owned by the Rothschild banking dynasty, at the time President Lincoln was taking action to create an unborrowed currency — the Greenback: "If this mischievous financial policy, which has its origin in the American Republic, shall become permanent, then that government will furnish its own money without cost! It will pay off its debts and be without debt. It will have all the money necessary to carry on its commerce. It will become prosperous without precedent in the history of the world. The brains and the wealth of all countries will go to America. That government must be destroyed or it will destroy every monarchy on the globe!"

Believers and non-believers must not dwell on the conspiracy, true or not, but must keep focused on the Big Picture: electing constitutionalists to Congress to reduce a bloated bureaucracy; forcing Congress to justify, by article and section of the Constitution, their authority to pass every piece of legislation; and encouraging the Supreme Court to interpret the Constitution as it is written.

Leon Howard  
West Richland, Wash.

## Dense Dave

If "fractional reserve banking hasn't added anything to" David Rockefeller's fortune, then David must be as dense as McCormack believes your readers to be.

Jack Dennon  
Warrenton, Ore.

## The Best-Laid Schemes

If Mr. McCormack (and other starry-

## Letters Policy

We invite readers to comment on articles that have appeared in the pages of *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.



eyed libertarians) could get over their unsophisticated faith, viz., that they will save the world by privatizing garbage collection, they might ask of privatization, *Who benefits?* By the context and the company in which he places my remarks about N.M. Rothschild Co. acting as consultants to the Thatcher privatization, Mr. McCormack implies that I was actually promoting anti-Semitism (*wink, wink, it's really the Jews behind it all*). If he had read my two lengthy reports on New Zealand and the privatization there (published in 1989), he would have found that the Rothschild firm also consulted there and in numerous other countries. It appeared that the New Zealand privatization was *not* democratic, free-market capitalism in action, but merely a political scheme to transfer government assets to a well-connected oligarchy.

From the county ward heeler to the halls of power in Washington, business and politics run on a network of contacts. This is a fact of life known to all but the terminally naive. Those with the contacts get the business. The "free market" is an illusion as long as real human beings are involved, and as long as governments regulate the economy and the monetary system there can't be any free markets.

In any event, I have never promoted any conspiracy theory akin to what Mr. McCormack describes. But I have spent hundreds of hours reading the mind-numbing documents published by the CFR, Trilateral Commission, U.N., etc., etc., and if you don't see a commonality of interest, action, and sponsorship among these people, you're blind as a bat. If you want to know what "your" government and "your" free markets will be doing ten years from now, just read them. However, I have never argued that our American establishment is all-powerful, and have in fact controverted such naive views.

Furthermore, I have done everything in my power to promote racial harmony according to the plain demands of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I have, quite literally, put my family, my property, my career, and yes, even my life on the line for liberty under law and monetary reform. I have fought every level of government from the municipal to the federal, and with precious little help from libertarians who blow hard at the bar or at their keyboards but lose their wind when there's fighting to be done.

I've written a lot of controversial

things about the Establishment, even a book (*The Greening*) with Larry Abraham, who happens to be half Jewish and a Roman Catholic. Strange for an anti-Semite, don't you think? I don't mind hanging for what I write, but I certainly don't deserve hanging for what someone *imagines* I write.

Franklin Sanders  
Memphis, Tenn.

### Gibbon, Toynbee, Webster

John McCormack's polemic against the conspiratorial view of history is typical of all such attacks. McCormack carefully avoids reference to, or discussion of any examples from, the mountain of primary-source archival documentation that exists to support the Master Conspiracy thesis most associated with Nesta Webster and Robert Welch. McCormack attempts to discredit the Webster/Welch thesis by lumping it with the wholly unsubstantiated theories of Lyndon Larouche, Social Credit economists, racists, and anti-Semites (as well as McCormack's long-distance and unsolicited psychologizing). McCormack also makes some careless errors:

(1) Robert Welch dated the founding of the Master Conspiracy with the Order of the Illuminati in 1776, not "millennia old." See his essay "The Truth in Time."

(2) Nesta Webster was not "a significant figure in the British Union of Fascists" and no one has ever produced any documentation of that or any other alleged British fascist partisanship on the part of Webster. She lectured on the Master Conspiracy in 1920-1921 before the Royal Artillery Institution and the Brigade of Guards at the United Services Institute. And, before her death in 1960, Webster rewrote her 1921 book *World Revolution*, clearly rejecting any belief in a "Jewish conspiracy," admitting that when she wrote in 1920 she was then only aware of conspirators in such events as the Bolshevik coup of 1917 who were of Jewish or German extraction (none of whom were religious or Orthodox Jews).

Far from being "ridiculous" or "silly," Nesta Webster was a most impressive and serious historian whose *The French Revolution* (1919) remains a work of major importance today. I feel I can fairly make this claim because I own the only copy of her research notebooks (about 14,000 pages) in the U.S., have looked up and checked many of her sources in the British Library and else-

where; and have collected the majority of her original source materials over almost three decades.

(3) McCormack is almost correct in insisting that the Fed is "an arm of the U.S. government." It is precisely a government monopoly corporation or privileged cartel.

Conspiracy is best defined as a human activity involving more than one person, in which the parties are: (1) advancing basically the same or common objectives, (2) advancing objectives which would reasonably be recognized as personally harmful, destructive, or evil, (3) doing so either in secret or without warning their potential victims. Note that the definition says only that the parties are promoting the same objectives, not at all necessarily for the same personal reasons, goals, or motivations. This helps one understand why many different types of individuals would promote totalitarianism both in Washington and worldwide, each for their own reason or benefit. It also helps one realize that the conspiratorial view of history is little more than the application of human volition (a person is normally presumed to intend the logical consequences of his or her actions) to historical events. And it helps us recognize the irrational assumptions of such a superficial, sociological notion as McCormack's undefined "public choice theory."

William H. McIlhany  
Beverly Hills, Calif.

*McCormack responds:* Jim Showker repeats a demand made often over the years by conspiracy theorists — that someone produce a list of Fed shareholders. This is asked as though uncovering the list of member banks (the nominal "shareholders") were something requiring heroic detective work and not information the Fed's public affairs department is happy to send to anyone who calls and asks for it. Perhaps by combining his prodigious intellect with the others in his "financial circles," Showker may be able to master the arcana of directory assistance.

But even if he were to review the names of all 4,115 member banks (year-end 1994), representing all nationally-chartered U.S. banks and 67% of all U.S. commercial bank branches, Showker would not have gained any insights into the Fed's decision-making. As explained in my article, member banks have no control over the Fed power that matters — the power to create money. That

power is held by the Fed's Board of Governors, all seven members of which are political appointees.

Not only do the nominal "shareholders" not control Fed decision-making, they don't even benefit from "ownership" in a passive way. Their "investment" represents a capital loss to them because the 6% maximum return is lower than the cost of capital of every U.S. bank. National banks become "shareholders" because it is required of them by law. The number of "shares" they are required to "own" is determined by a fixed percentage of their regulatory capital; it isn't an investment portfolio decision they make themselves.

Showker misunderstands even the point about the low real returns to holding Treasury securities. That the Fed creates inflation and collects an economic rent from money creation is hardly in dispute. The important point is that the money generated (over \$20 billion in 1994) goes to the government by law and not into the pockets of private citizens.

Leon Howard's letter also demonstrates the mental confusion induced by conspiracy theory. In addition to including a spurious *Times* quote (and attributing the paper's ownership to the Rothschilds!) he provides us with a hilarious list of Federal Reserve "owners," including the Rothschild Bank of Berlin (sic), Israel Moses Sieff Bank of Italy, and the Warburg Bank of Hamburg and Amsterdam — institutions that have been defunct for more than half a century. While I applaud Howard's desire for constitutional government, I cannot imagine anyone laboring under his misapprehensions as an effective spokesman for the cause.

Regarding Rockefeller wealth: *Forbes* has estimated the net worth of John D. Rockefeller in 1910 at \$1.1 billion, when \$20.67 bought an ounce of gold. That would be about \$20 billion in current dollars. *Forbes* estimates the wealth of all Rockefeller descendants (now numbering in the hundreds) at \$6.2 billion. Of that amount, \$1.3 billion is attributed to David Rockefeller, the oldest and single richest Rockefeller. I presume Jack Denon is not too "dense" to figure out what kind of a real return that represents.

Franklin Sanders' wounded response to my article is simply bizarre. It is amazing that he spends so much time defending himself against anti-Semitism, a charge I never made against him. The

*continued on page 8*

# Liberty Live . . .

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*The Prospects for FDA Reform:* For now, abolition of the FDA may be just a dream. But is there any hope for serious FDA reform? **Robert Higgs** takes a hard look at the prospects for genuine change. A real eye-opener. (Audio: A138; Video: V138)

*The Oklahoma City Bombing:* Half a year after the bombing in Oklahoma City, the conspiracy theories are flying. But who knows what they're talking about, and who's just a paranoid flake? Explosives expert **Larry Grupp** investigates different theories of how the bombing was done — including the official story — and offers the most believable explanation to date. (Video only: V139)

*Going to Extremes:* **Wendy McElroy, Pierre Lemieux, David Friedman, Timothy Virkkala & R.W. Bradford.** When people are radicalized, they often embrace suicidal — or even homicidal — strategies. How do libertarians get drawn into martyrdom? How do others get drawn into terrorism? How can radicals avoid being sucked into the system? This tape deals with all these questions and one other: *Is voting immoral?* (Audio: A140; Video: V140)

*Revolution:* The militia movement is readying itself for a revolution. But is the time really ripe? In this tape, **Pierre Lemieux** asks the questions, "Revolution — if not, why not? And how do you know if it is time?" (Audio: A141; Video: V141)

*The Best — and Worst — Places to Invest and Live:* Investment advisor **Douglas Casey** is also a world traveler, visiting Third World backwaters and chatting with tinpot dictators from Cuba to Central Asia. In this fascinating talk, he recounts his recent adventures — and tells what valuable wealth-protecting information he learned. (Audio: A142; Video: V142)

*Investment Advice: Bonanza or BS?* **Harry Browne, Douglas Casey, R.W. Bradford, David Friedman & Victor Niederhoffer.** Do investment advisors really have anything to offer their customers — at least so far as good investment advice is concerned? Is there a science of economic forecasting? A no-holds-barred debate! (Audio: A143; Video: V143)

*Camouflage, Deception, and Survival in the World of Investing:* **Victor Niederhoffer**, one of the most successful speculators in the nation, offers his model of how markets function. Complex and in-depth. (Audio: A144; Video: V144)

*Do Short-Sighted Corporate Decision-Makers Screw the Future?* Collectivists claim free markets destroy society and the environment, because companies only think on a quarter-to-quarter basis. Economist **Richard Stroup** takes on this charge. (Audio: A145; Video: V145)

*Does Foreign Policy Matter?* **R.W. Bradford & Leon Hadar.** Most libertarians focus their energies on domestic issues. Should they pay more attention to the world around them? (Audio: A146; Video: V146)

# Share the Excitement!

*The Four Political Types:* **Fred Smith** points out some nasty roadblocks on the way to freedom — and how libertarians can navigate around them. (Audio: A147; Video: V147)

*Is Libertarianism Getting Anywhere?* **Harry Browne, Robert Higgs, Pierre Lemieux, Fred Smith & R.W. Bradford.** The case for (and against) libertarian optimism. Are we making any progress? (Audio: A148; Video: V148)

*Why Not Hang 'em All?* Everyone's talking about crime and punishment, but few ever take an economist's approach — or approach the topic without an unrealistic trust in government. **David Friedman** explains the benefits of apparently inefficient punishment, with a historian's eye for how different societies have dealt with crime issues in the past. (Audio: A149; Video: V149)

*Private Law Enforcement in Eighteenth-Century England:* Two hundred years ago, prosecution of felons in England was a *private* matter, rather than one for agents of the state. How did this system work? Why did it emerge? What were its advantages — and disadvantages? **David Friedman** holds your attention for all of this fascinating talk. (Audio: A150; Video: V150)

*Is Cyberspace Liberspace?* **David Friedman, Leon Hadar, Pierre Lemieux & Ross Overbeek.** What impact will the Internet, encryption, virtual reality, electronic money, and other technologies have on the political realm? Is cyberspace leading us toward greater individual freedom? Or is it all cyberhype? (Audio: A151; Video: V151)

*What Libertarians Can Learn from Environmentalists:* Libertarian **Randal O'Toole** has worked with environmentalists for years, observing the strategies of one of this century's most successful political movements. In this fascinating talk, he applies his insights to the battle for freedom. (Audio: A152; Video: V152)

*Can Liberty Survive Without Religion?* Are religious institutions necessary for a free society to survive? Has evolution killed religion — and, if so, is there any hope for freedom? **Jane Shaw** addresses these questions and more in this amazing talk. (Audio: A153; Video: V153)

*If Government Is So Villainous, Why Don't Government Officials Seem Like Villains?* Most government bureaucrats believe in what they're doing. Many are actually nice folks. But their actions lead to suffering, even death, for millions of people. How is this possible? Economist-philosopher **Daniel Klein** offers a compelling explanation — with very interesting implications. (Audio: A154; Video: V154)

*Sexual Correctness:* A new breed of feminist has declared war on individual liberty, in the process undermining women's autonomy — the very value they claim to uphold. In this information-packed talk, individualist feminist **Wendy McElroy** gives the chilling details of the latest illiberal court precedents and speaks up for the civil liberties of men and women alike. (Audio: A155; Video: V155)

*What America Needs — and What Americans Want:* The 1994 election showed that Americans are sick of politics-as-usual, but it's clear that the GOP isn't going to deliver on its promises. **Harry Browne** explains why the time is right for a Libertarian victory, and lays out his plan for dismantling the federal government. (Audio: A156; Video: V156)

*Has Environmentalism Run Its Course?* **Fred Smith, Randal O'Toole, Jane Shaw, Rick Stroup & R.W. Bradford.** The honeymoon seems to be over for such green giants as the Sierra Club and the Wilderness Society, with their bloated bureaucracies and statist politics. But what about the environmental movement as a whole? And where do free-market environmentalists fit in? (Audio: A157; Video: V157)

*Ayn Rand: The Woman Behind the Myth:* **Barbara Branden, John Hospers, Chris Sciabarra & R.W. Bradford.** These incredible tapes include countless priceless moments, along with information unavailable anywhere else. A must for any Rand fan! (Two audios: ARM, \$14.95; Two videos: VRM, \$29.95.)

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## Letters, continued from page 6

only reference to him in my article was a single line accurately characterizing his opposition to Thatcher's privatization plans on the grounds that they involved N.M. Rothschild as advisor and underwriter. While *Liberty* readers will undoubtedly be gratified to learn of the ecumenical nature of his collaboration with Larry Abraham, Sanders illustrates the difficulty conspiracy-minded people often have in dealing with policy issues.

His attack on the New Zealand privatization program is an excellent case in point. The most socialistic country in the First World just 15 years ago, New Zealand is now ranked below only Hong Kong and Singapore in the Fraser Institute's survey of global economic liberty. The privatization program initiated by Roger Douglas and implemented with the advice of Rothschild, among others, was an absolutely critical element in New Zealand's transformation. That Sanders echoes the claptrap of the socialist opponents of privatization shows how debilitating his obsession with the "Establishment" is.

William McIlhany's defense of Nesta Webster is disingenuous. Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists was far more representative of the groups Webster addressed as a featured speaker in the 1930s than the Brigade of Guards or the Royal Artillery Institute. Not only did the BUF promote her literature extensively in Britain, but the Nazi Party in Germany cited her frequently and approvingly in their own propaganda. McIlhany cannot deny that Webster publicly and repeatedly attributed the ills of the Western world to the "international and insidious hegemony" of the Jews at that time; he simply attempts to sidestep

the issue by saying she disavowed all that before she died in 1960.

Perhaps most revealing, though, is McIlhany's definition of conspiracy. It is so elastic as to be meaningless. That Welch's latter-day admirers feel it necessary to define conspiracy to include all those who promote the same objectives, whether or not their goals and motivations are the same, and whether or not they actually collaborate consciously, shows how intellectually empty the "Master Conspiracy Theory" is. By McIlhany's definition, Congress itself — and everyone who votes on the basis of the benefits they expect — is a conspiracy. "Master Conspiracy Theory," as defined by McIlhany, is simply a historical Rohrschach blot.

As for whether Welch's conspiracy is "millennia old": in *The New Americanism*, Welch traced the conspiratorial idea back to ancient Sparta, though he admitted that the Spartans "did not establish an esoteric core of uninterrupted organizational permanence to control and guide collectivist drives for power in the centuries ahead." Instead, he claimed, it splintered into "many small sects and heresies and societies and associations . . . each of which intended to be the embryo of an organization that would grow in power until it ruled the world." Soon, they "coalesced into a uniformly Satanic creed and program" that was promoted by the Bavarian Illuminati.

By McIlhany's definition, this fantasy would certainly qualify as a millennia-old conspiracy. I'd say it qualifies by the usual definition as well.

I thank Franklin Harris for his kind comments. I certainly share his concerns about the libertarian movement and, judging from some of the other letters responding to my article, our concerns are very well-placed.

### The Dialectic of Context

Lester H. Hunt ("In Search of Rand's Roots," March 1996) questions whether Rand adhered to a doctrine of internal relations. In my book, *Ayn Rand: The Russian Radical*, I support his contention that Rand had no such *metaphysical* commitment. She acknowledges that everything is related in the universe, but that it is not a philosophical task to establish the ultimate nature of these interrelationships. However, I also argue that Rand endorses a kind of epistemological internalism. An analysis of relations is legitimate provided that one defines one's context. By

altering one's context, vantage point, or level of generality, Rand suggests, one can articulate the essence of the thing, and those relations that might be relevant to our analysis of it. Moreover, since nothing can be defined external to its context, the conditions of one's definition are partly constitutive of the analysis.

These principles are on display in virtually every aspect of Rand's thought. Even when Rand stresses the primacy of existence she argues that one cannot fully understand metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, politics, or aesthetics in their abstraction from the whole they jointly constitute. In her literary methods, she recognizes that each story — with its characters and plot integrated to a central theme — "is written as a man is born — an *organic whole*, dictated only by its own laws and its own necessity" (*Letters of Ayn Rand*, p. 157, emphasis added). And in her social theory, she rejects vulgar economism, and traces the internal relationships among disparate factors, identifying "the great mistake [of] assuming that economics is a science which can be isolated from moral, philosophical and political principles, and considered as a subject in itself, without relation to them" (*Letters*, p. 260).

Chris Matthew Sciabarra  
New York, N.Y.

### Out of the Ballpark

Is Randal O'Toole ("Street smarts," March 1996) not a regular reader of *Liberty*? If he were he would have known that his assertion that the solution to highway problems is to sell the roads is hardly original. In fact, I proposed that very thing my article in the November 1988 *Liberty*. Inasmuch as the quest for a more rational highway system via selling the roads has not yet been achieved, I think it is worthwhile to pursue other means of making progress toward that objective.

While I, like Brown and Shull (*Letters*, March 1996), am not completely at ease with the role insurers have played in influencing driving and highway laws, I am more troubled by their apparent willingness to disavow responsibility for their own driving mistakes. It is this cavalier attitude of "to hell with everybody else" that gives libertarianism a bad reputation. A free society requires that each person take responsibility for his own actions. Those who would repudiate this responsibility (because they are "too poor") invite chaos and tyranny.

continued on page 68

### Errata

Owing to a faulty transcription and to incomplete fact-checking, several errors appeared in "The Road to the Big House," by Chester Alan Arthur (*Liberty*, March 1996): the associate White House counsel is W. Neil Eggleston, not "Eggleston"; the Clintons' attorney is David Kendall, not "Donald"; it's Patsy Thomasson, not "Patty"; Vince Foster died in 1993, not 1994. Our apologies to readers and the author, and our thanks to those who wrote with corrections.

—Jesse Walker, Asst. Editor



# Reflections

***The end of the end of history*** — So you thought you could really get rid of us, the good old boys of the Cold War — the spooks, the propagandists, the military-industrial complex. The fall of the Berlin Wall . . . capitalism in China . . . peace in the Middle East . . . the End of History. Things will be different now, you said.

You were wrong, my friends. Just look around you: the Communists are about to return to power in Moscow after an impressive comeback in Poland, Hungary, and Slovakia. Russia is emerging again as a "threat" to our "national interest," so we'll strengthen and expand NATO, and forget about the peace dividend. China and the United States may soon go to war over Taiwan, just like in the 1950s. We may even have another armed conflict in the Korean Peninsula. And Cuba and Castro are back in the headlines — maybe we'll have a rerun of the Bay of Pigs. In Israel, most polls indicate that the Likud party will win the coming election. Bye-bye, peace; welcome back, *intifada*. And maybe even another Desert Storm — against Iran this time.

Most important: an aging Nixonite may be the next U.S. president, meaning it will soon be springtime in Washington for the neocons and other lovers of global crusades and military intervention. The CIA, USIA, VOA, NSA, and all the other parasites of the warfare state are back in business, ready to roll back Russian nationalism, Islamic fundamentalism, and Chinese expansionism. You'll have to go back to reading *Commentary* and Martin Peretz's articles in *The New Republic*.

Ah, life is good!

—LTH

***Randolph Bourne, call your office*** — Why did Clinton send troops to Bosnia? Economists Gregory Hess and Athanasios Orphanides may have the answer.

In an econometric model, they tested the theory that, in bad economic times, weak presidents (those with shaky re-election prospects) tend to send troops abroad. The test included data for the period 1897–1988. Its conclusions: when the president could not seek re-election or the economy was not in recession, the probability of initiating war was about 30%. When the president was up for re-election with a poor economy, the probability rose to about 60%. —WM

***The blame falls mainly on the rain*** — A few years ago, Forest Service ecologists were predicting dire things for U.S. forests if global warming took place. They painted pictures of desertification throughout the West, with most of our forests pushed up to the Canadian border.

When global warming was all the rage, Congress gave the Forest Service several million dollars to study its effects on forests. Now the results are in, and guess what? The main problem is going to be that we will have too much wood.

Forest Service scientists combined the latest global climate models (made by others) with models of forest productivity

and the U.S. timber economy. I don't know about the climate models, but I give the agency credit for putting together some productivity and economic models that are pretty good.

Their results showed that under a "worst-case" (or is it best-case?) scenario, global climate change will increase U.S. forest growth by 24% in 50 years. This will reduce timber prices by 35% below what they would be without climate change. Though 50 years is the extent of the agency's economic projections, it is clear that growth will increase and prices will decline even further after that time.

Global warming means more carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, which is essential for plant growth; warmer temperatures, which means longer growing seasons; and more, not less, rainfall. So if you're worried about global warming, don't fret for America's forests. Instead, you better buy an umbrella.

—RO'T

***The parent trap*** — The education establishment likes to blame children's poor performance on their parents. The Department of Education's "Goals 2000" program, for example, lists "increased parental involvement in learning" as one of its aims.

It is true that smart parents tend to have smart children and that dysfunctional families block learning. But the idea that children won't learn unless their parents are actively involved in school is nonsense. It's just another effort to pass the buck.

For four years my son went to a private Montessori school, where children proceeded at their own pace through a specified curriculum. Some did better than others, but all children learned the basics, and parents didn't have to do a thing. Oh yes, they attended potluck dinners and helped paint the furniture, but the teachers did the teaching.

Now my son is in public school. There are a lot of daffy situations and bureaucratic rigidities with public school, as you would expect, but the direct cause of children's difficulties is this:

Children are expected to follow a specific curriculum at the same pace. That is, they are supposed to read the same stories, do the same exercises, learn the same spelling words, figure out the same math problems. At the same time, the makeup of each class is designed to include as wide differences in ability as possible (the opposite of "tracking," which is viewed as elitist).

In this situation, the curriculum must be geared to the median student. So nearly half find it too easy and nearly half find it too hard. Only a few find it "fits."

Eventually, parents realize that their child is out of step — either ahead of the curriculum and bored, or behind it and frustrated.

At that point, concerned parents *have* to be involved. They scurry around trying to figure out what is wrong. They talk to

the teacher, help with homework, try out tutoring, go for special tests, seek out enrichment programs. And, yes, the Department of Education is right: those parents who devote the most time and energy can save their children from educational disaster.

After creating the problem, the educationists tell us that parents must solve it. —JSS

### ***They'll read it when it's out in Tagalog***

— Hillary Rodham Clinton's quasi-handbook on childrearing, *It Takes a Village*, is obviously meant to cement her status as a champion of family values before the presidential election tolls in. I wonder if the nannies who raised Chelsea will buy it? —WM

***The marrying kind*** — Why does anyone have to be concerned about another person's sexual preferences, so long as he or she doesn't use or threaten force to impose his or her wishes on another? Like so many problems, the controversy over homosexual marriages results from government intervention. After all, a heterosexual marriage is simply a contractual arrangement between a man and a woman concerning their respective rights under the law. Typically, they embark upon such an arrangement out of love and a desire to live their lives together and form a family. Except for not having children of their own, a homosexual couple might do so for similar reasons. In any event, there is no reason why two men or two women couldn't enter into a marriage-like contract covering their respective rights to property, inheritance, pensions, and adoption, and their obligations to one another.

However, government discriminates against such contracts between two same-sex companions. Government regulations permit only survivors of a legal heterosexual marriage to inherit certain valuable rights such as Social Security, pension and job-related benefits, and the right to occupy rent-controlled apartments. Government also discriminates against homosexual couples with respect to adoption. So homosexuals fight for "affirmative action" laws and to have their relationships legally certified as "marriages."

Ending government-decreed benefits would eliminate the problem. Then homosexuals would be free to settle amicably and legally, by entering into mutually-agreed-upon contracts with one another, such matters as their respective rights to property, inheritance, and adoption. —BBG

***Secret agenda?*** — Rob Reiner's movie *The American President*, last year's wildly overpraised mediocrity that made many critics' top ten lists, has generally been interpreted as a paean to the Clinton administration. But could it have a more subtle message — something more radical being slipped into our subconscious?

Consider Michael J. Fox's character,

Rothschild, the young White House aide obviously modeled on George Stephanopoulos. Throughout the film, he hectors the president to impose stronger gun control legislation. In the end — and don't worry, I'm not giving away anything you won't figure out for yourself in the first ten minutes of the picture — the president does indeed call for gun confiscation.

So beneath the surface Clintonism, the movie is saying this:

***THE ROTHSCILDS ARE PLOTTING TO DISARM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE!***

And Clinton thought Rob Reiner was his friend. The man belongs in the Michigan Militia! —JW

***www.censorship.stupid*** — German prosecutors are trying to control cyberspace once more. Their target: a computer in Santa Cruz, California ([www.webcom.com](http://www.webcom.com)) that is declared "legally off limits" because it has the audacity to list Ernst Zundel among its over 1,500 customers. Zundel is a Canadian resident who believes that the Holocaust is a Jewish historical invention — that it never took place.

Ironically, the attempted censorship has brought Zundel undreamed-of publicity and widespread circulation of his theories. David Jones, president of Electronic Frontier Canada, explains: "Instead of limiting the audience for Zundel's propaganda, Germany's clumsy attempt to block access has resulted in the information being copied to new locations in cyberspace and becoming even more accessible, . . . and with the publicity, more people might want to visit these web pages to see what all the fuss is about. It's rather unfortunate." Jones also stressed that EFC "strongly disagrees with Zundel's views."

Declan McCullagh, a free speech activist, loaded Zundel's message into a single file and posted a Usenet newsgroup with instructions on "how to open your very own Zundel site mirror archive in five minutes or less." The same has been done at Carnegie Mellon University, Stanford University, and MIT. "If Germany starts to prevent their universities from connecting to other universities outside the country, it defeats

the purpose of them being on the Internet in the first place," observes Jones. —WM

***Spoiler alert*** — Democrats are elated over Ron Wyden's victory over State Senator Gordon Smith for Bob Packwood's seat in the U.S. Senate. The environment, abortion, and the recent budget debate have all been credited with the liberal Democrat's victory.

In fact, the vote was so close — Wyden beat Smith by less than 1.5% (568,000 to 551,000) — that almost anything could have made the difference. One factor not mentioned in any account I read was the presence of third parties.

Wyden and Smith actually shared the ballot with four "third-party" candidates. Two of them, the Socialist Party's Vicki Valdez and the Pacifica Party's Lou Gold (a noted environmentalist), collected 15,000 votes. The

### **Liberty's Editors Reflect**

CAA	Chester Alan Arthur
DB	David Boaz
RWB	R.W. Bradford
SC	Stephen Cox
BBG	Bettina Bien Greaves
LTH	Leon T. Hadar
BK	Bill Kauffman
RK	Richard Kostelanetz
LEL	Loren E. Lomasky
WM	Wendy McElroy
RO'T	Randal O'Toole
SR	Sheldon Richman
JSR	James S. Robbins
JSS	Jane S. Shaw
SS	Sandy Shaw
CS	Clark Stooksbury
TWV	Timothy Virkkala
JW	Jesse Walker

other two, Karen Shilling of the American Party (i.e., the Perotistas) and Gene Nanni of the Libertarian Party, collected 40,000 votes.

This means that a majority of voters selected parties or candidates who generally oppose big government and generally support trimming government spending. In other words, if the American and Libertarian Party voters had gone for Smith, he would have won the election even assuming the Socialist and Pacifica votes had gone to Wyden.

I draw two lessons from this. First, contrary to Democratic hopes, Oregon voters are getting more conservative: no one as conservative as Smith has come this close to winning a statewide election in decades. Second, if the Libertarian Party is going to act as a spoiler, I'm not interested in it. Though I may not agree with his social views, I'd rather have a fiscal conservative such as Smith than a tax-and-spend liberal such as Wyden any day. —RO'T

**Sofa, so good** — What is it about a couch on a porch that fills certain people with rage? When I was a college student, I lived in a house with a sofa on its porch, and life was grand. People could gather there to talk, or smoke, or drink, or play music, or make out, or just watch pedestrians wander by. It was both an adjunct to the house — an extra room smokers or loud talkers could be sent to without feeling banished — and an opening to the outside world. Random passers-by could stop for a second, stay for an hour, and end up our newest friends. The couch was ripped-up, dirty, and comfy. And our landlord made us get rid of it.

He was a good landlord in every other respect. But after he took away our couch, our house's social life took a bit of a dive. And we weren't the only ones: friends and neighbors also had their sofas evicted by other landlords (including one moderately prominent contemporary philosopher, whose sensible writings on politics might lead one to expect he'd know better). What gives?

Well, couchnapping our favorite furniture is a landlord's prerogative, I suppose. The house is his property, after all, and I don't remember demanding any special sofa rights in our lease. But the city council of Indiana, a small town in western Pennsylvania, has no such excuse. In December, the Indiana Borough Council banned residents from using furniture outside if it is "not specifically constructed for outdoor use." Offenders will be fined \$50-\$100 for a first offense, and up to \$300 if they keep sinning. The law was specifically designed to get couches off porches. According to the Associated Press, "The idea came from Councilman John Morganti, who has campaigned to clean up things he regards as eyesores."

Well, that's America: one man's way of life is another man's eyesore. Except in this case, the latter is a powerful prig, and he doesn't mind forcing everyone else to conform to his sterile social vision. Don't be surprised if this latest affront to civil society catches on in other cities. There is something about a happy porch that drives a busybody mad. —JW

**Nature boy, spare that tree** — "Too many of us are still locked into the mindset that says the way to make money off a piece of land is to mine it, drill it or log it," wrote Jon Roush, president of the Wilderness Society, in a letter to

the *New York Times* in January. His point was that preservation, not "extractive industry or agriculture," leads to a healthy economy, since tourists and new industries are attracted to places with forests intact.

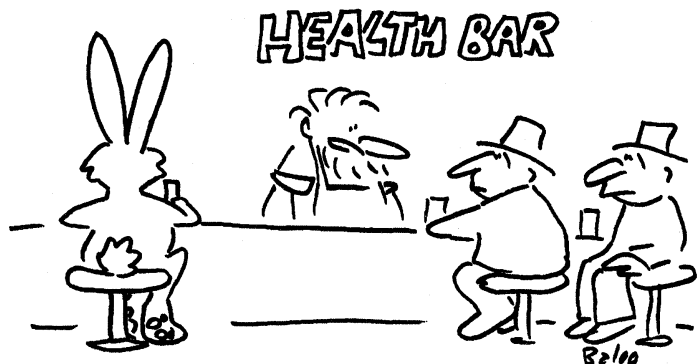
Roush should know all about the mindset, since he has it. Not too long ago, he sold 400,000 board feet of wood from his ranch in the Bitterroot Valley of Montana to Plum Creek Timber Company. That's not necessarily bad, but logging while categorically condemning logging seems hypocritical.

Roush is not the first environmentalist to attack logging while doing it himself. In 1993, William Arthur, the northwest regional director of the Sierra Club, cut 70% (or 85,000 board feet) of the standing timber on his property. At the time, the Sierra Club was suing the Forest Service over its management of Colville National Forest, which surrounds Arthur's property. Also that year, Arthur was a witness at Bill Clinton's "Forest Summit," urging that more land be preserved to protect the spotted owl.

These two actions typify the arrogance of the environmental movement. *The Nation*, which originally broke the Jon Roush story, said that "the head of the Wilderness Society logging old growth in the Bitterroot Valley is roughly akin to the head of Human Rights Watch torturing a domestic servant." That's harsh, but these guys do seem to take their private property rights for granted while actively trying to eliminate those of others. Jonathan Adler points out in his book *Environmentalism at the Crossroads* that in 1989 the Wilderness Society pushed for a doubling of federally protected wilderness and in 1992 it urged the federal government to buy \$1 million worth of private land.

Roush and Arthur remind me of the high-level Soviet *nomenklatura* who bought their goods in hard currency stores but expected others to stand in line at GUM. —JSS

**Belfast on the Potomac** — James B. Stewart's revelations (in *Blood Sport*) of the way the Clinton duo worked in Little Rock — and in Washington — brought to mind the structure of a terrorist organization. Bill is the political wing, always at arm's length from the activities of Hillary, at least in terms of deniability. Hillary is the militant wing, enforcing the will of the organization on any who cross its path. I've always wondered why so few of the people the Clintons have double-crossed over the years have come forward to tell their stories, and I've assumed it was a combination of Bill's charisma and the probability that the Clintons



"Relax, guys — he was a rabbit long before he started coming in here."

have just as much dirt on all of their potential detractors. But the portrayal of the ruthless, manipulative Hillary Rodham Clinton in Stewart's book shows who inspired the real terror. It would take a strong-willed person indeed to face off with Hillary the kneecapper. —JSR

**The Hamas golem** — The peace process in Palestine is effectively dead. The carnage recently unleashed on innocent Israelis has destroyed it, and those responsible for the bombings have an ocean of blood on their hands: not just of their direct victims, but of all those who will die in the crackdown to come. Hamas' terrorist tactics are as vile as its fundamentalist ideology.

That much is obvious — not just because it is true, but because it does not break with conventional thinking about the Middle East. It is easy, in the United States, to condemn Arab and Muslim terrorists. It is much harder to seriously discuss what makes it possible for a group like Hamas to flourish.

The hawks are now demanding a harsh crackdown in the occupied territories; peace, they not unreasonably suggest, must take a back seat to Israelis' immediate security. The putative doves can only suggest greater subsidies for Yasser Arafat, to give him a leg up on his Hamas rivals. We have thus been maneuvered into a position where the only options discussed in the corridors of power are punishing all Palestinians for the crimes of a minority (rather like punishing all Israeli Jews for the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin), or further propping up the man whose corruption

and illiberalism has handed Hamas its constituency.

Hamas is pursuing a classic *strategy of tension*. Its intent is to create a situation in which the average Palestinian has only two alternatives: acquiescence to unbearable oppression, or support for Hamas. The tactic requires (a) provoking a severe clampdown, and (b) eliminating all other challengers to Israeli authority. Hamas has now achieved the first goal — largely because every other player in the "peace process" has achieved the second for it. Arafat's autocratic disdain for his people's interests drove supporters from his camp, and his vigilant suppression of dissident voices in the PLO ensured that a third path between Arafat and Hamas would not emerge. Meanwhile, Israel and the U.S. only helped Arafat along by underwriting him. (And not only that: before the peace talks began, Israel subsidized *Hamas*, hoping to undermine the PLO's authority among Palestinians. At the time, the country was governed by the Likud Party — the same hawks who now push for no-holds-barred repression. The chickens, as Malcolm X liked to say, have come home to roost.)

Arafat is, in more ways than one, the anti-Moses: he led his people to the promised land, then entered it alone. Had he not cashed his nation's interests in for a chance to speak at Harvard and be photographed on the White House lawn, he would have been able to suppress Hamas before its campaign of terror got out of hand. Had Israel treated Palestinians with dignity and respect — allowing them freedom of speech instead of censorship, freedom of enterprise instead of punitive regulation, a rule of law instead of arbitrary violations of civil rights — Hamas would never have drawn the kind of fanatical support a campaign of suicide bombers requires. The strategy of tension is working because the Israeli government and the PLO are allowing it to work. Hamas is to blame for the recent mass murders on Israeli soil, but Israel and the PLO are to blame for Hamas. —JW

**It took a village** — In the spring of 1947, socialism was still a strong intellectual force. Most leading economists were either mixed-economy Keynesians or hard-core collectivists, and the other disciplines weren't in much better shape. Virtually every nation was in the grip of one statist doctrine or another, from the harsh totalitarianism of Josef Stalin to the much milder, but still destructive, Fair Dealism of Harry Truman. In that environment, 36 pro-market intellectuals from around the world gathered at Mont Pelerin, Switzerland, to plot strategy in the postwar era. F.A. Hayek was there. So was Ludwig von Mises. So was Milton Friedman.

I traveled to Mont Pelerin not long ago, after a trip through the Swiss Alps. Mont Pelerin, I discovered, is not actually a mountain, at least in the snow-covered alpine sense; it is a tiny village overlooking Lac Lemman near the Swiss town of Vevey. A *petit* red funicular railway transports tourists up the hillside from Vevey to the village, where a spectacular view of the Swiss Riviera awaits. To the east is Montreaux, site of the internationally renowned jazz festival. To the south, across the lake, is Evian — a famous French spa where alpine mineral water is bottled. And in the distance, there are the breathtaking mountains.

*Pelerin* is the French word for "pilgrim," and it was easy for me to imagine the conferees making their pilgrimage to





Switzerland a half-century ago. The world has changed dramatically in the years since that meeting, and much of the intellectual change can be attributed to Mont Pelerin's conferees. A grounded scientific belief in free markets is supplanting the old faith in the state. In 1947, the Austrian and Chicago schools of free-market economics were widely ignored. In 1974, Hayek was awarded the Nobel Prize, an honor bestowed on Friedman two years later.

So I arrived at Mont Pelerin with certain expectations. A statue of Hayek, perhaps, or a Rue du Mises; at a minimum, a simple plaque outside the Hotel du Parc, commemorating the great conference that took place within. Instead, I found a Tibetan Institute and some cows wandering in a nearby meadow. If 36 socialists had gathered there in 1947, there would be statues, streets, plaques, and still more: five books, three plays, and two novels would have been produced already, with more in the works.

I was disappointed, but not depressed. The land was too scenic, too beautiful for me to feel down. I consoled myself with thoughts of *Mont Pelerin: The Movie* as I rode the funicular down to Vevey. Perhaps *One Week That Changed the World*, or *36 Angry Men*.  
—guest reflection by Greg Kaza

***It takes a village, a sociology department, and the 82nd Airborne*** — In Hillary Clinton's smarmy book on childrearing, *It Takes a Village* (from the expression "It takes a village to raise a child"), the "village" is a metaphor for the state. The cozy little tome is nothing short of a self-righteous call for the state to replace parental authority. As this absentee-mother explains, "The village itself must act in place of parents; it accepts those responsibilities in all our names through the authority we vest in government."

When should parental rights be terminated? Not surprisingly, she argues for breaking up the family upon sexual or physical abuse of the child. But then the brave Hillary plunges ahead to raise the vague specter of "improper child maintenance." How could wayward but nonabusive parents be swayed toward her view of proper child maintenance? She suggests that medical benefits to such people be made "contingent on agreement to allow home visits [from social workers] or to participate in other forms of parent education."

First she wanted to socialize medicine, placing it under government control. Now she wants access to medical care to be a privilege that must be earned through conformity to her view of childrearing. As Alexander Cockburn has commented, "She should change her book's title to *It Takes a Police State*."  
—WM

***Plebiscital maniacs*** — In Australia, they take democracy seriously.

The Australian state of Victoria introduced the secret ballot in 1854, on the theory that it would prevent intimidation of voters. From a somewhat different perspective, Lysander Spooner saw the so-called "Australian ballot" as a way for voters to rob their neighbors in secret, via taxation. The Australian ballot prevailed and Spooner's thinking lay dead to the world, embalmed on the yellowing pages of old political tracts. In 1894, only 15 years after Wyoming enacted the

world's first women's suffrage, South Australia followed suit. In 1924, Australia made voting no longer a right, but an obligation, instituting fines for those who fail to vote.

A more recent reform requires that voters rank candidates for office in order of preference. As I understand the system, they count the first-choice votes for each candidate, eliminate the candidate with the fewest, and increase the ranking of the remaining candidates on each ballot. In other words, if you rank candidates Adams, Brown, Cromwell, Dimwit, and Edwards, and Adams finishes last, your ballot now counts in favor of Brown. If in the second counting of ballots, Brown is last, your vote now goes to Cromwell. And so on. It sounds a bit cumbersome, but pretty fair, right?

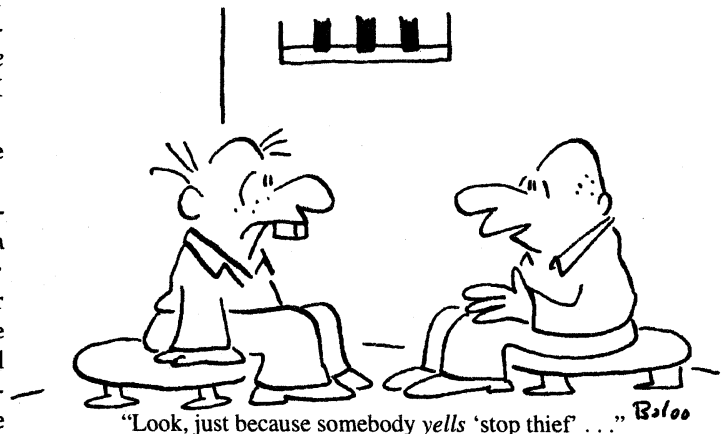
Well, not so fair as you might think. It makes voting for the candidates of minor parties virtually irrelevant, since in the end the election comes down to the two candidates of the major parties, after all the ballots for other candidates are eliminated in the early rounds of ballot counting. At least that's what Albert Langer figured. So he suggested that voters simply rate the two major parties in a tie for last on their ballot. This is a violation of the voting laws, but it's a lot harder to punish the Australian who follows Langer's advice than it is to punish the Australian who does not vote, since Australia has the secret ballot.

Not to worry. In a country that takes democracy as seriously as Australia does, there is a way to deal with such insolence. The electoral commission won an injunction forbidding Langer to advocate such treason. He defied the court order, and on Valentine's Day was sentenced to ten weeks in jail.

Yes: in Australia, they take democracy seriously — so seriously, in fact, that they fine people for refusing to vote and jail people for challenging the two-party oligopoly. Of what importance are the rights to liberty and property — the most fundamental rights of liberal society — when Australia's peculiar democracy is challenged?  
—RWB

***These guys were the Vikings?*** — There's something about foreign travel that makes you hum all those patriotic songs you learned in grade school.

My mother and I recently traveled to Norway. Fjords, lakes, forests, crisp clean air — it all makes you feel alive. Altogether a fine place for a vacation. We had the added pleasure of visiting relatives, and being welcomed into the homes of the local people. Norwegians have a reputation of being cold, and it is not undeserved, but if you are "in," they



become extremely friendly. We spent a lot of time drinking coffee and eating little cakes.

Our visit included a stop by the old family farm, the place where my grandmother was born, and the place she left in 1917 to find a brighter future abroad. My grandmother didn't like the pool of potential mates in her town, and although she didn't speak a word of English, she went to America, all alone. My cousins still own the old farm, a beautiful piece of land right on the fjord. That's where the trouble starts. They sort of own it.

The concept of private property rights hasn't reached this country yet. The government decided to build an aquarium on the property. Oh, my cousins would still own the land, all right, they'd just have to put up with tourists, staff, parking lots, and a huge aquarium right next to the house — if the house is allowed to remain standing, that is. For some reason, the aquarium has not yet been built, but the property's sort-of owners (my cousins) answer the government's plans with lapdog obedience. That's just the way it goes in Norway.

Luckily, one of my most unfortunate cousins was kind enough to rescue me from the endless string of coffee parties and the blue-haired old ladies. He took me out to drink beer with the rest of Young Norway. Luckily again, almost all young Norwegians are fluent in English. We talked about a lot of things over our \$10.00 pints of beer — alcohol is very highly taxed in Norway, to discourage abuse. Naturally, this just promotes heavy patronage of the duty-free liquor shops by those who travel, and of moonshine aquavit by those who stay at home. One additional problem with drinking in Norway is that the penalties for driving under the influence of alcohol are very severe, and the definition of "under the influence" is very strict. Breathing into a breathalyzer after eating a liqueur-filled chocolate candy will qualify you as intoxicated. Now, I'm no fan of drunk driving, but most people can manage to operate a motor vehicle after one beer, certainly after a liqueur-filled candy. In Norway, however, such an act will land you in jail for three weeks.

One of our relatives once hosted a party. A guest asked the host to move a car that was blocking his, so the host moved the car several feet out of the way. The police saw this, arrested him, and threw him in jail, even though he had not even left his own driveway.

The family noted his example. All Norwegians take the idea of designating a driver very seriously. Well, what's wrong with that? What's wrong with the government scaring the beejeezus out of the population? It's good for business, too. As you might expect, the taxi business in Norway is booming, which is a very good thing for another cousin of mine, a cab driver. He has five children, at last count, by three different women, none of whom he has bothered to marry. A young woman I met in the bar, wearing a microscopic mini-skirt, also had a child at home, also was not married. She seemed more embarrassed about not having a job than about the fact that her child didn't have a father. Norwegians, like many other Europeans, don't seem to get married anymore, and none seem to have any plans to do so. Although this helps keep the divorce rate low, I wonder how having six or eight sets of parents will affect the children.

The most comical thing I learned about Norway demonstrates perfectly how this benevolent dictatorship operates.

The bureaucrats of Norway have banned eyedrops as, get this, "unnecessary, and possibly addictive." It is against the law to sell eyedrops in Norway! And red-eyed Norwegians don't even seem to mind. They just smuggle cases of ClearEyes every time they come back into the country, clearly not concerned about either health or legality, but unwilling to exert the effort to change the law. One wonders what the Norwegians would do if their government decided to take the same approach to caffeine. Starbucks on the black market, sweater-wearing blonde bums in alleys . . . "C'mon, Sven! I need my fix!"

Somehow, I pried Mom away from our relatives' constant addictive and unnecessary coffee parties, and we left little Norway and all its friendly, well-meaning socialism, urging our relatives to come and visit us in America. For the most part, they were unenthusiastic. They have a comfortable life, predictable and safe. The social engineers are doing their jobs.

—guest reflection by Carolina Beroza

**Better living through litigation** — Coming up: Durk Pearson and Sandy Shaw *et al.* vs. Shalala, Kessler, the FDA, *et al.* When Durk and I first began our research into aging mechanisms in 1968, the limit to what could be done to extend human lifespan was information: there wasn't very much of it. In 1996, the limit is regulatory barriers, particularly those put in place by the FDA. Some of their most appalling regulations concern "health claims." You aren't allowed to print a statement accompanying a health care product, either as part of the label or as advertising, in which truthful and non-misleading information suggests the product may be good for your health, without permission from the FDA. Our First Amendment suit against this policy is working its way through the courts, after having detoured through the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals (which said it didn't have jurisdiction).

The FDA's blanket ban on health claims constitutes a prior restraint, which is not only contrary to the First Amendment but has been considered very dubious by the courts even under the commercial speech review standard. (The courts have considered commercial speech to be somehow different from other speech and not "deserving" of full First Amendment protection. The First Amendment, of course, makes no such distinction. However, even under this reduced standard, the courts oppose prior restraints except under very unusual circumstances.)

If we win this case, our victory will dramatically expand the market for health products, particularly dietary supplements, because it is very difficult to sell products without being able to tell people what the products can do. Until then, America still won't have a health-care system, just an after-the-fact illness-care system. —SS

**Hired gun control** — The principal objection to libel laws is that the business of establishing truth and falsity is strictly a matter for theocracies and other dictatorships. The liberal secular state should not be in that business at all. Anyone who supports libel is probably inclined to support other government intrusions as well.

If someone has defamed you, the alternative to a lawsuit is simply to reply to the charges. Defamation can succeed

only if you lack sufficient intelligence or self-respect to respond. The fact that your critic might have a louder voice than you — say, because he is an established writer, or because the periodical publishing him has a wide circulation — does not excuse failing to answer in kind. In a free society, such circumstantial inequalities are just as inevitable as unequal economic opportunities. Truth will usually triumph, all excuses to the contrary notwithstanding.

Individuals who choose to respond to criticism with a lawsuit usually do so because they *can't* defend themselves in the free marketplace of ideas. I cannot think of any recently alleged "libel" that was not at least somewhat true, regardless of what was decided in court. Furthermore, in almost all cases, the complainants actually managed to *increase* the circulation of the supposedly defamatory comments. In suing Mary McCarthy for calling her a liar, the playwright Lillian Hellman reminded everyone that she was indeed a fabricator.

Libel suits are strictly for the rich, for if litigious petitioners lose, they are responsible for paying not only their own lawyers but the writer's lawyer and court costs as well. Since such suits are rarely won, especially nowadays, only rich pricks can afford them. This is another way of saying that anyone who initiates a defamation suit, especially of a visible critic, wants to have his or her name forever prefaced as That Rich Prick X.Y.Z., much as prostitutes are called "whores" long after they've turned their final trick. (Don't discount the advantages of such a moniker in attracting a certain class of literary groupies.) This explains why, when an author writes something critical, the first question his or her publisher asks is not whether the charge can be substantiated, but whether the person criticized is rich — i.e., whether he or she can afford to lose a lot of money engaging in legal intimidation.

The real function of such a suit is to waste a writer's time — to keep him or her away from his or her primary work. Perhaps, then, an unsuccessful litigant should be responsible for fair compensation of professional time lost. Assuming a rate of \$50.00 per hour for a writer's time, the court could rule that, if 200 hours of a writer's time were wasted, the debt would automatically be \$10,000. If 2,000 hours, then \$100,000. (This is actually a cheap rate. Plumbers charge more, at least in New York City.)

If we accept this principle, it would be wise to require litigants to put sufficient money in escrow before the suit begins, simply because we all know how hard it can be to collect a debt from moneyed deadbeats, such as negligent absentee fathers. This requirement ought to be acceptable, because nothing is more dubious than a rich person who does not put his or her money where his or her mouth is.

Precisely because libel suits can be so expensive, semi-scrupulous lawyers specialize in conning rich people into initiating them. It is easy to suspect a *provocateur* behind the most comic current libel case, in which the British arm of McDonald's is suing two impoverished environmental activists for a six-page leaflet alleging that the multinational destroys rainforests, abuses workers, and causes health problems. Because the trial has become a well-publicized farce, McDonald's has suffered bad publicity, protests at its stores, and legal expenses of nearly \$10,000 a day. According to *The*

*Wall Street Journal*, "Acknowledging that Mr. Morris and Ms. Steele are broke, McDonald's isn't seeking damages or even court costs. It only wants the judge to say the leaflet's statements are false." McDonald's has reportedly offered, without success, to "settle" the case if only the writers would state that the charges are untrue. The defendants "say they will go away only if McDonald's promises never to pursue such a case again — against anybody." Hoisted on its own arrogance — and its susceptibility to aggressive con men — McDonald's is left embarrassed, its purported representatives no doubt snickering as they write out their bill.

So-called defamation suits simply represent bullies' efforts to harass or censor using hired guns. Anyone initiating such a suit is courting the ignominy that is generally accorded bullies. —RK

**Unpersuaded** — I was surprised to read Jane Shaw's comment that the new interest in Jane Austen at the Cineplex is a "sign that Americans yearn for a return to traditional behavior and values" ("Virtue and virtuosity," March 1996). I've yet to see any of the recent movies based on Austen's work (unless you count *Clueless*, which, in this context, I don't). But I've read Austen, and if the new films are faithful to her books, I think I'm more inclined to agree with *The New Republic's* Stanley Kauffmann: "this *Sense and Sensibility* adaptation becomes a somewhat pitiless exposé of a cruel society: young women whose sole purpose is to find proper husbands, young men whose sole function is to inherit money or to marry it. Thus, rather than extolling the allegedly enviable assurances of the past, the film implicitly admires the present for being in great degree different."

When I read *Pride and Prejudice* in high school, I initially hated it, largely because I didn't like most of the characters and despised the way they lived their lives. After 60 pages or so, dawn finally cracked over my thick skull, and I realized that Austen didn't care for this way of life either. Holding up Jane Austen books to show the wonders of old-fashioned manners is like holding up *Invisible Man* as a testament to American race relations.

This doesn't really affect Shaw's ultimate point — that the state subverts traditional values — since the people who populate *Pride and Prejudice* aren't exactly exemplars of bourgeois virtue. Theirs is the old aristocratic way of life, something



"Don't you understand, Lenny? You don't have to sell Watchtowers anymore."

that free markets tend to undermine, much as the therapeutic state undermines the civil values Shaw and I admire.

Besides, I'd be wary about drawing sweeping conclusions from what's doing well at the box office. After all, more people go to movies like *Judge Dredd* than to movies like *Persuasion*. I'm not sure what social lessons can be drawn from that, but whatever they may be, they probably won't give much solace to those who hope to see a revival of virtuous behavior. —JW

### ***Another Rhodes scholar we never needed*** —

The lamentations in the press over the announced retirement of Sen. Bill Bradley (D-N.J.) were particularly gloomy, and it was no mistake that his announcement coincided with a tour to promote his new book, *Time Present, Time Past: A Memoir*. The anguish commentators feel over the departure of the "moderate middle," the "sensible

center," etc. seems well out of proportion to anything these politicians have actually done over the years. In fact, as Bradley's book demonstrates, he has no original ideas.

But Bradley is from a group that actually prides itself on having no ideas: the Moderates. Their special talents are deal-making, compromising, and supporting the status quo. They are not the hope of the future; they are the people who have caused the problem, by lacking the will to stand up and change the way the government works. Their reaction in the face of an attempt at real change? Give up, leave, and spout holier-than-thou rhetoric all the way out.

The Republic will survive without them, even flourish. Good riddance. —JSR

***PoliSci for beginners*** — Democracy: A system of political governance in which the ayes have it and the nays get it. —SR

## *Medianotes*

***Indifferent to the truth*** — If you've been following political news, you pretty much know the story on the fight for the Republican nomination. Dole went into the race a frontrunner, but he quickly relinquished that role to Pat Buchanan after Buchanan won the Alaska and Louisiana caucuses, finished a strong second in the Iowa caucus, and won the New Hampshire primary. Then Steve Forbes came on strong, winning in Delaware and Arizona and taking the lead. But in a dramatic last-ditch stand, Dole came back from the dead by winning South Carolina big, then swept the primaries on "Junior Tuesday" and virtually assured himself the nomination.

It's a great story, full of drama, surprises, upsets, come-from-behind wins . . . there's just one problem: it is false in almost every detail. From the moment, in late January, when the Forbes campaign was untracked by Dole's stealthy use of fraudulent telephone campaigning, the battle for the nomination was virtually over. By the morning of February 27, Dole had the nomination won. Buchanan was never the frontrunner. In fact, Buchanan never even had a realistic chance at the nomination. Forbes's victories in Delaware and Arizona didn't mark his comeback. They were the last gasps of a mortally wounded campaign. Buchanan's support within the Republican Party, while enthusiastic, was never large enough to give him any prospect of winning. Neither in 1992 nor in 1996 did he ever manage to get even 40% of the vote in a primary; given his views, he never will. For decades, the Republican Party has been the party of free trade. Yes, a minority favors protection from foreign competition (at least for whatever industry this minority happens to be employed in), but the majority does not. Nor do many Republicans

warm to Pat's other big issues: absolute prohibition of abortion, even in cases of rape or incest; keeping foreigners out of the U.S.; government support for religious values. All these have the enthusiastic support of a minority of Republicans — between 15% and 30% in most states. But all are opposed by a large majority in nearly every state.

A candidate like Buchanan, who has the fanatical support of a minority but is the last choice of a substantial majority, can get a significant portion of the vote in a few states where his big issues appeal to an especially large minority. He can even win a few states whose delegates are chosen by caucus, where the zeal of one's followers is magnified by the fact that the less zealous are less likely to sit through the tedious caucus process. If there are enough other candidates to split the vote, he might even finish first in a primary or two, as he did in New Hampshire. But sooner or later, the field will narrow and delegates will accrue to one or another opponent. There is simply no way a candidate ranked least favorite by a large majority of Republicans can capture the nomination — even if he is as good a campaigner, as charming a fellow, and as clever a debater as Buchanan. Buchanan was way behind when he started the race, way behind after Iowa, way behind after New Hampshire, and is way behind today. He will always be way behind.

But of course, the press knows that basketball tournaments sell more papers and get higher ratings than runaway campaigns. And the press delights in the presence of a Republican who is easy to beat up on. So after Buchanan won his caucuses in Alaska and Louisiana, got almost a quarter of the Iowa caucus vote, and finished first in New Hampshire, the press declared Buchanan the man to



beat and portrayed Dole as the man trying to catch up. Never mind that two of Buchanan's victories had come in very conservative caucus states and that his sole primary victory was in an extremely conservative state with a large Roman Catholic electorate, circumstances that would be repeated nowhere else. Never mind that Buchanan's margin in New Hampshire was so tiny that within five days Dole had pulled ahead in cumulative popular vote. (If one includes the "CityVote" primary in November, Dole's cumulative vote always exceeded Buchanan's by more than 5%.)

You would think that the returns from the Arizona, North Dakota, and South Dakota primaries on March 5 would have brought the press back to reality. Sure, Forbes carried Arizona and won all its delegates, and Buchanan finished a fairly strong second in South Dakota, a strong anti-abortion state. But by now, Dole had a substantial lead in the popular vote and was a close second in the delegate count, with Forbes's small lead explained by his good fortune in winning two winner-take-all primaries. At this point, Dole had won two primaries and finished second in the other three. Buchanan had won one, finished second in one, and finished third in three. Forbes had won two, finished second in one, third in one, and fourth in one. Dole had a 5% lead in popular vote over Buchanan and a 6.5% lead over Forbes.

How did the experts play the story? They said that the Dole campaign was practically finished, kaput, dead; that Forbes had made a remarkable comeback; and that Buchanan was now the leader. The most idiotic interpretation came on *Nightline*, which led with a false report that Dole had finished third in Arizona and proceeded to spend

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*It's a great story, full of drama, surprises, upsets, come-from-behind wins . . . there's just one problem: it is false in almost every detail.*

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an entire half hour explaining how and why the Dole campaign had collapsed. The print media followed with an orgy of "in-depth" coverage of the emerging frontrunner, Pat Buchanan, the new threat from the extreme Right. His picture, sometimes retouched to make him appear Satanic or Nixonesque, appeared on the covers of *Time*, *Newsweek*, *U.S. News*, *The Economist*, and *New York*. The apogee of this orgy was *The New Republic's* March 18 issue, which contained seven separate articles attacking Buchanan. Pat Buchanan the nutball right-wing television commentator might not sell magazines, but Pat Buchanan the nutball future nominee of the GOP plainly could.

Four days later, Dole carried South Carolina by a wide margin. This surprised no one who had a glimmer of understanding of American politics: conservative rural fundamentalist Protestants were not likely to vote for big-city Catholic Pat Buchanan even if he did oppose abortion; Steve Forbes's campaign was going nowhere; Lamar Alexander's ludicrous idea-free campaign was relying on nothing but hope that the

rednecks would prefer a fellow Southerner. Most importantly, the South Carolina GOP is perhaps the nation's most powerful political machine, and it was absolutely committed to Bob Dole. Three days later, Dole swept the "Junior Tuesday" primaries, again to no one's surprise.

Except the media's. "Bob Dole's campaign seems to have gone from inert to invincible overnight," explained *The Wall Street Journal*. An upset, a come-from-behind victory, a miracle!

It may seem that there are only two ways to explain why the news media portrayed this dull runaway victory as a dra-

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*The "star" jobs go to people who will stretch the truth a little, ignore the evidence, dramatize a story a little — or maybe a little more, or maybe a lot more — until it reads like a child's sports novel.*

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matic race. One is that they are fools, too stupid to bother to add up the numbers and see that Dole was ahead from the beginning, too stupid to realize that Buchanan could never capture the nomination of a party whose members overwhelmingly oppose him on all his crucial issues, too stupid to see that after his drubbing in Iowa and New Hampshire, Forbes was at best a long shot.

The other explanation is that journalists have at least a glimmering of an understanding that more people read the paper for its sports coverage than for its political coverage, and that if they emulate the journalistic standards of sports reporters (i.e., ignore the truth, dramatize everything) they may prosper.

But the truth probably encompasses parts of both explanations. In America, there are reporters and analysts who know how to add, who have common sense, who are determined to discover the truth and to tell it. But the stories they tell are often not terribly exciting. So they don't get high-visibility jobs with television or newspapers. Instead, the "star" jobs go to people who will stretch the truth, ignore the evidence, dramatize a story a little — or maybe a little more, or maybe a lot more — until it reads like a child's sports novel.

There is, of course, one very interesting story in the campaign: the story of Bob Dole's use of mendacious telemarketers to quash the Forbes campaign and ensure the nomination for himself, calling tens of thousands of early caucus and primary voters and telling them outright lies about Forbes. It was a tough story to get, requiring a lot of legwork and lots of paperwork, and it didn't have strong visual elements. The fact that Dole lied when he claimed that his campaign had not used negative telemarketers was discovered by a small newspaper in Springfield, Illinois, which stumbled on the story when some of the phone salesmen talked about it among friends. The fact that Dole's campaign spent more than \$1,000,000 with a single such telemarketing firm was revealed only when reporters dug through literally thousands of pages of Federal Election Commission reports.

And nobody really cares, anyway. The most prominent journalistic report of the details of Dole's fraudulent use of telephone marketing to knock Forbes out of the race came weeks later, buried on the back page of *The Wall Street Journal* on Super Tuesday, when political attention was clearly focused elsewhere.

No one cares, any more than they cared when Bill Clinton brazenly lied on *60 Minutes* about his affair with Gennifer Flowers or lied repeatedly about how he obtained his draft deferment. This isn't the real world. It's politics. It's a world where fraud that goes undetected until after the election interests only political groupies, whose view is, "If you don't get caught, it's good campaigning." A world where the so-called "watchdogs" are really lapdogs, and pundits are rewarded not for their analytic ability, but their skill at dramatizing the banal. Truth isn't important in this world.

—CAA

**Talking heads, empty skulls** — Friday, March 8, on *The Newshour with Jim Lehrer*, Messrs. Lehrer, Shields, and Gigot discussed why the pundits failed so miserably in analyzing the 1996 GOP presidential primary race. The three analyzed their own failed analyses, and they'll be back next week with even more analysis. There was no trace of self-irony. A recent study in *The Harvard Journal of Press and Politics* revealed that the accuracy rate for predictions on the *McLaughlin Group* is 50.1%, the same as "a monkey flipping a coin." The McGroupies will be back next week too.

The problem is that there is no quality control in the punditocracy — no one ever gets fired. And they are so self-conscious about being part of the process that they lack the objectivity necessary for real analysis. Instead they discuss "perceptions" or the conventional wisdom, and play the horse-race game with opinion polls.

A new low was reached the same night, when a journalist at the Republican debate in Texas referred to Alan Keyes as a radio talk show host with no foreign policy experience. The former ambassador to UNESCO then humiliated the reporter for his lack of preparation and appalling display of ignorance. But that reporter was back on the job the next day.

—JSR

**Columnny** — Out of work? Down on your luck? Not too bright? Perhaps you should think about becoming a newspaper columnist. It's a booming profession where any semi-literate can succeed, so long as you don't rock the boat or think for yourself.

I used to believe that "liberals" — the likes of Molly Ivins and Robert Kuttner — had a corner on the half-wit columnist market. But then I began receiving the national weekly edition of the *Washington Times*, whose editorial columns are filled with ex-Reagan/Bush speechwriters, supply-side theologians, and Beltway-foundation intellectuals. It was in these pages that I first learned from Don Feder that "the war between the president and Congress" over the 1995-96 government shutdowns was a "conflict of visions as stark as any in our history." Feder is a fool if he actually believes the budget battle is comparable to the secession of the southern states in 1860-61, the battles over the New Deal, or the

domestic fights over the war in Vietnam. But this is to be expected: Feder has to embrace opinions as frequently as Liz Taylor embraces new husbands.

Similar pap flows from the pens of Tony Snow, Mona Charen, and Donald Lambro into the pages of my *Times* every week. Richard Grenier, who always appears at the front of the "Commentary" section, is probably the worst of the lot. Usually, his tripe is interchangeable with that of the aforementioned writers. But occasionally, to employ a popular annoying phrase, he pushes the envelope of illiteracy. He sometimes writes as if English were his second language, and perhaps Earth his second planet. A recent column on . . . well, something to do with movies, begins: "Those were the days when the roughest, toughest, meanest critters were the gun-slingers of the Wild West — or at least they were thought so by their admirers gathered at Musso and Frank's on Hollywood Boulevard. Bang! Bang! Caramba! But where have they gone?" After this auspicious opening, he rambles on about Mel Gibson, foreign film critics, Peggy Noonan, and William Randolph Hearst. The beginning and end are only tangentially related to the middle. When he has a mind to, he can be as thick and unreadable as William F. Buckley. And like Buckley, each column is accompanied by his incredibly pompous visage.

The irony in all of this is that the *Times* recently fired columnist Samuel Francis for his white supremacist views. In spite of his obvious dislike of blacks, gays, and other minorities, Francis is one of the more interesting conservative commentators. He does not repeat William Kristol-approved puffery for the Contract With America. In fact, he dismisses congressional Republicans and their hangers-on as the "Stupid Party." Francis is wrong about a lot of things, but he's an independent and idiosyncratic voice. You'd think a paper as filled with warmed-over Gingrichism as the *Times* would want at least one freethinker in its pages.

—CS

**Lust lessons** — *Washington Post* columnist Mark Shields wishes that Bill Clinton would emulate Franklin Roosevelt's words: "I should like to have it said of my first administration that in it, the forces of selfishness and of lust for power met their match. I should like to have it said of my second administration that in it, those forces met their master." I'm not sure about selfishness, but I think it's fair to say that in FDR any lust for power previously seen in America indeed met its match.

—DB

**Our man in Guyana** — How has Jesse Helms been doing as chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee? Not well, argues Barry Yeoman, a North Carolina journalist writing in the February 5 *Nation*. When Democrats filibustered Helms's anti-foreign aid bill, the senator responded by shutting down his committee for four months. "The news media had a field day with Helms's maneuvers," reports Yeoman, "but reporters failed to explain the critical issues at stake in the affected countries. In August, Guyana suffered a massive cyanide spill from a gold mine into its largest river, and no U.S. ambassador was present to marshal cleanup resources."

I'm sure the Guyanese are still cursing Senator No for this.

If there were an ecological disaster in *my* backyard, the first person I'd look to for help would be some foreign bureaucrat who got his job as a political payoff. Damn you, Jesse!

According to Yeoman, Helms has used his new position to fight foreign aid (i.e., subsidies to American multinationals and Third World bureaucrats) and throw sand in the wheels of America's "presence abroad." Furthermore, all his work as Foreign Relations chair has distracted him from his domestic concerns — the censorship, bigotry, and theocracy that used to put him in the headlines. I've never admired, supported, or liked Senator Helms, but Yeoman's article almost made a Congressional Clubber out of me. —JW

**Kiss up and don't tell** — During the speculation over the identity of "Anonymous," author of the exposé of the 1992 Clinton campaign, *Primary Colors*, Mark Miller of *Newsweek* stated that he "could have written that from [his] notes." Well, Mark, thanks for keeping the electorate informed in 1992, back when it would have mattered! The fact that almost anyone in the press corps could have written the book is a sad comment on the journalistic profession. Reporters prize their access to candidates, access which they presumably would lose if they reported the juicy stuff — but what good is access unless it is *used* for something?

The real exposé in *Primary Colors* is of the arrogance and insularity of the press, for whom the author's identity is a bigger story than his depiction of a venal, racist, philandering presidential candidate. But of course the "identity" issue was more interesting to them. They already knew about the president's character. —JSR

**The best magazine that ever was?** — Pundits residing between Wall Street and the Upper West Side have lamented the decline of *The New Yorker* for this or

that reason. What they seem to have missed is the demise of its once-distinguished prose style. This became most apparent to me while reading the issue dated January 8, 1996. In a review of a biography of Malcolm Lowry I found the following: "Bowker draws a convincing and chilling portrait of the two main relationships in Lowry's life. His second wife, Margerie Bonner Lowry, herself a writer, is seen partly as an opportunistic parasite, keeping Lowry afloat but feeding off the aura of his genius." A portrait "drawn" that is both "convincing" and "chilling" has three clichés in less than twice as many words, while the image of a genius generating an "aura" is likewise more hackneyed than visible. (Try to imagine it.) "Keeping . . . afloat" as a simile for *support* is likewise a cliché. "Opportunistic" is redundant with "parasite," if only because its opposite is inconceivable.

On the following page, in a review of the film *Nico Icon*, is this from another *New Yorker* author: "One of the reasons that 'Nico Icon' works is that Nico herself was 'film perfect': lovely to look at in her youth, arresting in middle age, and capable of a thousand transformations while projecting a persona that conveyed ennui, chances missed, and the sense that she was stunned by her own enigmatic arrival." "Film perfect" is not an expression so familiar that it merits quotation marks, which function here to divorce the platitude from its author, rather than enhancing its value. Any "critic" judging anything in terms of "what works" (and thus implicitly of "not works") is a patent beginner; that is the language of gatekeepers making commercial decisions. These are verifiable gaucheries. What's a matter of opinion is my sense that the image beginning with the word "capable" and ending with "arrival" is incomprehensible, precisely because it is a series of clichés strung together to be individually acceptable but in sum obscure.

Need I go on?

—RK

## Politics

**Is integrity a family value?** — James Carville, in a February 1, 1996 interview with CNN's Bernard Shaw, gave some insight into the issues the Clinton re-election team will stress this fall: "I think what we've had is we've had stagnant wages in this country for too long, and we've had a growing number of children growing up in non-traditional non-two-parent families. And I think that that's, by and large, what I hope the '96 campaign is about." President Clinton began this drift towards family values rhetoric last August, when he presented his 14-point American Family Values Agenda, a list of political proposals — most of which involved funding for federal education and anti-crime and health-care programs.

Just for the record, compare this to candidate Clinton's July 16, 1992 acceptance speech at the Democratic convention:

"Frankly, I'm fed up with politicians in Washington lecturing the rest of us about 'family values.' Our families have values. But our government doesn't. I want an America where 'family values' live in our actions, not just in our speeches. An America that includes every family. Every traditional family and every extended family. Every two-parent family, every single-parent family, and every foster family. Every family."

Is there any reason why anyone should believe anything Bill Clinton or anybody remotely associated with him says? If so, I'd like to know it.

—JSR

**Rich, mean, and old** — Each of the leading Republican candidates brought some strengths to bear, but none touched all the bases. Forbes has money, endless

amounts of money. Buchanan knows how to be mean when he has to be — even when he doesn't have to be. Dole has experience; he's put in his time; he's paid his dues; hell — he's just damned old!

Each of these features is good by itself. But what has been lacking to this point is the complete package. The party should have dumped these three also-rans and drafted the one man who combines all of their assets. The perfect GOP nominee for 1996 is none other than . . . Montgomery Burns! ("That's 'Mr. Burns' to you, Simpson.") —LEL

**Dole's flat tax** — Steve Forbes's abortive campaign proved the electoral appeal of the flat tax. So it's not surprising that Forbes's opponents began to claim it for themselves. After Forbes won the Arizona primary, Pat Buchanan claimed that the flat tax had not been "worked up by the boys in the Yacht Club" but actually had been Buchanan's idea in the first place; Forbes had stolen it from him. Dole — who had spent millions attacking the proposal in thousands of secret, fraudulent telephone calls and hundreds of television ads that misrepresented its impact on taxpayers — suddenly picked up the flat tax. Of course, he didn't do so without checking the polls, which revealed that while people liked the idea of a flat tax, they also liked deductions for mortgage interest and charities. So he added these deductions to his plan. For the primary in New York, where state and local taxes are outrageously high, Dole added a deduction for state and local taxes. Then he let on that the flat tax should have two rates, not just one.

In short, Dole's flat tax is about the same as Ronald Reagan's proposed tax reform of 1986 — except that Reagan did not want to allow a deduction for state and local taxes, figuring that such deductibility was in effect a federal subsidy for state and local taxes. In other words, Dole's flat tax would be even less flat than Reagan's 1986 reform. But the comparison breaks down: I don't recall Reagan ever calling his proposal a flat tax. —RWB

**Das Buchanan** — Working in the office of a libertarian publication, it is no surprise that I often have to defend the frequent kind words that I have for Patrick J. Buchanan. It's not as if I'm unaware of his faults. He would ban the *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issue if given the chance, and I don't care for his protectionism. But Buchanan has qualities that made him, for me, the best of the Republicans:

- He has *some* good things to say. Buchanan would have U.S. "allies" pay for their own defense and would abolish foreign aid. He favors a flat tax and is, relatively speaking, an isolationist. Try to imagine Bob Dole promising to bring the New World Order "crashing down," as Pat Buchanan has.

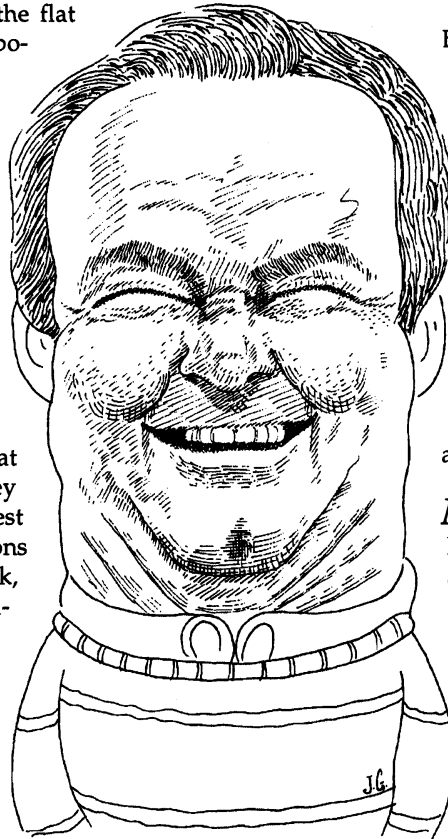
- He is entertaining. From his days of putting words into Spiro Agnew's mouth to his bouts with Michael Kinsley on *Crossfire*, Buchanan has never been boring.

- He helped destroy King George. Once you discount the real criminals (Wilson, LBJ, etc.), George Bush has to be the worst U.S. president of the century. He was a feckless troll who did nothing but kill people, raise taxes, and expand government. Pat Buchanan had him in his cross-hairs when Bill Clinton was still whore-hopping his way across Arkansas.

- He has made good enemies. Anyone who is despised by George Will, Bill Bennett, Norman Podhoretz, and Jack Kemp can't be all bad.

- He was the only *man* in the race. Buchanan is imbued with an appealing zest for life. His biography, *Right from the Beginning*, tells unequivocally where he comes from. He is, among other things, Scotch-Irish, Roman Catholic, and Mississippi Confederate. The other Republican candidates were mostly faceless organization men (Bob Dole, Richard Lugar) or grotesque cartoon characters (Alan Keyes, Robert Dornan).

I realize I'm not going to win many converts with this line of argument. Buchanan has too many flaws to gain much libertarian support. But his virtues are worth noting. —CS



**My enemy's enemy** — The Two-Minute Hate that greeted Pat Buchanan after his victory in New Hampshire ought to teach Middle Americans once and for all that our ruling class not only despises them but lives in mortal fear that someday, somehow, the old ghosts — of Jefferson and Shays, of Jackson and Long — will return, and the revenants will inspire a revolt. No, Buchanan isn't perfect. In fact, as I cheered him on one night from the comfort of my couch, watching TV in what now passes for an

act of citizenship, I realized that I disagreed with him on tariffs, an abortion amendment, a moratorium on immigration — but *so what?* As the Mugwumps said of Grover Cleveland, we love him for the enemies he's made.

Pat's subsequent flare-out — it's not easy to win primaries when ABC/NBC/CBS/*Time*/*Newsweek* depicts you as Lucifer's black-sheep brother — does have a bright side. At least it averted a meeting with the inevitable Arthur Bremer who awaited him on the road to San Diego. —BK

**Aiming for the top** — The spectre of Pat Buchanan still frightens many people, especially those who worry about his tendency to play on fear and hatred. But a Buchanan presidency would have many beneficial side-effects. Consider just one: it might turn leftists away from gun control. —TWV

**Stardust memories** — Barring a sudden heart attack, indictment, or unforgivable political *faux pas*, Bob Dole



is sure to become the Republican nominee for president. Until recently, though, there were three major candidates in the Republican fray. Dole was the anointed candidate, the favorite of traditional party elites. Steve Forbes was the preppy candidate, embraced by unreconstructed supply-siders. And Pat Buchanan was the fuck-you candidate. He railed against the Powers That Be — and some That Aren't — no matter where it landed him on the political spectrum. He even quoted the late author of *Das Kapital* on the perils of free trade, making him the closest we've had to a Marxist Republican since Vito Marcantonio was in his prime. Buchanan's appeal had little to do with his philosophy (such as it is) and nothing to do with his personal qualifications (such as they are) for the job. He was there so voters could feel like they were sticking it to the Man. On that level, he was my favorite of the lot.

There were other candidates, too — loony Bob Dornan, booming Alan Keyes, plain-talkin' Morry Taylor. None of them had any chance of winning, so they got to stick their necks out a little farther than the frontrunners did. Eventually, they disappeared from the race, short of breath and short of funds. And the campaign became a duller spectacle to watch.

"What do you think about the presidential candidates?"  
 "I prefer the earlier, funnier ones."  
 —JW

**A mispacked court** — At the *Liberty* Conference last September, I asked a panel of prominent libertarians a hypothetical question: If the presidential election were held today, and you had to vote in it, and your choices were limited to Bob Dole and Bill Clinton, for whom would you cast your ballot? Four of the panelists said they'd vote for Clinton. Their thinking was that however bad Clinton may be, Dole would be worse: a Washington insider bereft of principle, he would be Nixon II, leading Republicans even deeper into the jungle of pork, high taxes, and gargantuan government. The one holdout confessed that he'd probably vote for Clinton if he were faced with such an odious choice, but there was one good argument to be made for Dole. The president controls judicial appointments, and Dole (he figured) would be likely to appoint people less favorable to power and more favorable to individual rights.

In 1988, John and Tina Bennis purchased a beat-up old 1977 Pontiac for \$600. A few months later, John solicited a prostitute while in their car. Local law (this was in Michigan)

authorizes the state to seize property used in such heinous crimes, so the old Pontiac was taken by the police. Tina Bennis pointed out that she had a half interest in the car, and it was not fair to punish her for her husband's crime. A Michigan court ruled that her half interest amounted to so little money that she could go screw herself. (Or, as the *New York Times* put it, "a state circuit court judge in Detroit responded to Mrs. Bennis' request to insulate her half-interest in the car by noting that the value was so slight that 'there's practically nothing left' after court costs were deducted.") Mrs. Bennis appealed, supported by a brief from the Institute for Justice, a sort of American Civil Liberties Union for property rights. The case wound its way up to the Supreme Court, which ruled on March 5 that there was nothing in the Constitution that could prevent a state from punishing one person for the crime of another, at least when the punishment amounted to only \$300.

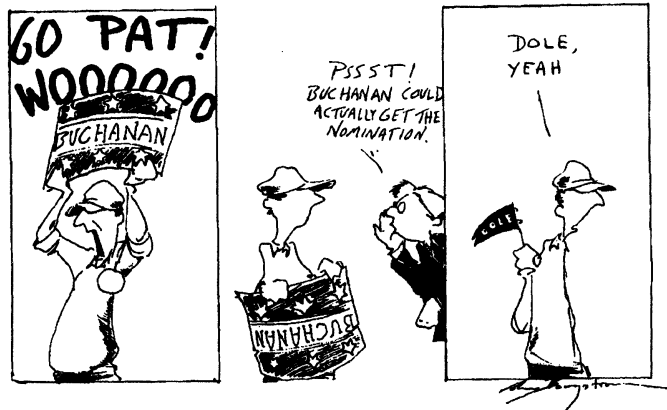
Chief Justice William Rehnquist observed in the majority opinion that "an owner's interest in property may be forfeited by reason of the use to which the property is put even though the owner did not know that it was to be put to such use." In a concurring opinion, Justice Clarence Thomas observed that "if improperly used, forfeiture could become more like a roulette wheel employed to raise revenue from innocent but hapless owners whose property is unforeseeably misused," but that nothing in the Constitution could stop such an injustice: "This case is ultimately a reminder that the federal Constitution does not prohibit everything that is intensely undesirable."

Now, the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution, with which the Supreme Court is presumably familiar, happens to state, "No person shall be . . . deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation." One now has to wonder what interpretive machine has transformed this clear idea into the Supreme Court's opinions. Perhaps we are to conclude that legislation allowing the government to steal the property of innocent people isn't covered by the Fifth Amendment. Or perhaps we are to conclude that when the State of Michigan passes a law authorizing the police to seize the property of innocent people, that's "due process of law."

It's worth noting that the judges who dissented were Kennedy, Souter, Breyer, and Stevens — a moderate conservative, an eclectic, a Clinton appointee alleged to be a leftist, and the justice usually considered furthest to the left. The majority consisted of four conservatives and purported conservative-libertarians, plus Clinton appointee Ginsberg.

When I hear libertarians suggest that a vote for Bob Dole will at least have a salutary effect on future Supreme Court nominees, I shall think of this decision.  
 —RWB

**Bad cop, worse cop** — The Silly Season has begun, first with some warmup stretches in Louisiana, then a dash through Iowa, followed by the official *mano a mano* primary combat in New Hampshire. Then, just when the purveyors of public wisdom solemnly united in declaring that the senior senator from the Sunflower State had stumbled, perhaps irrevocably, with Pat Buchanan the unlikely deliverer of mortal wounds, Mr. Dole wrapped up the nomi-



nation with a string of primary landslides. What had happened?

Not for the first time, the pundits had applied their full powers of analysis to a delicate political phenomenon and thereby managed to get it precisely backwards. What should have been apparent even before the New Hampshire sleight of hand is that Buchanan, rather than being Dole's *bête noire*, is in fact the best thing that has happened to him since God smiled on the senator and miraculously lifted all the gray from his hair.

Until now, Dole has been a consistent loser in presidential races. Why is this? It cannot be because of his incoherent mumble: compared with Ford and Bush, Dole is a veritable Demosthenes. Nor does he lack sufficient intelligence to occupy a post within a heartbeat or two of the presidency: the example of Mr. Quayle is, in this regard, exemplary. Dole is, to be sure, dull, but he is outflanked on the soporific side by Vice President Al Gore. And, of course, as he points out on every feasible occasion, Dole has been waiting for his turn since — well, just about since feuds in his part of the world were settled with bows and arrows.

Dole's problem is his unlikeableness. Try as he might, he can't help saying things that are downright nasty. Yes, some of his acerbic asides are funny — and some zinged people deserve the hit — but it's simply creepy to watch and listen to Dole as his thin lips stretch sardonically across his midwestern visage and he launches a barrage of barbs. Most of us somewhere in our past had a vice principal like that, and we did not relish another visit to his office. So even if we respected Dole's service as minority/majority leader (or, more reasonably, gave thanks that at least he wasn't Dick Gephardt or Jesse Helms) when it came time to vote we looked elsewhere.

But now Dole has been freed from the third-rate Nixon persona that has haunted him for these many years, and the agent of deliverance is none other than that first-rate Spiro Agnew, Pat Buchanan. It is difficult to retain the image of Dole the Meanie when he shares the podium at presidential debates with a candidate who truly oozes nativist malice and authoritarian bile. If Dole occasionally knees an opponent in the groin, it's because something untoward has come over him; when Buchanan does so, it is for the sheer sport of the occasion. Dole doesn't seem exactly to like people, but Buchanan's fondness for them is the political equivalent of Hannibal Lecter's. If there is some group against whom an animus can be evoked for political gain, Buchanan gleefully places it in his sights and pulls the trigger: homosexuals, Zionists, blacks, illegal immigrants, legal immigrants, abortionists, corporations, foreigners. Dole may not dote on the above groups, but at least he will tolerate them, much as he has tolerated the Democrats across the aisle.

Accordingly, Bob Dole has been anointed the Great White Hope — except for Alan Keyes, there is no other kind of Hope among the Republican tribe — for decency and Marquis-of-Queensberry-rules politics. A vote for Dole is no longer simply an endorsement of narrow-minded midwestern Republican boosterism, but a protest against xenophobic brutishness.

Do we chalk up the makeover to happenstance? Or is there more here than meets the eye? Might it not be the Dole

people who launched and funded the Buchanan campaign? Is this political tussling as exquisitely choreographed as the full nelsons and body slams of the World Wrestling Federation? Are we being set up by the same people who gave us the Gulf of Tonkin resolution and the Designated Hitter rule?

I shall say no more here. But look for my name in the credits of the next conspiracy-shredding movie blockbuster. —LEL

**Paul runs off** — In the Texas primary on Super Tuesday, Ron Paul advanced into an April 9 runoff against incumbent Republican congressman Greg Laughlin, thereby assuring Republican voters in Texas' 14th district that their nominee for Congress in 1996 will be someone who was not a Republican a few years earlier. After serving in Congress from 1976 to 1984 and trying unsuccessfully for a term in the Senate, Paul jumped to the Libertarian Party and ran as its presidential nominee in 1988, only to jump back to the GOP a few years ago. Laughlin, on the other hand, was elected to office as a Democrat and jumped to the GOP when he smelled the coffee after the 1994 GOP landslide.

This year's battle proved an expensive one, despite its rather small audience of about 34,000 GOP voters. Laughlin won financial support from PACs and regular Republicans, who want him to succeed in hopes of encouraging more Democrat incumbents to switch parties. Paul depended on small donations from conservatives and libertarians. More than \$1,600,000 was spent in the primary, which amounted to approximately \$500 for every vote cast.

Laughlin attacked Paul mostly for Paul's libertarian background, bringing up libertarian positions on so-called "social issues" in order to reduce Paul's support among religious conservatives. Paul attacked Laughlin as a big-government, big-spending Democrat, and attempted to maintain the support of the religious Right by citing his own longtime opposition to legalized abortion.

When the dust settled, Laughlin had 42% of the vote and Paul 32%. The third major contender in the race, Jim Deats, whose 24% of the vote prevented either Paul or Laughlin from getting the majority that would prevent a runoff, is close to Paul's thinking. Deats, *The Wall Street Journal* reports, has agreed to support Paul in the runoff.

Paul is probably the most successful explicitly libertarian politician in American history. As a congressman in the 1970s and '80s, he had a wonderful record of opposing taxes, supporting civil liberties, opposing government spending (even military projects in his own district), and opposing the expansionist foreign policy popular with both parties. Often he stood alone in defense of individual liberty, notably in his opposition to various "anti-crime" measures that greatly increased the power of federal police.

Both sides expect a lot more heavy spending in the runoff, with both sides drawing on the same sources that financed the first round. Paul is rated the slight favorite, despite his second-place finish. He is expected to pick up most of Deats's support, and his own support is rated very solid. It is also worth noting that over the past 15 years, no incumbent congressman forced into a runoff has managed to survive the second round. —CAA

## Politics

# The Life and Death of the Forbes Campaign

by Chester Alan Arthur

Why it flourished, how it was destroyed, and what it means.

Steve Forbes never called himself a libertarian, but his presidential campaign was based on a number of libertarian themes. Its central proposal, the flat tax, combined a major tax cut with an end to using the tax code for social engineering and political favors. Forbes proposed to tax all income once, and all at the same rate. (The sole exception was a reasonable exemption for every person.) No longer would the tax on corporate profits be paid twice, first by the corporation and later by the stockholder. Interest income wouldn't be taxed at all, and interest payments wouldn't be deductible; neither would charitable donations or state or local taxes.

A person's (or a business's) tax return would be remarkably simple. The tax code would be reduced from millions of words to a few thousand. Days spent filling out returns would be virtually eliminated. So would tax evasion schemes, tax shelters, uneconomic investments made to get tax breaks, and all the other distortions caused by the current Byzantine system.

Indeed, the biggest threat that Forbes's scheme poses to the current political structure is that it would take the granting and removing of tax breaks out of the political process. Under the current tax code, individuals and businesses can make or save huge sums of money by lobbying for relatively small changes in the code. Not surprisingly, the lobbying industry is big, and the senators and representatives who sit on committees that write changes in the code get huge "campaign donations" (i.e. bribes)

from lobbyists. Under the Forbes proposal, all this would change. People would invest their money and energy in trying to profit by fulfilling consumer wants, instead of filling out tax forms, investing in schemes to reduce tax liability, and bribing congressmen.

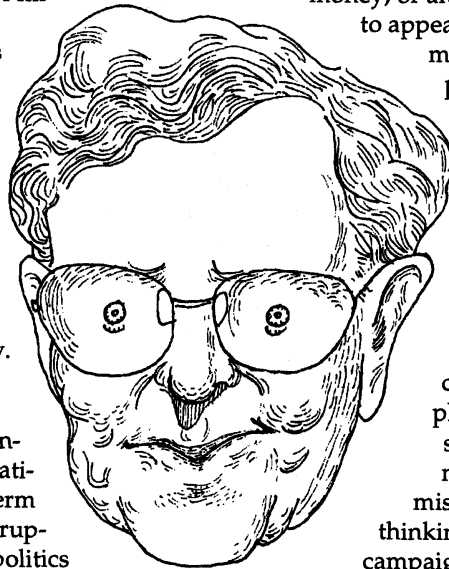
Forbes's other proposals also struck libertarian themes. He bravely spoke about allowing people to opt out of Social Security. He advocated school choice, a step away from government control and toward privatization. He favored term limits, to end the corruption inherent in the politics of the welfare state. He even called for a return to the gold standard. He was pro-choice on abortion, at least in comparison to other Republican contenders. And he never descended into the swamp of anti-civil-libertarian emotion in pursuit of a "war on crime."

And unlike the other candidates — Republican, Democrat, and Libertarian

— Forbes was willing to spend his own money on his race, and could afford to do it. This meant he had no need to invest a lot of time asking people for money, or altering his program to appeal to donors. It also meant that he didn't pick the taxpayer's pocket to finance his campaign, unlike the rich Republicans in the race.

Political journalism, of course, is not very concerned with principles, or even policy, so by and large the media pretty much missed the libertarian thinking behind Forbes's campaign themes. Indeed, they missed the fact that he was

thinking at all; he was almost universally portrayed as a classic single-issue candidate — slightly daft on the subject, don't you know? The only exceptions that I noticed to this particular policy of stereotyping could be found in an article in *The New Republic* and an article in *The Nation*. Unfortunately, neither of these articles gives



anything like judicious consideration to the ideas that they admit Forbes has.

In the March 25 *TNR*, John B. Judis identifies the libertarian implications of the Forbes program:

For two decades, Republican presidential candidates have threatened to dismantle Lyndon Johnson's Great Society, while simultaneously pledging to preserve such popular liberal reforms as Social Security and Medicare. These reforms were based on the assumption that, without government intervention, corporate capitalism would create extremes of wealth and power that would undermine the American commitment to social equality. Democrats and Republicans from Woodrow Wilson to Ronald Reagan quarreled over the extent of intervention but not over the need for it. Malcolm S. "Steve" Forbes Jr. is the first major presidential candidate since Barry Goldwater to step on what he calls the "third rail of American politics" and directly attack these reforms. . . . And he's getting votes — not enough to be nominated, but enough to have a long-term impact on Republican and national politics. . . . Forbes himself seems to believe sincerely that government lies at the root of every American problem . . . He thinks the current American economy, if freed from government intervention, will create an "economic boom of historic proportions."

Needless to say, Judis is no fan of Forbes's libertarian agenda. He ridicules virtually every aspect of Forbes's program. He describes Forbes's observation that "the way you drive wages up is by having a productive, vigorous economy" as "sincere but crazy optimism." But this pales in comparison,

he thinks, to Forbes's support for a sound dollar based on gold. This "frivolous proposal," Judis explains, is "perhaps his loopyest."

In the March 11 *Nation*, Marc Cooper is shocked by the kind of people that Forbes has attracted to his campaign:

The problem for Forbes, however, is that he may be attracting a thriving new subculture in American life: economic nuts (though they might prefer the "libertarian" label) . . . five of six in a group of young Forbes activists I spent three hours with rejected any role for government in legislating or enforcing social morality. But then again, they rejected just about any role for government, except maintaining the army, the police and the courts.

Cooper goes on to describe the table talk at a Forbes fundraiser in Arizona, in which all but one participant expressed opinions that might easily take place at a dinner table at a Libertarian Party convention: the income tax is "nothing but class envy," it "penalizes achievement" and "steals from people who work hard." Social Security? "Let's privatize it." "Welfare is stealing from me." Like Judis, Cooper is aghast. He is especially distraught that the opinions come from people who are "all middle class or above . . . very political and very articulate."

From Cooper's account, it seems almost certain than none of the libertarians had ever been affiliated with the Libertarian Party or any other libertarian organization. This suggests that there are a lot of potential activists out there remaining to be tapped. It remains to be seen whether Forbes will remain active in the Republican Party and attempt to keep these new activists involved. But if he does, the GOP could very well turn in a more libertarian direction.

Of course, libertarians have noticed the Forbes campaign. In an Internet survey concluded February 12, libertarians were asked: "If one of the major

declared Democrat or Republican candidates stands out as being more libertarian or less statist than the others, select their [sic] name from the list below." Over half of the respondents selected Forbes, who easily eclipsed "None of the Above." Curiously, respondents who said they expected to be delegates to the Libertarian Party convention were 18% more likely to identify Forbes than those who didn't expect to be delegates, which suggests that Forbes's libertarianism is more

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*Until the Forbes campaign ran aground on the invisible shoal of Dole's telephone smear campaign, it was demonstrating that many Americans will respond favorably to a libertarian agenda.*

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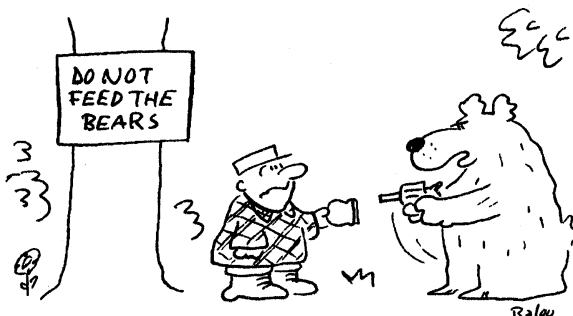
evident to libertarian activists than it is to others who sympathize with the movement.

Thoughtful libertarians have long wondered how things might have worked out if so many libertarians had not left the GOP in the 1970s to form the Libertarian Party. The success that the Forbes campaign enjoyed suggests that the move may have been unwise. Certainly the presence of an additional 10,000 libertarian activists within the GOP would have moved it in a different, more libertarian direction.

In the meantime, libertarian activists of all parties ought to be thinking about how they can mobilize the support for a libertarian agenda that the Forbes campaign mobilized in the early Republican primaries.

## The Death of the Forbes Campaign

Forbes entered a race against four well-established politicians, and virtually no one had ever heard of him. Furthermore, his opponents all had important allies within the Republican Party, and political organizations in place. He had none. So he followed a simple strategy: invest your time and money in television advertising that articulates your program, concentrating your efforts on the two most



"Freeze, sucker!"

# **“Voilà logic!”**

—P. J. O' ROURKE

**“A  
serious  
blueprint  
for change.”**

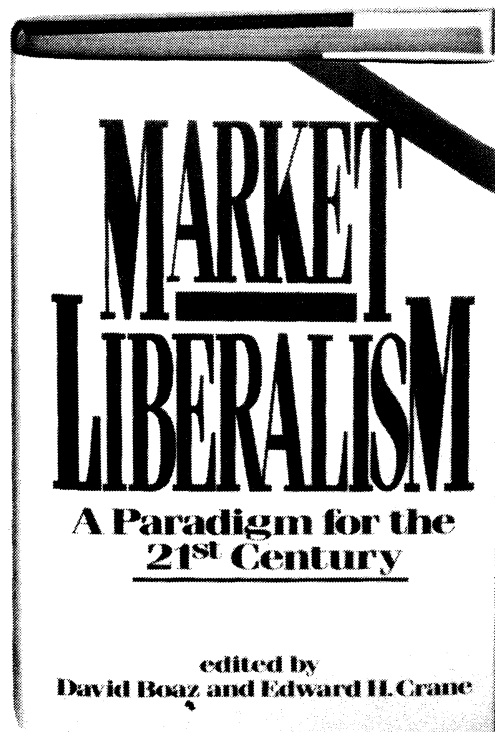
—GEORGE F. WILL

**“A futuristic  
vision ...  
charts new  
territory for  
the decades  
ahead.”**

—GOV. WILLIAM F. WELD

**“Should be  
the principal  
compass  
for  
policymakers  
and  
public servants.”**

—MALCOLM S. FORBES, JR.



**“Provocative new  
ideas ... a road  
map for our  
new president.”**

—GOV. L. DOUGLAS WILDER

**“Should be read  
and re-read  
by every member  
of Congress.”**

—JACK KEMP

**“A  
splendid  
collection  
of  
informed  
analyses ...  
must reading.”**

—MILTON FRIEDMAN

**“Bristles  
with  
uncomfortable  
ideas.”**

—PETE DU PONT

**“Facts,  
reason,  
clear-eyed  
and  
disinterested  
analysis ...  
voilà logic!”**

—P. J. O'ROURKE

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visible races. If you can do well in Iowa and New Hampshire, your lack of fame and organization can be overcome.

The Forbes strategy worked pretty well, at least through late January, by which time he was the frontrunner in New Hampshire and within striking distance of Dole in Iowa. Then Forbes got hit by a meteorite and was destroyed almost overnight.

No, I'm not talking about the gangbang the other Republican candidates

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*Political journalism, of course, is not very interested in principles, or even policy, so by and large the media pretty much missed the libertarian thinking behind Forbes's campaign themes.*

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inflicted on the flat tax at the Iowa debate. Sure, Lamar Alexander denounced it as "a truly nutty idea in the Jerry Brown tradition." And Pat Buchanan said "it looks like one that was worked up by the boys at the yacht basin." Nor do I refer to all the denunciations of Forbes for being a millionaire. (The other Republican contenders, by the way, were also millionaires.)

And no, I'm not talking about the use of "negative" television advertising, widely heralded at the time. Yes, Forbes did run advertising pointing out how frontrunner Bob Dole had supported tax increases and was part of the Washington power structure. And there was probably some reaction against these ads. But they also did Forbes a lot of good — they were needed to counter Dole's false claims of being a longtime opponent of tax increases and a critic of big government.

Forbes's mistake was failing to realize early enough the depths of fraud and deceit to which the Dole campaign would lower itself. About a week before the Iowa caucuses, the Dole campaign secretly hired telemarketing firms to call unsuspecting voters. The professionals posed as pollsters or representatives of credible organizations,

giving voters false information under false pretenses.

Thousands of Iowa farmers received phone calls from telemarketers following this script:

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm calling with a special message from Iowa's Farm Families. The Iowa Farm Bureau has adopted a resolution that opposes the flat tax like the one offered by candidate Steve Forbes. Under the Forbes flat tax, Iowa's farmers would pay an average of \$5,000 more in taxes.

There is no organization called Iowa's Farm Families. But there is an Iowa Farm Bureau, and it certainly did not adopt a resolution against Forbes's (or any other) flat tax plan. And Forbes's plan would lower the taxes on Iowa farmers, as it would lower them on virtually all other Americans. All the claims were false, and the first two can be proven false very easily. If the same script had been used in a television ad, Dole would have been denounced by every newspaper, every television station, and every decent Iowan for his conscious deception.

Other voters got calls from people claiming to be pollsters for "National Market Research," another nonexistent organization. People were asked whom they intended to vote for. If they indicated support for Forbes, they were asked follow-up questions beginning with "Are you aware that Steve Forbes . . ." and ending with a claim, often false, designed to turn the voter against him.

One of the firms making such phone calls for Dole was Campaign Tel, headquartered in New York City. An employee of Campaign Tel's office in Springfield, Illinois, said telemarketers at his office alone made between 10,000 and 30,000 phone calls following this and similar scripts. According to press reports, Dole used other telemarketers, too, targeting other potential participants in the Iowa caucuses. Forbes invested in broadcasting his message; Dole narrowcasted his, honing in on those most likely to participate in the coming caucus or primary.

The genius of Dole's tactic was that it could be conducted in near-secrecy. This enabled Dole to lie with impunity, leaving Forbes unable to respond, un-

aware even of the lies told about him until the damage had been done.

Of course, the Forbes campaign eventually got reports of the massive fraud, and Forbes accused Dole of being behind the effort. Dole denied the accusation, and responded, of course, by accusing Forbes of dirty campaigning.

On January 25, Forbes had risen above the pack of GOP challengers to Dole, with 18% in the polls of likely caucusers, versus Dole's 26%. By February 10, only four days before the caucuses, Forbes had cut Dole's lead to just 1%. But then Dole's secret telephone campaign went into high gear. At the February 14 caucuses, Dole captured 26% of the vote. Forbes finished a distant fourth, with just 10%.

The pattern repeated itself in New Hampshire. On February 13, Forbes, Dole, and Buchanan were in a virtual three-way tie. But with Dole's secret telephone smear and news of Forbes's

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*The genius of Dole's method was that it could be practiced in near-secrecy. This enabled Dole to lie, leaving Forbes unable to respond.*

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dismal showing in Iowa, Forbes's support fell like a rock. He finished fourth once again, and his chances of winning the Republican nomination disappeared.

Forbes came back to win the Delaware primary four days later, and three days after that, he won the Arizona primary. But it was too little, too late. By now the press had painted him as an also-ran and was focusing its energy on two major stories, both of them palpably false: the emergence of Pat Buchanan as frontrunner and the sudden death of Bob Dole's hopes. What would have happened if Dole had not engaged in his secret telephone smear campaign? It's impossible to know for sure. But one thing is certain: until the Forbes campaign ran aground on this invisible shoal, it was demonstrating that many Americans will respond favorably to a libertarian agenda. □

## Criticism

# The Chemical Inquisition

by Robert H. Nelson

"The lamp of American Puritanism . . . became converted into a huge bonfire, or rather a blast furnace, with flames mounting to the very heavens, and sinners stacked like cordwood at the hands of an eager black gang."

—H.L. Mencken

Our Puritan heritage has left us the view of America as a model for the world, the place where God's full design will first be realized. Puritans see the world as a struggle between good and evil, with America leading the forces of good. But the devil is always seeking to corrupt the innocent and sow discord. Constant vigilance is required to subdue this force for evil.

The Puritan impulse has produced some noble causes, such as the movement against slavery, in which New England abolitionists applied the moral righteousness of their Boston forebears to a worldly purpose. But it also has let loose in the land the fear of devils, giving rise to such public hysteria and religious persecutions as the Salem witch trials.

Puritanism pervades the American experience. Today's prosecutions of alleged child abusers, often brought to trial on no evidence other than flimsy, crackpot-therapist-induced "repressed memories," are eerily reminiscent of the Salem hysteria. So are campaigns to ban pornography, and some feminists' claims that all heterosexual sex reflects unworthy motives. But these developments pale in comparison to a much larger campaign to purge the corrupting presence of chemicals from American life. In chemical substances, our new Puritans see contaminants that threaten the very fabric of American life. The synthetic products of modern science have become our contemporary witches. They must be suppressed and eliminated.

There is no real disagreement

about this between Republicans and Democrats, though they do disagree about which chemicals threaten us most. Democrats tend to focus on dioxin, Alar, asbestos, and other environmental pollutants, and call for a federal police authority to protect the citizenry. Republicans prefer to fixate on heroin, cocaine, and other psychoactive drugs. Both parties call for a nationwide crusade to purify the nation.

Last year, House Speaker Newt Gingrich took up the Drug War theme with great enthusiasm, suggesting the execution of some drug dealers. Gingrich's get-tough approach follows in the steps of Bush's Drug Czar William Bennett, who warned in his 1989 report to Congress that the "evils" of drugs raised the prospect of "personal, social, medical, and economic catastrophe."<sup>1</sup> President Bush denounced drugs as a moral "scourge" upon the nation, and called for vastly increased enforcement activity and spending.<sup>2</sup>

These Republicans, to be sure, had already seen the environmentalist brand of chemical prohibitionism at work. The Clean Water Act of 1972 aimed to ban all pollution from the

waters of the United States by 1985, whatever the cost. Earlier, the Delaney Clause had banned even the minutest part per billion of any food additive that has been shown to have the potential to cause cancer in tests on any laboratory animal.

These fears play on the modern anxiety that science and technology may be not the savior but rather the destroyer of life. Science, many people suspect, may be the devil's final trick. First he tempted us with scientific knowledge, offering people new power over nature and vast material rewards. Then he used the very same instrument to destroy mankind. Synthetic chemicals are the modern apple, and society today faces expulsion from Eden.

But we can be spared that fate if our politicians are vigilant enough — or so drug warriors like Gingrich and environmental crusaders like Henry Waxman tell us in their different ways. They can save us from our fallen selves.

The Bible tells us that playing God is not only a great sin, but one sure to provoke His wrath. This theme appears first in the book of Genesis and is repeated many times through-

out the rest of the Bible. In the story of Noah, for example, good times spread in the land, the people turn to evil ways, and God must impose severe punishment — here, as elsewhere, in the form of an environmental catastrophe. Now modern science, seeking to remake God's creation, threatens the same severe punishment in the same form. Environmental Jeremiahs warn that the sinners of the world will soon face their just fate, with global warming and other supposedly imminent results of human industry leading to

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*Science, many suspect, may be the devil's final trick.*

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widespread flooding, famine, disease, and other disasters.

The drug warriors focus their punishments on the iniquity of the inner cities. It is here above all that people have succumbed to chemical temptations. For a few moments of pleasure, they have sold their souls. And they will surely pay a price as a different type of environmental calamity strikes, already visible in the social decay, crime, and other hellish conditions of the inner city. But if the forces of good are sufficiently vigilant and mount a crusade to purge the evils of drugs from the world, some people may yet be saved.

Like the crusades of the Middle Ages, America's campaigns against evil have fallen short of expectations. Nineteenth-century abolitionists succeeded in freeing the slaves, but — owing to their own intransigence and extremism — they failed to solve the problem of black-white relations in the South. In the aftermath of the Civil War, black slavery was replaced with a century of almost equally severe repression. The temperance movement, which ended in complete failure with the repeal of alcohol prohibition in 1933, repeated the experience.

### The Costs of Intolerance

Having failed to learn from history, we are condemned to repeat it. When lawmakers initiate moral crusades — when their goal is to banish evil — practical results, social tolerance, and

individual rights generally end up taking a back seat to moralistic posturing and self-righteous condemnation. Laws assert religious symbolism and ignore the disastrous practical consequences of mandating personal choice. It becomes difficult or impossible to ask questions about the costs and benefits of laws. Indeed, some environmental laws specifically prohibit consideration of costs and benefits. Drug policy advocates who advocate "zero tolerance" of drugs and drug users speak in the same absolutist terms.

The high costs to American society of environmental policy — more than \$100 billion per year just for laws administered by the Environmental Protection Agency — are probably matched by the costs of drug policy. The costs of drug enforcement, although sometimes harder to measure than the costs of pollution enforcement, include:

- (1) *Widespread criminal activity affecting all Americans.* About 10% of all violent offenses and 25% of all property offenses in the United States are committed "to get money for drugs," according to Justice Department surveys of current jail inmates.
- (2) *Destabilization of other countries' political systems.* In Mexico and Colombia, for example, drug-related corruption is rampant.
- (3) *Increased taxes for enforcement of drug laws.* The federal government's direct expenditures alone totalled \$13.3 billion in 1995 (up from \$1.5 billion in 1981). State and local governments spent \$15.9 billion in 1991, the year with the most recent data available.
- (4) *Overloading the criminal justice system.* In 1993 alone, 1.1 million people were arrested for drug offenses, "bankrupting the criminal justice system [and] leaving it without the resources to punish violators of other laws," in the words of Harvard professor Mark Kleiman.<sup>3</sup>
- (5) *Massive expansion of the prison population.* Drug offenders now constitute 61% of federal prison inmates, up from 25% in 1980. More than 300,000 people are being held in all U.S. prisons for drug offenses at a

typical cost of \$30,000 to \$50,000 per inmate per year, a main reason for the explosive growth of the U.S. prison population. That's a total cost of about \$12 billion per year.

- (6) *Transformation of many inner-city areas into virtual war zones.* The culture of urban crime and poverty is largely a product of the War on Drugs.

Despite its enormous costs, the Drug War has done little to reduce illegal drug use. The number of casual recreational users has dropped somewhat over the past ten years, but the most recent data show this trend is reversing.<sup>4</sup> Hard-core use has stayed about the same. Researchers generally think that drug use is driven more by broad cultural and social factors than by government control efforts. Peter Reuter of the Rand Corporation and the University of Maryland finds that "the available evidence suggests that intensified enforcement has had modest success in raising drug prices and has not reduced already limited access for the middle class. Public disapproval of drug use has increased, and that may well have reduced initiation, but it is unlikely that this disapproval

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*In his standard sermon, prominent environmentalist David Brower describes human beings as a "cancer" on the Earth.*

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is a function of enforcement stringency."<sup>5</sup>

The government simply does not have the power to prevent tens of millions of Americans from getting what they want. Fully 77 million Americans twelve and older (37% of the population) report having used some kind of illegal drug at some time in their life.

### Junk Science Paves the Way

In a moral crusade, dispassionate analysis is suppressed and sound science loses out. The victims of the Salem witch trials were convicted in substantial part on the basis of testimony given

by adolescents who claimed to see "spectral images" (spectres flying in the air) of the accused — images only people in league with the devil were said to be capable of producing. That was the junk science of 1692.

Today, junk science takes the form of the epidemiology and other "scientific" data used to buttress environmental fanaticism, as well as the wild misinformation used to justify much of the current drug policy debate. Avram Goldstein, professor emeritus at Stanford University, says that the public discussion of illegal drugs has been "virtually uninformed concerning the neurobiology, neurochemistry, toxicology, and medical aspects of the addicting drugs."<sup>6</sup>

Another leading authority on drug pharmacology, Dr. E. Leong Way, comments that — despite its fearful public image — "heroin does not have major effects on the motor and cardiovascular system and hence, the user can function effectively if access to the drug is not prevented."<sup>7</sup> Americans understand the physiological effects of heroin no better than they do the actual risks of dioxin, Alar, asbestos, and other chemical substances that have caused recurring and costly public panics.

Cocaine is a less predictable and more dangerous drug than heroin. Discovered in 1884, it was at first considered a "miracle drug," and doctors prescribed it for a wide variety of conventional uses. Cocaine was the first local anesthetic, enabling surgeons to perform operations that up to then had been extremely painful or altogether impossible. As is well known, cocaine was also part of the early formula for Coca-Cola, although in small enough amounts that it posed no risk of physical harm or addiction.

Higher levels of cocaine use, however, not only have much more powerful effects on the mind but can cause unexpected heart stoppages. And heavy cocaine use can lead to paranoia. Still, withdrawal from cocaine addiction, although psychologically very difficult for many people, is less physically stressful than heroin or alcohol withdrawal. And the proportion of recreational cocaine users who become addicts is similar to the proportion of recreational drinkers who become alco-

holics. Alcohol has almost as severe physical and psychological consequences for abusers. Many people use cocaine, like alcohol, for long periods without great adverse effects.<sup>8</sup>

Users who face a low risk of addiction might well benefit from the availability of new types of relatively innocuous mental stimulants — as millions already so regard alcohol, nicotine, caffeine, and other equally

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*Democrats tend to focus on dioxin, Alar, asbestos, and other environmental pollutants. Republicans fixate on heroin, cocaine, and other psychoactive drugs.*

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powerful but legal drugs. Early in the century, before heroin was banned, many doctors recommended it to alcoholics as less damaging in its overall consequences. And the harmful effects of cigarettes, which cause 400,000 deaths per year, might be diminished by increased access to alternative stimulants. But with the religious crusade against psychoactive drugs, no alternative but prohibition can even be discussed.

### Drug War or Class War?

Except, of course, for the mood-altering drugs whose use is popular with "respectable" people in the middle and upper classes; drugs such as caffeine, nicotine, alcohol, and various prescription tranquilizers remain quite legal. It is the drugs of the poor and dispossessed that become the objects of Puritan hysteria, public anxiety, and repressive legal control. When a drug's popularity moves upwards in society, persecution is reduced or eliminated. The Salem witch trials stopped when prosecutors began to file charges against eminent citizens of the Massachusetts colony.

Indeed, drug policies often reflect racist attitudes. Years before national prohibition, many states and localities, particularly in the South, adopted their own alcohol prohibition laws. The arrival of prohibition in the South roughly

coincided with the imposition of Jim Crow, since Southerners feared that the availability of alcohol would stir local blacks to violence, as black resentments festered under increasingly oppressive race laws.

The history of heroin and cocaine is similar.<sup>9</sup> Concerns about opium — the naturally occurring predecessor to manufactured heroin — were stirred by the spectacle of poor Chinese gathering in mysterious opium dens. However, it was not until early in this century, when cocaine use spread to poor urban districts, that the movement for strong measures to control drugs gathered enough strength to enact legal restrictions. In a recent Rand Corporation study of the history of cocaine, Joseph Spillane observed:

The fear of violent crime committed by cocaine fiends appeared in countless popular accounts of the period. As several historians have argued, there is little doubt that these accounts frequently distorted reality and were sustained through fear and prejudice against cocaine users.

In much the same way that the real health costs of cocaine were often grossly exaggerated, so too were the real effects of cocaine on the behavior of its users. Nowhere was this more true than in the South, where police departments in particular rallied to the defense of white communities against the imagined menace of cocaine-crazed blacks. No one expressed a more extreme view than E.H. Williams. . . . Cocaine, Williams believed, transformed "hitherto inoffensive, law-abiding Negroes" into "a constant menace to his [sic] community." Under the influence of cocaine, "sexual desires are increased and perverted, peaceful Negroes become quarrelsome, and timid Negroes develop a degree of 'Dutch courage' that is sometimes almost incredible." The result was that "a large proportion of the wholesale killings in the South during recent years have been the result of cocaine." A black user of cocaine was "absolutely beyond redemption."<sup>10</sup>

The great gap between public attitudes toward middle-class, "respectable" drug users and poor or non-white "dangers to society" was formalized in the 1980s when highly disparate federal penalties were enacted for dealing in different kinds of cocaine. These

new laws mandated much more severe penalties for crack (the form of cocaine popular with poor, black Americans) than for powder (the equally dangerous form of cocaine favored by white middle- and upper-class users). To receive the same prison sentence, powder cocaine users must possess 100 times the amount of cocaine as crack users. Only 4% of imprisoned crack offenders are white, compared with 32% of those imprisoned for powder cocaine offenses. The drug laws are a principal reason why one third of black men in their twenties are currently in prison, on probation, or on parole.

In Puritan theology, the elect are revealed by their success in a business or other calling — a key contributing factor, Max Weber argued, in creating the cultural conditions for the emergence of capitalism. The same theological tenets strongly suggest that many of the poor, by contrast, are sinners chosen by God for damnation. As instruments of the devil and of weak moral fibre, and thus a great menace to society, it is necessary to wage a constant and fierce war against their influence.

The Puritan roots of our drug policies have not gone unnoticed. One authority has described them as a "pharmacological Calvinism."<sup>11</sup> For the Calvinists of old, a life of pain and suffering could be therapeutic. Life should be lived for labor, not consumption; too much enjoyment is likely to create an opening for the devil. Our modern Puritans fear that illegal drugs will lead people astray by offering pleasure without work. In environmental matters, the same Puritan spirit sees the corruption of the human spirit in the mass consumption that characterizes prosperous, modern life.<sup>12</sup> The false lure of science everywhere tempts us down the path to destruction.

## Sin and Pleasure

In his standard sermon, prominent environmentalist David Brower described human beings as a "cancer" on the Earth.<sup>13</sup> Drug dealers, others say, are the cancer of the inner city. These views are secularizations of the old Calvinist belief in the total depravity of man. Evil can be combated only

by public authorities willing to administer harsh punishments. The moral crusades against chemicals are waged as total wars that will decide whether the endangered forces of good in the world will prevail or lose out to the looming forces of evil. According to the reigning drug "theology," the ideal state is a natural condition unaltered by artificial substances — a personal Garden of Eden, chemical free. A new

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*Republicans and Democrats agree that certain chemicals pose a threat to the American way of life, though they disagree about which chemicals threaten us most.*

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substance introduced into the body, of course, may be considered a great medical advance if it "restores" the body to its "natural" state — even if it may have dangerous side effects. Thus, sufferers from "depression" are encouraged to take lithium or Prozac, even though some dangers may be posed, because such drugs are administered in an attempt to bring patients back to "normal." However, a drug such as LSD is unquestionably evil — although for many users it has few, if any, adverse effects — because it is taken to stimulate an "abnormal" or "unnatural" mental state.

In deciding whether to take a medical drug, the doctor and the patient simply weigh the dangers against the potential benefits. For illegal drugs such as cocaine or marijuana, however, such pragmatic balancing is permitted neither to the individual nor to society. Instead, religion makes one absolutist determination for all of us, based on a strict morality of the "natural."

As Joseph Spillane showed in his study cited above, early in this century, addiction to cocaine was considered an acceptable risk of medical treatment. But if the "sole excuse [for using cocaine] is the seeking for new sensations," then the cocaine user "does not need protection, but rather restraint by law in order that he may not become a menace to the public weal."<sup>14</sup> What determines the attitudes of society is

not the actual damage done by cocaine but the social — really religious — context of its use.

In the Middle Ages, usury was a sin against God, but the identical financial transaction, properly reinterpreted by clever theologians, could receive the blessing of the Church. Today, heroin is taboo, but methadone is a valued and legal treatment for heroin addicts. In actual fact, methadone is very similar chemically to heroin. It has similar physical effects on the body, but less euphoric impact. The great sin of heroin, then, is not that it causes addiction, but that it violates the Calvinist stricture against effortless and thus illegitimate sources of pleasure.

As in so many other respects, drug policy has common Puritan roots with environmental policy. The areas included in the national system of wilderness — those "cathedrals" of the environmental faith — are defined by their freedom from roads, buildings, motorized vehicles, and other human contaminations of the natural order. The theology of environmentalism strongly supports efforts to "restore" nature — like the Bible, which calls on man to emerge from his fallen state by resurrecting the Garden of Eden, or, failing that, to look forward to the harmony of man and nature in heaven.

In Yellowstone National Park, official park policy has decreed that mountain goats entering from the west side must be welcomed, but other mountain goats — biologically identical — seeking to enter from the northeast side can be killed if necessary to keep them out of the park. Park officials explain that the goats west of the park are a "natural" herd; those to the northeast, having been introduced there in the twentieth century by hunters, are artificial. They are like the new chemicals discovered by modern science in this century. Similarly, the EPA for many years showed little interest in indoor air pollution, even while spending billions of dollars to curb less dangerous pollutants that threatened to contaminate the "natural" environment outdoors.

I don't want to minimize the personal tragedies — death, homelessness, bankruptcy, family breakup, physical incapacitation, etc. — suffered by those addicted to heroin, cocaine, and other



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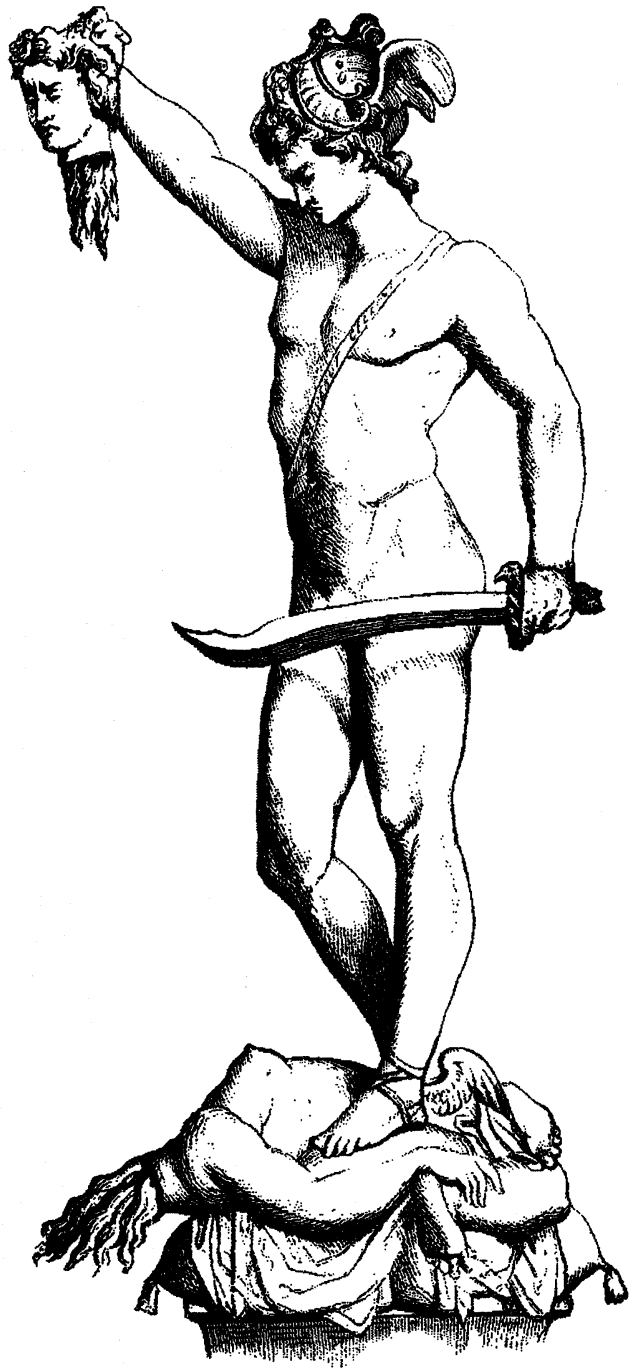
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illegal (and legal) drugs. Nor do I intend to imply that no environmental threats exist. But the anti-chemical crusade has cost billions of dollars with few results beyond the promulgation of a civil intolerance informed by a system of quasi-religious symbolism. It has created a vast and expensive bureaucracy that tramples on civil rights and uses tax money to defend itself through propaganda, beginning in grade school and continuing in the workplace. It has generally assumed the role of a benevolent dictator: part nanny, part cop. Such are the results of religious warfare.

Part of the reason the system works for politicians is because they receive money to distribute to constituents. Prisons have become a new form of pork. According to one recent report, "the burgeoning business of supplying goods and services to prisons is fueling demand for even tougher laws." One student of prison policies notes, "The people lobbying on the crime bill are from these industries. It's rivaling the old Pentagon industry."<sup>15</sup>

Inside the Beltway, it frequently appears that Republicans differ from Democrats more by the constituencies they serve than by matters of political and economic principle. Puritan hysteria may waste tax dollars and destroy

lives, but it serves both parties by motivating supporters to contribute time and money in the belief that they are enlisting in a righteous crusade to save the world from evil.

Some Republicans recognize these problems when it comes to environmental regulation. Following up on the Contract with America, the House this year passed legislation requiring that the benefits of such regulations be weighed against their costs. But when it comes to illegal drugs, the average Republican seems blind to the logic of costs and benefits. Democrats suffer a reverse blindness: they occasionally show greater tolerance for drugs, but seek to ban environmental pollutants regardless of the cost.

There are many alternatives to the War on Drugs.<sup>16</sup> Total drug legalization lies at one end of a spectrum that includes different forms of limited legalization hedged by various controls. I can imagine a system that fully decriminalizes personal use and possession, imposes mild sanctions against illegal drug sales, allows low-dose legal sales of non-addictive and mildly addictive drugs, and establishes a tightly controlled and monitored system by which physicians can prescribe heroin, cocaine, and other drugs when they judge it will be in the patient's

overall interests. Different places might experiment with more lenient policies, perhaps allowing drugs to be sold over-the-counter, like cigarettes. In any case, there is no need to insist that there be one policy for everyone, decided everywhere by federal law.

Neither the absolutist crusade for a drug-free America nor the absolutist crusade for a pollution-free environment serves us well. Both are grounded in a secularized account of man's fall from grace, in which, having eaten of the apple of science, humanity must fight to restore its purity by containing the evil forces of chemistry set loose in the world. People of other faiths and convictions can derive little satisfaction from all this Puritan righteousness.

Now some prohibitionists are calling for using the death penalty in the drug war. This is the modern equivalent of burning witches at the stake. As Paul Johnson has reminded us, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, "wherever Calvinism became strong, witches were systematically hunted" — not only in Salem, Massachusetts, but throughout Europe.<sup>17</sup>

It is time to call off this Puritan crusade, a crusade that once again persecutes some Americans in the name of the religious certainties of others. □

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## Travel

# Wings Over Mongolia

by Jim Huffman

First class isn't even second-rate in the Third World.

Air travel, like railways in an earlier day, reflects a country's life. The benignly oppressive states, like Singapore, have wonderful airlines, I am told. It was said of Mussolini's Italy that its trains ran on time. Mussolini is no more, and the Italian railways didn't really work well even then, but one can still learn a lot about a country from its airlines — as I learned last summer, when my 13-year-old son and I traveled to Mongolia.

There are essentially two routes to Mongolia by air — through Russia, and through China. I chose China, where we hopped a Mongol Air flight to Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia's capital. Mongol Air is also known by its Mongolian initials, MIAT. The few Americans who have flown in Mongolia say the initials stand for "Maybe I Arrive Today." MIAT has two tiers of air service — international (essentially, to Beijing and back) and domestic. International is pleasant enough, flying on old planes that remind you of, say, Eastern Airlines in 1972. The flight attendants seem to bathe with some regularity. Meals are served.

But what meals! People bitch about airplane food, but I confess to a certain delight in it; it reveals the airline's national face. And a lot of the time, I *really like* what I'm eating. But those who complain about Western airlines' overcooked, high-fat meals have probably never eaten on MIAT. Mongolia is hell for vegetarians: a land of descendants of nomads, big on their meat and little else. I relish

the idea of bringing those who grumble about American dependence on beef to this land, where a meal without meat is unthinkable. And the airline meals are no different.

I had dreamed of going to Mongolia since I was 17, so they could have served shit on crackers (as my wife's family indelicately puts it) and I would not have cared. What they served was not that, but it ranked not far behind. Soggy corn chips, sandwiches made of some unknown meat (complete with bones), and some unusual pickles. The redeeming factor for my son came when I belatedly explained to him that, not being amongst American puritans, he could have a beer. I told him the Mongolian word — *piiv* — and he relished using it for the next two weeks. (I finally began to limit him to one beer per flight, much to his consternation.)

But at least they *serve* food on the international flights, so if you're hungry, you can have something. On international flights, there is at least a modicum of competition, and it is truly astonishing what even a slight market can do. Admittedly, the competition is not fierce. If you were fight-

ing China Airlines head-to-head for market share, you probably wouldn't be shaking in your corporate boots either.

Domestic flights are a different animal entirely. Mongol Air is the only ride in town. And it shows.

Apologists for the USPS first-class mail monopoly should be required to fly around Mongolia on domestic runs for a month or so. MIAT being MIAT, they probably wouldn't make it back, but what the heck. While MIAT's international flights resemble flying on Eastern from Greensboro to Chicago in 1972, MIAT's domestic flights resemble flying with a Soviet invasion force in 1943. And I'm being generous.

The aircrafts themselves are — let's be charitable — elderly. Giant Soviet behemoth hand-me-downs. Airplanes that look like giant mangy Chia pets. My son and I flew from Ulaanbaatar to Dalandzagdad, a small town of 5,000 in the middle of the Gobi desert. The x-ray operator at the Ulaanbaatar airport was sleeping beside her machine. Luckily for the Mongols, I was not carrying a bomb. There was no check-in. Someone from MIAT announced boarding, and the

race was on. While rushing on board, we waved our laminated, reusable boarding passes at the flight attendant. (Believe me, they are *definitely* reused. I wanted to keep mine for a souvenir, and was told that this was forbidden.)

Like the shuttles here in the states, there are no assigned seats. But don't misunderstand me. This policy does not exist for the convenience of the passengers. One boards through the

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*While MIAT's international flights resemble flying on Eastern in 1972, their domestic flights resemble flying with a Soviet invasion force in 1943.*

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back of the plane, on a rickety ladder. My son and I managed to find adjacent seats, but the fun had only begun. Let's say that maintenance was probably not one of MIAT's corporate targets for 1995. You see, my seat had no seat belt. Neither did my son's. There were no oxygen masks, no seat-cushions-that-double-as-life-rafts. (Okay — Mongolia is mostly desert, so I suppose they wouldn't be much help.) There were no flight attendants giving safety instructions and pointing out passenger exits. In fact, there was only one flight attendant, and her sole function consisted of bringing around a tray of hard candies at the beginning of the flight. One apiece, please.

There is no air conditioning on MIAT planes, either. Given that we were flying in August, this was no small consideration. But there were flies, and they were a source of mild torment for us during the flight. Initially, I blamed the flies for the constant itching on the back of my head. After an hour or so, the Mongolian friend I was traveling with spoke harshly to the man behind me, and the itching stopped. He later explained that the man had been playing with my hair, which apparently is a custom in certain parts of the country.

(The Mongolian summers are cool enough that getting along without air conditioning is generally not a problem. But heat in midwinter Mongolia is

hardly optional: in January, the temperature sometimes drops to 50 below in Ulaanbaatar. Those madcap masters of centralized planning, the Soviet-era Russians, brought their own ideas of city planning to Mongolia. Ulaanbaatar, a city of 600,000 people, operates one gargantuan central heating facility, and heat is distributed throughout the city by a network of pipes and conduits. Should something happen to that facility around, say, January 15, things would get pretty cool pretty quickly. I am told that the American embassy has emergency plans to evacuate all Americans in that event.)

Mongolia has decided that the way to rectify the inequities of the world is to charge anyone unfortunate enough to have a non-Mongolian passport in U.S. dollars. That's anyone: Americans, Mexicans, Canadians, Germans, Japanese. Anyone traveling to Mongolia must bring along a considerable cache of American cash. Our flight from Ulaanbaatar to Dalandzagdad was about 350 miles, and my round-trip ticket was \$140 — cash, since hardly anyone, including MIAT, takes charge cards — while my son's was \$70. Mongols (the only other people on our flights) were charged about \$14.

We didn't realize that this constituted a form of first-class passage.

I have never flown first-class in the West. It always struck me as a little ridiculous to pay such high prices for the privilege of wider seats and minimally better meals. But I got what passed for Mongolian domestic first-class treatment on this trip.

On the way down, we were foolish enough to get on with everyone else. On the way back, the solitary flight attendant singled us out of the crowd and insisted we board first. Uh-oh, I thought, we've done something wrong. But no: she was merely giving us the pick of the seats.

Americans expect certain amenities at airports, and we are not usually disappointed. What would an American airport be without Hare Krishnas, surly luggage checks, bad and overpriced food, and rude miniature Stalinists at the x-ray machine? And there are other things, usually invisible to us. Things like navigation systems, radar, and ground-to-air communica-

tions. Even paved runways.

Outside of Ulaanbaatar, it is an act of charity to refer to anything as an airport. We were preparing to land in Dalandzagdad when I realized that there was no runway there. We were coming into the middle of a sheep field. What's more, my son noticed that the pilot barely missed the fence. I bemusedly asked my Mongolian host if animals were ever killed by incoming flights. He took me with complete seriousness: "Oh, no," he replied, "There are heavy fines for the pilot who kills an animal." The Mongols take their animals seriously.

Not necessarily so their human charges.

It was perhaps fortunate that Mongolia is so cut off from civilization that international phone calls are almost impossible, making my wife and me unable to speak to each other for the entire two weeks. Had she known we were flying MIAT, there would have been wringing of hands and biting of nails back in North Carolina. For MIAT is cursed with a somewhat less than sterling safety record. A month after our return, a plane bound for the unfortunately named city of Moron crashed into a mountain in fog. While this sort of incident occurs in other countries, too, it

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*The x-ray operator at the Ulaanbaatar airport was sleeping. Luckily for the Mongols, I was not carrying a bomb.*

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happens a tad more frequently in Mongolia. Nor is it reassuring that outside Ulaanbaatar, we saw no radar equipment.

Upon disembarking, passengers walk out onto the field. The glaring sun contrasts with the subdued light in the plane. (Subdued because the inside is painted military green — does this give you some indication of the plane's previous purpose?) Disembarkation is slowed because each passenger has his luggage with him there on the flight. There's nothing quite so disconcerting as realizing that one is flying on a plane

*continued on page 41*

## Profile

# The Transmigration of Timothy Leary

by Brian Doherty

An interviewer, on the outside, looking in.

After a couple of decades as that saddest of things, a celebrity without portfolio, Timothy Leary has enjoyed a recent spate of media attention for an unfortunate distinction: he is dying of prostate cancer. It has metastasized, he tells me, and causes a severe pain in his left hip. He's been turning up more often than usual in newspaper features and on TV. A biopic is also in the works, possibly to be directed by Leary's friend Tim Robbins.

When I first arranged to interview Leary, my intention was to do a simple Q-and-A, to be transcribed and published in *Liberty*. That's not what happened, for reasons that will become clear. If this *had* been the feature that *Liberty* and I had planned, I might have explained in the introduction that in talking to Leary, I was not a disinterested journalist just doing a job. I had long admired the man and his work, ever since first reading his books in my early adolescence. I was talking to one of the heroes of my youth, which undoubtedly blunted any aggressive journalistic edge and contributed to the interview's disappointing results.

My affection for the man went beyond enjoying his books. I admired the fine rebellious figure he cut: a straight-laced Harvard psychologist and designer of personality tests discovers the magic of psychedelic mushrooms and begins wondering what applications they might have for psychological science. He launches on a program of applying psychedelics to psychology, discovers LSD, and

experiments with reducing prison recidivism rates, changing personality traits, and working out the theological implications of this strange and powerful substance. Controversy erupts over his using undergrads in psychedelic experiments. He is driven from Harvard, gets wealthy backing, and establishes himself and his research at a house in Millbrook, N.Y. He becomes a public proselytizer for the wonders of acid, shifting from the traditional scientist's role into a shaman/showman mode, and attracts unwanted attention from the law. He runs for governor of California, is arrested for pot possession, and escapes from prison, fleeing the country with the help of the Weather Underground. He then lives the life of the international fugitive jetsetter in Algeria and Switzerland, is captured in Afghanistan and dragged back to the States in chains, serves a few more years in prison, and is let out under circumstances that led to accusations of being a federal stool pigeon, even a CIA agent. He moves to Hollywood, where he lives the life of the L.A. party boy, works with computers, debates G. Gordon Liddy, lectures, guest-stars in various movies and

rock videos, and is adopted as a premiere intellectual on a low-level Hollywood star circuit.

To me, Leary was a hero not for his associations with psychedelics, but for his eventful life — and for the expansive, radically libertarian visions of his '70s books, particularly *Exo-Psychology*, *Neuropolitics*, and *The Intelligence Agents*. Written during a time of simultaneous advances in rocketry, neural sciences, and genetics, these were fabulous, systematic, rococo treatises elaborating on the '70s sequel to "Turn On, Tune In, Drop Out": S.M.I.<sup>2</sup>.L.E., which stood for Space Migration, Intelligence Increase (I-squared, get it?), and Life Extension. ("The making of slogans," says Leary, "is key to any form of humanist culture.") Leary portrayed DNA as a godlike intelligence rapidly propelling human beings toward the next phase in the evolutionary script: escape from the planet, exponential growth in intelligence, immortality. He built these visions around a unique model of human consciousness, which he divided into eight "circuits" — four terrestrial and four post-terrestrial. He linked these to other traditional human psychological



testing systems: tarot, I Ching, astrology.

Leary's grab-bag of '70s enthusiasms pretty much summed up what is currently being hyped by a colorful group of Southern California entrepreneurs as "Extropianism." If Dr. Tim wasn't the first Extropian, he's definitely a Hall-of-Famer.

His '70s books were daring, optimistic, and encyclopedic, risking ridicule

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*"I can walk from my study to the kitchen and forget what I was going for, but recapitulate the history of humanity from the amoeba to Dan Quayle, and how Freud fits in."*

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and error in their dense breadth of speculation. They were my first exposure to sociobiology, life extension science, and credible space colonization schemes. Leary wrote these tidings of the ultimate escape while locked up in a cage by the U.S. government. It was a grand vision, and presented with just the right touch of what those who sneer call snake-oil salesmanship. The ever-optimistic and chipper Leary doesn't bridle at such descriptions — a chapter of *Neuropolitics* is called "In Defense of Snake-Oil Salesmen."

### Tim & Me

When I heard Leary was dying, I vowed to meet him before he went. We were both living in Los Angeles, but I didn't know how to go about contacting him. I knew he lived in Beverly Hills — I even had a couple of friendly acquaintances who were associates of his — but I didn't try too hard to finagle the matter.

In early December, there was a book-signing at Hollywood's La Luz de Jesus gallery for Leary's newest book, *Surfing the Conscious Nets*, a very curious and uncharacteristic computerized graphic novel telling the adventures of a young ambisexual black man with the improbable but telling name Huck Getty Mellon von Schlebrugge. (Von Schlebrugge was the maiden name of Leary's second wife Nanette; the significance of the other three

names should be clear enough.) I went.

The computer illustrations for this peculiar and frustrating book were done by my pal Howard Hallis, who was also at the signing. I got some old books autographed, introduced myself to Leary, and tried to enlist Howard's help in scheduling an interview. A week later, by accident, I found myself sitting next to Leary at a party at a Hollywood restaurant.

Unusually for Hollywood, we ended up talking one-on-one for around 45 minutes — perhaps because we were sitting toward the back of the patio with no natural flow of traffic around us. I was not, of course, taping our conversation, or even taking notes, but in many ways this approached a dream Q-and-A. We talked about Thomas Szasz and Noam Chomsky — Leary praised them both, and I expressed discomfort with Chomsky's economics. Leary winked — "We're all libertarians, of course," he whispered conspiratorially, but Chomsky was still a brilliant linguist and critic of government crimes. We talked about the AIDS establishment (we had been introduced at the party by a mutual friend, heretical AIDS journalist Celia Farber of *Spin*), medical fascism (he mocked attention deficit disorder — "It's just kids being hyper, curious"), Leary's relationship with his stepson, computers, senility ("I can walk from my study to the kitchen and forget what I was going for, but recapitulate the history of humanity from the amoeba to Dan Quayle, and how Freud fits in"), and his arrangements for his death. (LSD, he has decided, can work as a mental preparation for death. "If you haven't had a couple of death experiences, your dealer is cheating you.")

He was sharp, he was interested, and the conversation didn't lag. He signaled the conclusion of one line of talk with, "And that's the end of that." Then we were on to the next topic. I dared to broach the idea, as he prepared to leave, that perhaps we could talk like this again on tape, for this libertarian magazine I write for? We exchanged numbers.

My first attempt at a scheduled, official interview was aborted; he was entertaining a couple of female houseguests when I arrived, and he wasn't

interested in leaving them to talk to me. While Leary was occupied, Howard showed me around the house. After a while, Leary joined us in his study/computer room, where he tested his deteriorating memory by making me write my name on a pad while he tried to remember who I was. (He had warned me when we exchanged numbers that I would have to constantly remind him who I was and where we had met, and indeed I did.)

We chatted for a few minutes, then he and Howard and I inhaled a balloon full of nitrous oxide. Leary got "professorial," as he put it, and lectured us briefly about the roles of William James and Gertrude Stein in popularizing the use of nitrous oxide — "pure brain food." He raised his hands in supplicant prayer to heaven, in the name of William James, and asked Howard to fetch a biographical dictionary and a quotation book. He read us some of Stein's *bon mots* and her bio entry, then dismissed me; we'd have to do the interview some other time.

A few weeks later, I arrived at the arranged time to find the contents of his garage/archive scattered in the driveway. The garage was being

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*Timothy Leary is going to try to talk to us from the dead. Well, who would you rather hear from?*

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repainted. Dozens of people milled about the house, Leary was far too distracted to talk, and one of his assistants, suspicious of my presence, asked me to please fax the details of why I wanted the doctor's time. (I passed that test — she even waved his customary \$1,000 interview fee in recognition of *Liberty's* small-press status.)

A few weeks later, the taped interview finally took place. Leary was sitting in sweatpants at a table in his living room, that day's mail and faxes scattered around him. The phone rang a lot, and Leary actually answered it himself most of the time. (Once he had me do it, and take a number down for him. He also asked me to move a pile

of old newspapers and envelopes into the laundry room. What can I say? It's Timothy Leary. I did it.)

## The Interview Commences

The interview did not start well. Questions that I'd hoped would trigger long, discursive answers garnered brief, telegraphic ones instead. Leary was impatient with the interviewer-subject game. I had hoped that, as an early expert in transactional psychology, he would remember the rules and respect them. But Leary is uninterested in playing anyone's games but his own these days. He is a great, accomplished man in his last days — who can blame him for not delighting in taking yet another hour of his rapidly diminishing life to explain his work to yet another reporter?

As a nervous acolyte speaking with him for the record — for *history* — I was nonplussed, growing on annoyed. Questions about his writings got responses like this: "My problem here is I've written all of this. Saying it is like reciting it; it's already written. What can we do about that?" He stared off into space, was unresponsive, hesitant. He'd cut off long silences with a sharp "Next question," even if the last one hadn't quite been addressed. Brief perorations on subjects like S.M.I.<sup>2</sup>.L.E. or cryogenics (Leary wears a bracelet that identifies him as a candidate for cryogenic preservation) would trail off with him telling me, "You know all that."

He was right. But, I tried gingerly to explain (my enormous admiration for the man making me unwilling to be adversarial), this was more than just us two chatting. A tape recorder was running. An audience of 14,000 who might not — probably do not — know all of what Timothy Leary has to say had to be considered. But he still didn't want to play.

One question about his attitude toward death led to a lengthy break as Leary and one of the young, dreadlocked Lollapaloozians who litter the house tried to retrieve a computer document Leary had written for a Japanese magazine, which he insisted would be a better response to my question than anything he could tell me. It turned out to be a strange three-page poem that mixed computer and sexual imagery bizarrely, and I still can't fig-

ure out how it relates to my question.

While they disappeared on this mission, I had plenty of time to take in my surroundings. For once, no one else wandered through for almost 20 minutes. (Earlier in the interview, a neighbor had arrived with dog food.) Leary's home is plainer than you'd expect from its hyperwealthy surroundings at the heights of Beverly Hills — the slope above his house is uninhabited grassland, rare in L.A. It's a typical suburban one-story bungalow, garage on the

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*"My politics is basically saying that power resides inside the individual. The state has simply no right."*

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right, a study, a living room, and one bedroom. From the back yard spreads a glorious vista of the Los Angeles basin. The house is sparsely but delightfully decorated: bits of art by Robert Williams, Kenny Scharf, Howard Hallis; a portrait of his friend, actress Susan Sarandon; a Japanese poster for the film *True Romance*; movie promotion stand-ups of John Wayne and Clint Eastwood — gifts of rock star Al Jourgensen of Ministry. Pretty/grungy young people, male and female, float about the house helping Leary take care of his business.

The house did have a smattering of more bizarre bric-a-brac. I was facing a seven-foot-tall pencil in the left corner, and a large, stringless musical instrument — double bass? cello? — on the right. Other items catalogued:

A gold record for Ministry's *Psalm 69* album.

A well-wishing note from William Burroughs, taped to a sideboard in the kitchen.

A three-dimensional car door with a mannequin's arm hanging out, adorning a wall.

A billiards table.

The walls were white. There weren't as many books as I had expected — one wall in the dining room, some in his study/computer room.

## Tim Speaks

I had hoped to recreate some of the best moments from our first conversa-

tion, bringing up some of the same topics and hoping to get some of the same responses. No such luck. On Thomas Szasz: "I have been a great admirer of his for years. He is one of the great libertarian figures of our time. He's taking power away from the medical monopoly and empowering individuals, he's right down the line for libertarian politics, humanist politics." At our first meeting, he had called Szasz "brilliant, dangerous, ahead of his time" and told me of having brought Szasz to speak at Harvard.

On his death: he is ready to be frozen, but "I want to make it clear I may decide not to do it." He also commented that "if I could be brought back, the condition of my brain might be of some interest to science." His executors "are commanded to disconnect any life-preservation method if I'm inarticulate. This is a tremendous opportunity. . . . I'm gonna try to plan my dying. You plan for college, you should plan for dying. In my case for many years I've been planning. I have prostate cancer that's metastasized, painful cancer rupture in my left hip. I'm having radiation, doing everything the cancer doctors want. I want to be a good patient," he added, but admitted that he ignores their dietary advice, and continues to eat what he likes.

He is attempting one final experiment in mental exploration and communication. There's a period of time after the heart stops but before brain death. "Obviously, this period [is] a wonderful opportunity to explore, communicate back," he explained. We tried to figure out how long that period might be. Leary suggested 2–15 seconds. I know very little about this subject, but recalled that during our party conversation on the same topic he suggested the time could be minutes. "I try to be conservative," he winked. "It has been known for a thousand years that there was a period after death. Oriental philosophies suggest that it's your duty as a brain-carrying, conscious person to turn off your mind, get the body no longer involved.

"So I'm gonna have in my dying room, when I'm tubed up and wired up, so even when I'm close to inarticulate, I'll be able to type with my finger, maybe even by blinking eyes, work out

a language. The key thing is my whole front wall in my deanimation room will be a screen, so I can word-process and communicate when I won't have the body to help out." In our party conversation, he had suggested using a system analogous to the experiential typewriter he and Richard Alpert developed to help communicate ineffable psychedelic impressions in something better than ordinary language.

For the intrepid explorer of new ways of thinking, experiencing, and communicating, this was a predictably delightful obsession: Timothy Leary is going to try to talk to us from the dead.

Well, who would *you* rather hear from?

### Surfing Waves

To many people, Leary's career seems flighty, if not flaky — even dangerous or criminal. From transactional therapy to drugs to space travel to computers, he has not chosen the standard academic (or celebrity) route of hoeing the same row over and over. Accusations of trendiness bounce off him; he is consciously and philosophically trendy. When asked about his current status as spokesman for individualistic, self-chosen dying, he points out that it's an obvious concern of aging baby boomers, a generation he is a full leap ahead of (he's exactly 25 years older than the oldest boomer) yet has strangely haunted. "Now the baby boom is discovering death. It's spooky. I read the *New York Times* and see five articles dealing with someone planning to die. Life extension stuff, it's hot right now. It's quite predictable. Once again I'm surfing a wave that's there. I expected the wave to come."

The same goes for drugs and computers. "That's being a evolutionary agent, watching cultural stuff that's been happening sequentially. It's nothing new that I'm doing. I'm simply passing on the word."

"I'm an absolute fanatic about language," Leary told me on two occasions — the one idea he repeated of his own volition, not because I tried to make him. When I would refer to "his ideas" and his success in spreading them, he corrected me, not pedantically but almost angrily: "They're not *my* ideas."

Even with regard to space travel and life extension, his more *outré* con-

cerns, he sees himself serenely going with the flow. "Everyone knows that. Everybody knows we're getting off the planet. No big Socratic leap there. What I'm trying to do in all my work is point out my duty as a genetic engineer. Obviously that idea was ahead of its time. It's gonna happen, but not right now. But there is more humanization of space. They're flying around there all the time now. That's good."

In the decade between space travel and dying, Timothy Leary began a love affair with the computer. "Over and over again, I'm gonna come back to the Web," Leary told me — and he did. "The Web's implications are so profound and far-reaching and so obvious. Once you get kids growing up dialing . . . what power that gives the kid! *Those* kids are gonna wanna turn on and tune in!" Leary says that his "Turn on, Tune in, Drop out" slogan for acid in the '60s was ahead of its time technologically; only with computers and the World Wide Web does it fully make sense. "We can make pretty solid predictions here. The Web will change human civilization."

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*"I get mad when liberals insult advertising," Leary said, calling the great cathedrals of Europe grand advertisements for the Catholic Church.*

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McLuhan talked about it and we always knew we'd have a global village — and now it's happening. It's coming right now."

I wondered what Leary's understanding of computers had taught him about his older interest, human intelligence. During our first conversation, he had shared his fascination with words, their history and meaning and precise usage. Sitting casually on a couch in his study is a printout of a parsing of the definition of the word *celebrity*. Posted to the wall in his study is an advertisement doing the same for the word *amplify*. (He told me at the party that one of his favorite words is *reflect*.)

He loves tracking down words' meanings, tracing their roots. He had pounced on me ferociously and

Socratically at the party when I casually mentioned that something "calmed my nerves." What, precisely, did I mean by "nerves"? We went back and forth on this for a few minutes. I began to understand why the Athenians got so pissed off at Socrates that they made him swallow hemlock.

He had gone on to wax on the beauty of computer language, direct commands leading to direct and predictable results. He was fascinated with the *save as* command, allowing one to create something new over the body of something old while preserving it as well. He ended with one of his grandly charming and disarming Irish winks: "And, of course," said one of America's most notorious prison escapees, "Escape."

### Politics

Of course, we talked politics. "Yes, I am a libertarian," Leary said. During one of our phone conversations, when I mentioned *Liberty*, Leary brought up his Libertarian Party membership. "I've known some of the people involved in it for years." He hosted a fundraiser for Ron Paul's 1988 presidential campaign at his home.

Why is he a libertarian? "I'm a humanist. The state has no right to tell adult humans what to do with their personal lives. I'm not waiting for the government to give me permission." A lot of people probably feel similarly, but not that many take active steps like joining the LP. "There's an enormous minority of people who are basically libertarians, but see no reason why they should say it." The notion of an *obligation* of any sort to be an activist about one's personal politics rankles him. "My politics is basically saying that power resides inside the individual. The state has simply no right — politics, laws, bills, lobbying about personal life, censor sexual expression, drugs? What does that mean? I was accused by many, like Abbie Hoffman, of luring a young generation away by making them feel good, allowing them to reward themselves."

Leary is not afraid of the market, unlike so many "civil" libertarians who might agree with him about censorship and personal-freedom issues. During

*continued on page 69*

# The Truth and Ayn Rand

by R.W. Bradford

Ayn Rand left Russia in 1926. Just what did she bring with her?

In 1961, Ayn Rand told Barbara Branden about an encounter many years earlier with a long-forgotten philosopher. Back in 1924, while a student in the Soviet Union, Rand had taken a course on ancient philosophy from Prof. N. O. Lossky, an "international authority on Plato." Rand explained that she had demonstrated a mastery of Plato that impressed her professor. Lossky detected a hostility toward Platonism in her account, and asked about her own views. Rand explained her position to the famous scholar, concluding, "My philosophical views are not part of the history of philosophy yet. But they will be." The professor, an especially harsh grader who believed women incapable of understanding philosophy, gave Rand the score of "Perfect."

Unfortunately, research by Chris Matthew Sciabarra has demonstrated quite conclusively that Lossky did not teach at the University of Petrograd when Rand studied there, that he was not a Platonist, that he was not a harsh grader, and that he had many women students and treated them very well.

In the September *Liberty*, I suggested that Rand's story was not entirely accurate, but was probably an attempt at self-mythology. In the January *Liberty*, Lester Hunt ascribed to me the view that Rand was "simply lying" when she told this to Branden, and that this is the "least plausible" interpretation. His reasoning:

What motive could she have had for inventing a connection with Lossky? The only one I can think of would be

that of attempting to gain some sort of respectability. At the time she told this story to Barbara Branden (1961), he was dying in almost complete obscurity. Very few people in this country knew who he was, or would have cared if they had known. His name unfortunately could work no magic in the world that she knew at that time. Further, trying to gain respectability by associating yourself with some antecedently respectable person was not the sort of thing that Rand did. As I have indicated, she was, if anything, in the grips of the opposite vice: that of presenting oneself as unconnected with human history.

Prof. Hunt's criticism seems wrong in so many ways that I hardly know where to begin.

It mischaracterizes my position. I have never suggested that Rand was "simply lying" when she told the Lossky anecdote. Here is the closest I have come to making such a charge:

The challenge faced by anyone who tries to come to grips with the life or intellectual development of Ayn Rand is that she was both a very private person and one who believed that myth was sometimes more important than truth. In other

words, it's difficult to understand a person who is both secretive and prone to lying about herself. Whether one is generous or ungenerous in explaining the problem of Ayn Rand, this underlying problem persists.

This is the only place I have used the word "lying" about the Lossky story. I use the term in what I describe as an "ungenerous" characterization of her behavior; I think the other (which I describe as "generous") is more accurate. Worse still, there is nothing to suggest that I believe that what she was doing was in any way "simple."

Prof. Hunt could conceive of only one reason that might explain why Rand would tell such an anecdote were it not true: she was "attempting to gain some sort of respectability . . . by associating [her]self with some antecedently respectable person." It is, he observed, ludicrous to suggest Rand would have such a motive, since Lossky was not respectable when she told the story and since Rand considered such a motive downright dishonorable. His observation is correct, of course, and if I could think of only such a ludicrous explanation of

Rand's motivation, I would also reject the hypothesis that her account is less than true.

Happily, I can conceive of another explanation. Why might a person concoct a story about herself that portrays her as brilliant, fearless, extremely original in her thinking, and extraordinarily self-confident and self-perceptive? Perhaps because she would like people to think of her as brilliant, fearless,

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*Why might a person concoct a story about herself that portrays her as brilliant, fearless, extremely original in her thinking, and extraordinarily self-confident and self-perceptive?*

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extremely original in her thinking, and extraordinarily self-confident and self-perceptive.

I believe that it is likely Rand told the story to illustrate these traits in herself, just as she told stories to illustrate the personal traits of the characters in her novels. My suspicion is that she had a vague memory of Lossky as a prominent philosopher of the appropriate time and place (likely, one she remembered from a guest lecture at her gymnasium), inserted his name into a story that may have had some (probably slight) basis in fact, and embellished the tale to illustrate the traits she wished to portray. I further doubt that she ever suspected that Lossky was still alive or that anyone would ever investigate (and thus undermine) her fanciful story. Further, I suspect she may have come to believe her anecdote, at least in some sense, like any good salesman would.

Of course, what I offer is only a hypothesis. Despite Sciabarra's herculean search, the historical record is not absolutely conclusive. As Sciabarra has shown, it is possible to construe Rand's story in a way that is consistent with the historic record, if certain gaps in the evidence are filled very, very carefully. Perhaps, for example, Lossky was "very dour and irritable"

because he was banned from teaching, and therefore at the time a tough grader who disliked women to the point of discriminating against them academically — though at other times in his career he was an easy grader, who was pleasant and treated women students very well. And perhaps Lossky did teach a special seminar — though there is no evidence that he did. Perhaps the subject of that seminar was Plato, since the Communist authorities would perhaps think Plato was a harmless subject for an anti-Communist to teach — though Lossky apparently never taught Plato at any other time. Perhaps the reason that there is no evidence that Lossky ever taught such a course is that all records were lost, because "it was taught on the fringes of the university." And perhaps, although it would be extremely unusual, Rand managed to get permission to attend the seminar, and (again) the records were lost. And perhaps Rand simply forgot that her vivid experience with Lossky did not take place at the university, but rather at the annex.

This is the account that Sciabarra provides and that Prof. Hunt finds "most plausible." I personally am more inclined to apply Occam's Razor. All these unlikely events are possible, since there is no documentary evidence that specifically disproves them. But what are the chances that all these less-than-likely events occurred without leaving a scintilla of evidence?

I invite the interested reader to examine the evidence and form his own conclusion.

### Defender of the Faith

James G. Lennox is one reader who has examined the evidence. In a review of Sciabarra's book published in the newsletter of the Institute for Objectivist Studies (and reprinted, in a slightly different form, in *Reason*), he arrives at pretty much the same conclusion I did. Peculiarly, much of the remainder of his review reveals the same sort of propensity for apology as the evaluations of the most fanatical followers of Rand.

In a stunning passage, he jumps from rejecting Sciabarra's case for a direct Rand-Lossky connection to a

bizarre conclusion:

[T]he direct evidence that the youthful Ayn Rand was positively influenced, through Lossky, by the "dialectical antidualism" of early 20th century Russian philosophy is thin. . . . [S]uch influences are taken for granted: "Though Rand rejected much of the content of Lossky's philosophy, her own system retained an exhaustive and dialectical form that reflected her roots," writes Sciabarra. And, later, "[A]s I have demonstrated, Rand's philosophy . . . was a historical product of her revolt against formal dualism."

Demonstrated is a strong word — and entirely inappropriate here. No evidence that Rand was familiar with Lossky's philosophy has been provided, and only weak, conflicting evidence that she studied ancient philosophy with him. Sciabarra thoroughly discusses the philosophy of Russia's "Silver Age," but provides no direct evidence that it influenced Ayn Rand.

That's it. From the fact that Sciabarra failed to prove that Rand

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*All these unlikely events are possible, since there is no documentary evidence that specifically disproves them. But what are the chances that all occurred without leaving a scintilla of evidence?*

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had known Lossky, Lennox concludes that the philosophy of Russia's Silver Age did not influence Rand!

Lennox has it precisely backwards. Sciabarra may have presented only "weak, conflicting evidence" that Rand knew Lossky, but the evidence Sciabarra presents that Rand was influenced by the philosophy of Russia's Silver Age is thorough and convincing. Sciabarra's case consists of two elements. First, the philosophical environment in which Ayn Rand immersed herself was saturated by Silver Age thinking. Second, Rand's philosophy contains powerful similarities to that thought, as well as elements that seem very much to be intended as reactions against portions of it.



This case is entirely circumstantial. But it is so overpowering that Lennox's criticism of it is reminiscent of the defense attorney who tells the jury: "Yes, it's true that these credible witnesses all claim to have seen my client shoot the victim. But all they saw was him aiming his gun at the victim and pulling the trigger, followed by a loud report, and the victim falling over dead, with a bullet wound to the heart. *Not a single witness actually saw the bullet leave the gun and enter the victim's body.* I therefore ask you to find the accused not guilty."

Lennox concludes his attack on Sciabarra's book with these words:

The recently published *Letters of Ayn*

*Rand* contains numerous letters, especially those to Isabel Paterson and John Hospers, in which Rand discusses philosophical method and the history of modern philosophy. The picture that emerges from them is of a young novelist caught up in the battle for liberty and individualism in an America quickly succumbing to the collectivism from which she had fled. . . . They show no hints of the sorts of influences that Sciabarra conjectures were crucial to her philosophical development.

Good grief. Rand's philosophical letters to Isabel Paterson were written between 1945 and 1948, more than two decades after the period of her intellec-

tual development that Sciabarra is writing about. And they were written after "nights and nights and nights of discussion" with Paterson, so naturally they focused on issues that interested Paterson and her at the time, not the issues that interested her two decades earlier while a student in the Soviet Union. And Rand's letters to John Hospers date from 1960 and 1961, by which time Rand was in her mid-fifties, no longer "a young novelist" by any stretch of the imagination. By then, she had already begun to promulgate the myth that her philosophy sprang fully mature from her head like the goddess Athena from the brow of Zeus. □

### Huffman, "Wings Over Mongolia," *continued from page 34*

with no radar to an airport with no radio on a plane with no safety equipment, with a staff consisting of one flight attendant — and knowing that your way out is blocked because the fat lady in the aisle seat has a breadmaker box between her bandy legs.

But it was an uneventful landing, and we spent the next three wonderful days exploring the Gobi desert around Dalandzagdad.

We found out belatedly that Dalandzagdad's domestic terminal (a concrete building to the side of the field) had a bar. The Mongols love their alcohol, and my friend and host knew that the flight would have no beverage service, so he entered the bar, there to be fortified for the return flight to Ulaanbaatar. My son and I waited in the "lounge" (a picnic table outside with a roof over it). The flight was scheduled to leave at 1:30 and was the one and only flight that day. We arrived at the airport around 1:00 and there was no plane in sight. Nor any passengers. We occupied our time by looking at the arrival and departures board. It was not high-tech. It consisted of a chalkboard. Given that there were two incoming and two outgoing flights a week — and that the arrival and departure times seemed more in the realm of hope or prophecy than reality — there were not a lot of changes in the schedule. In the meantime, passengers began trickling in, and finally, a few minutes after 3:00,

there was a stir of excitement among the waiting passengers as we saw an airplane descending from the sky. The plane had no sooner stopped when the crowd surged forward, mobbing the aircraft. The flight attendant shooed us all away to allow the arriving passengers to get off, then shooed us away again because she needed to clean. And clean she did. She swept the inside, and

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*There was only one flight attendant, and her sole function consisted of bringing around a tray of hard candies at the beginning of the flight. One apiece, please.*

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anyone unfortunate enough to be standing at the door when she was finished was treated to a faceful of dust and assorted airplane debris.

I made it back to Ulaanbaatar. But I was not through with MIAT. The attendants on the flights to and from Beijing wear an apron when serving food. It is a gloriously pretty piece of cloth, all done up in the colors of the Mongolian flag. I wanted one of those aprons. I knew I could not buy one, but I thought perhaps I could bribe the attendant into giving me one.

Being an American, I am not good at bribery. And being a Southerner, I am not good at being direct. So it was doubly bad when I waited until all the other passengers left the plane in Beijing, then suggested to the attendant that I wanted an apron. I waved some U.S. currency, which — as you've probably guessed by now — is widely beloved in Mongolia.

She did not take the bait. They are not for sale, she said, smiling. I'm not sure she even understood that I was offering her a bribe. But that was my fault, not hers.

Get me out of this country alive, I vowed while in Mongolia, and I won't complain about American air travel for . . . a long time. Well, maybe two weeks. And then I'll shut up. If the flight attendant is grumpy, I'll smile and be nice. Because I know that 12,000 miles away, flying across the Mongolian desert, one of her comrades-in-arms is passing out hard candies that would scare your dentist half to death. If I have a rough landing, I'll secretly rejoice that we didn't squash a sheep on the way down. That, indeed, there were no sheep there for the squashing. Then I'll remind myself that when Reagan fired the air traffic controllers, he could have replaced them with Mongolian scabs.

Few things can make American air travel look appealing. MIAT is one of them. □

## Republicans

# What Became of the Revolution?

*by Kevin Knight*

How the GOP betrayed its mandate to reduce the size and power of government.

The GOP revolution has bombed. In November 1994, Americans believed big government was a failure, and the Republican Party was given the opportunity to reduce the government's size and scope. But congressional Republicans have since crumpled under the weight of political pressure, pork, and privilege. It appears we voted for Dimestore Democrats ("we can do it ten cents cheaper").

At the outset of 1995, House Speaker Newt Gingrich and the 73 fresh-faced first-term House Republicans excited the public with their promise of smaller government. The federal departments of Commerce, Education, Energy, and Housing and Urban Development were targeted for elimination. The National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Legal Services Commission, and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting were headed for the trash heap.

A cynical public had faith that finally, someone was going to do something about wasteful big government. At the start of the Republicans' first 100 days, Gingrich set the marching orders: *Cooperate, yes. Compromise, no.* But as *Boston Globe* columnist Jeff Jacoby has said, "Right after that, the compromising began."

The revolution wasn't derailed by predictable Democratic demagoguery — tales of children not learning, seniors starving, Big Bird out of a job — but by Republicans "moving too slow," according to Republican pollster Frank Luntz. The challenge, he

added, was to "produce reform people can point to."

Unfortunately, what people can point to is business as usual. While GOP leaders should have proposed balancing the budget in two years, reducing cost of living adjustments in order to preserve and then privatize Social Security, and enacting affluence-testing for other entitlements, longtime Republicans in the House and Senate have become infatuated with their newfound seniority. As committee chairs, they've joined the Democrats in a celebration of pork, be it courthouses and highways or B-2 bombers the Defense Department does not want. A conspicuous example was the federal ethanol subsidy. Gingrich and Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole fought tooth and nail to preserve this \$770 million pork-laden welfare program for farmers and agribusiness.

Even the 73 freshmen, the spearhead of the GOP revolution, have become embroiled in the business of Washington, abandoning their promise to abolish agencies and programs that regulate, subsidize, or redistribute. As *Time* magazine noted, these "onetime absolutists are giving

ground to the sordid realities of getting re-elected and to a larger realization that the incomplete victory of nudging the government in a new direction is better than the total defeat of bringing it down."

David Boaz, executive vice-president of the Cato Institute, has accurately assessed the current political mood: "Americans feel they are faced with a choice between Democrats who want to tax productive citizens to subsidize both a non-working underclass and a new class of cultural elitists, and Republicans who project an image of intolerance and *don't actually cut government.*"

The GOP revolution stalled in part because members have failed to educate the public. It's a challenge to decipher trillion-dollar economics for people justifiably more concerned with balancing a \$100 checkbook. Members have not explained the big picture — that to help the homeless, the poor, and children, we've got to balance the budget. And members failed to illustrate the degree that government borrows to finance current spending. As Robert Eisner recently wrote in *The Wall Street Journal*, "voters would not permit

increased spending if it had to be financed by taxes rather than painless borrowing."

Perhaps most importantly, members failed to clearly redefine the role of government. As Cato's Stephen Moore has said, "no matter how long one searches the Constitution, it is impossible to find any language that authorizes at least 90% of the civilian programs that Congress crams into the federal budget today."

By reducing the deficit, we strengthen the economy for future generations of Americans, rich and poor. If the federal government borrowed less to sustain its spending programs, there would be more money available for business to create jobs, boost productivity, and deliver better paychecks. Less government borrowing means lower interest rates. Homes, autos, and college tuition could be financed more cheaply, saving Americans billions of dollars.

Many elected officials here in Minnesota have railed against the hard-fought spending reductions proposed in the federal budget, crying that such reductions place unfair burdens on state, county, and city governments. But remember, we are all federal

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*It appears we voted for Dimestore Democrats ("we can do it ten cents cheaper").*

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citizens. I welcome the reductions. I welcome the opportunity to take responsibility for our own.

We must make drastic changes in how we spend your money. Even if the revolution in Congress has stalled, we must reduce the size of government everywhere, quickly.

The GOP must rediscover its mandate and continue the revolution, putting aside the spoils of office. As GOP freshman Rep. Mark Neumann of Wisconsin has said, "This is about the future of our kids and what's going to happen to them. . . . You've got a group of people here who want to fix this country and go back home and live out our lives."

The voters sent revolutionaries to

Washington, not co-conspirators. Unless Republicans move faster, voters

will be sending them home a lot sooner than they imagined. □

# Conscription Fever

by Aaron Steelman

Congressional Republicans like to preach against intrusive government — but they're dodging the draft.

**T**he failure of the Republican "revolution" is nowhere more evident than in the survival of that absurd relic of the Cold War, draft registration. The Republicans, like their twins across the aisle, support this authoritarian and intrusive system even though it has no valid military purpose. Indeed, government committees appointed to investigate the matter have repeatedly rejected peacetime registration as inefficient and unnecessary.

Draft registration survives for one reason alone: statist like it. It reminds young men that they are servants of empire.

In the wake of the Soviets' 1979 invasion of Afghanistan, Jimmy Carter proposed restoring draft registration as a "necessary step" to preserve and enhance "national security requirements." But around the same time, the Selective Service System (SSS) released a report that found post-mobilization registration "preferable" to registration in peacetime. Carter quickly changed his tune, presenting registration as a symbol of America's "resolve" to stand firm against Soviet aggression. Over the opposition of non-interventionists such as Mark Hatfield and a handful of left-wing Democrats, Congress caved in and restored registration in 1980.

During Ronald Reagan's 1980 campaign, he repeatedly stated his opposition to the new policy, arguing that forcing young men to register would destroy "the very values that our soci-

ety is committed to defending." As soon as the election was won, however, he abandoned this principled stand; now, he declared, registration was needed to procure emergency manpower. Reagan's superficially practical rationale, like Carter's, was contradicted by a nearly simultaneous government report. This one was issued by the president's own Military Manpower Task Force, which echoed the SSS's finding that peacetime registration does little to increase efficiency. Like most products of presidential task forces, it was buried, and registration became a non-issue.

Then, in December 1993, the Department of Defense issued a report stating that registration could be ended with "no effect on military mobilization requirements, little effect on the time it would take to mobilize, and no measurable effect on military recruitment." As a result, the report stated, "suspending peacetime draft registration could be accomplished with limited risk to national security considering the low probability of the need for conscription." These admissions won widespread praise from both Republicans and Democrats. Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.) remarked, "For the first time in 14 years, we've gotten a straight answer from the Pentagon that says that peacetime registration has nothing to do with real defense needs."

Since the man in the White House had spent the better part of his youth avoiding the draft, Selective Service

*continued on page 47*

## Testimony

# How Johnny Cash Restored My Faith in the Healing Powers of Hip

*by Jesse Walker*

Two years ago, the good folks at *Time* magazine, in their never-ending quest for new "trends" to invent or oversimplify, discovered the death of Hip. According to Richard Lacayo's August 8, 1994 cover story, things have gotten to the point where *everybody* is trying to be hip. Therefore, since hipness is supposed to be an outsider's stance, Hip is dead.

### The Hip Dialectic

What *Time* discovered, in its characteristically — forgive the word — unhip way, goes far beyond hipness. To be hip, once upon a time, meant to be aware, to see through social games, as in "I'm hip to that." Somewhere along the line, it changed meaning; now, it is synonymous with fashionability. Fashion, after all, is the art of selling poses, and no pose is more fashionable than that of not caring about fashion. ("I'm the kind of guy who doesn't like labels," an anarchist acquaintance once told me. What better label could a hep cat hope for?)

The fashion cycle already turns without logic or reason. Grease the wheels with hipness, and they spin ever faster. Now, whatever is hip becomes fashionable, but what is fashionable cannot long be hip. David Lynch labored in hip semi-obscurity for years before the *Twin Peaks* television series made him fashionable — and that fashionability ensured that in a year or two he would be unhip, ignorable, backlashed, passé. The fashionable Lynch produced a minor, moderately amusing movie called *Wild at Heart*, and it won the Cannes

Film Festival prize. The passé Lynch produced a powerful film prequel to his TV series, and it was roundly booed at Cannes, because the director had hogged the spotlight too long.

The hipster despises fashionability, or at least makes a fashionable show of doing so. Why? Partly out of elitism: *Everybody's into "my" thing; better dump it fast.* But partly out of a real disgust with seeing his honestly felt attachments mass-produced and reduced to an oh-so-contemporary wink. *So you're into Johnny Cash, eh? Yeah — I hear he's big with Generation X right now.* Imagine my surprise when I woke up one morning to find the flannel shirts I'd been wearing since the seventh grade had been magically turned into the badge of an imaginary movement called "grunge." *Damn, I thought to myself. Now everybody's going to think I'm trying to be hip.*

### The Man in Black

I mentioned Johnny Cash a moment ago. For those in the dark: in 1994, Mr. Cash dropped out of the Nashville rat race to record a CD, *American Recordings*, that seemed targeted at the so-called alternative music audience. It was produced by

Rick Rubin, known for his work with stars of rap and rock, and featured songs written by such un-Nashville figures as Tom Waits and Glenn Danzig, the latter the former frontman of the '80s punk band the Misfits (sample song title: "Mommy, Can I Go Out and Kill Tonight?"). Its most notorious track was "Delia's Gone," about a man who murders his betrothed. That song in particular set the critics' tongues a-waggin': to hear the media tell it, this was something incredibly new for Johnny Cash.

Few, if any, pointed out that he had recorded the same song once before, back in 1962.

*American Recordings* is a stark, dark, and wonderful album, but it marked no great break with Cash's long-established punk persona. (*Johnny Cash at San Quentin* packs more revolutionary fervor than anything any '60s rockers set to vinyl, and "One Piece at a Time" belongs in the IWW songbook.) Nor, despite the "Generation X is discovering Johnny Cash" articles that filled the trashy pages of *USA Today* and its ilk, was the man in black a newcomer to hipness. I worked at an alternative radio station from 1988 to 1993 with the hip-

pest bunch of folks you'll ever lay eyes on, and they all loved Johnny Cash. All of them. Long before the hype machine shifted into gear.

According to the old fashion-cycle pattern, Johnny Cash should be terminally unhip any time now. This time, though, it might not happen. Here's why.

*Time* says that because everyone is hip, Hip is dead. But hipness in the old sense — the sense of awareness, of discovering the truth behind the social *maya* — need not shrivel when popularly adopted. Truth doesn't change; only lies do. The Mel Tormé revival will disappear once the kids figure out that Tormé doesn't have much to offer besides a few campy laughs. The Johnny Cash revival might last for as long as Cash can produce great music. If you're a music-lover looking for a rebellious hero, you can sign on with the adolescent thrills of a heavy-metal hairspray band (or their contemporary "alternative" soundalikes), or you can seek out the real thing. And if the real thing turns out to be a born-again Christian who sings country music —

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*The authentic is eccentric; only the prepackaged fit into easy stereotypes.*

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well, who were you expecting? Sammy Hagar? The authentic is eccentric; only the prepackaged fit into easy stereotypes.

### A Utopian Scenario

Perhaps, if I may be optimistic, *Time* has discovered, not the death of Hip, but the death — or growing irrelevance — of Fashion. In other words, people may be getting hip to Hip.

Back in 1990, *Time* started the Generation X hysteria with a stupid cover story about some people they annoyingly called "twentysomethings." *Time's* reporters interviewed a number of members of my generation and discovered, to their horror, that they could discern no pattern. Since they had to find a "trend" to write about, they announced to their readers that twentysomethings are directionless and confused.

In plain language, they discovered that we are all individuals. Shocking, shocking.

This is true of every generation, of course. But with mine, one factor was different: even the generational "leaders," those arrogant folk who claim to speak for all their peers, were heading in wildly different directions. No one in the media knew who to write about, or when. They finally settled on the *Time* line — that we were simply confused — and Generation X was born. When even this generation gap failed to materialize (the people who didn't fit the label hated it, and the people who did fit it hated it even more), *Time* and the rest threw their hands in the air and proclaimed that Hip must be dead.

In the meantime, forgotten music, movies, even commercials of the past are reissued on low-circulation videos and CDs. Cassette networks, cheap camcorders, micro radio, and desktop publishing make local, do-it-yourself expression even simpler than before. Twenty-year-olds find it easier to explore Fats Waller, or Hasil Adkins, or Spike Jones — or Johnny Cash — while they're supposed to be tuned to Pearl Jam, Blind Melon, and the other officially designated alternatives to the mainstream. Kids find it easier to produce their own zines about their own interests when the mass media leave them behind, or just to post some comments on the Internet. Hegemonic pop culture dissolves into an egalitarian soup, where yesterday's creations are as accessible as the fashions of today.

And the guardians of mass culture, of the Fashion Cycle, see their precious pose of hipness decline in value, because just about everyone is hip to it by now.

In this optimistic view of things, *Time's* "Death of Hip" story is a rear-guard action, a last-ditch attempt to get this secession from mass media under control. *Oh, so you think it's a waste of time trying to be hip? I hear that's very "in" now.* And it might work. But it might not. Not if popular culture really is getting more diverse and uncontrollable.

### A Dose of Realism

But is it? It may be easier to find old records or movies today, but they were always there, somewhere, for the com-

mitted to hunt. Today's desktop publishing may be cheaper than the amateur-press magazines of past decades, but the new zines aren't necessarily any better.

There have *always* been some people who prefer creating to consuming, or who prefer consuming something old or *outré* to consuming something current. If I think there are more of us now than before, I'm probably just falling prey to the Last Generation

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*The reporters could discern no pattern. Since they had to find a "trend" to write about, they announced that twentysomethings are directionless and confused.*

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syndrome: the ludicrous faith that the changes of *my* time will dwarf those of past and future eras.

### An Unaccountably Optimistic Conclusion

Still, at the risk of embracing a Tofflerian faith that a Great Transformation is taking place around me, I prefer optimism, if only because it helps to get me through the night. Besides, every now and then, something comes along to justify it.

Last summer, a friend and I attended a Johnny Cash concert, along with the most diverse crowd I'd ever seen at a musical event. There were kids under 20, and there were a couple of folks I swear were older than my grandmother. There were Garth Brooks lookalikes and there were Cure wannabees. In the aisle, two young men passed a joint back and forth; next to them sat an old man with a cane. June Carter sang for a bit — and so did the lead singer of the Screaming Trees. The audience crossed all boundaries of age, culture, and class, and just about everyone seemed to enjoy themselves.

Generation gaps, petty subculture boundaries, and class prejudice are always fashionable. But the Johnny Cash concert — so everyone told me — was hip.

And even if that doesn't signify anything, I still had a good time. □

## Explanation

# Why I Would Not Vote Against Hitler

by Wendy McElroy

You can't fight tyranny at the ballot box.

At the last *Liberty* Conference, an intellectual brawl erupted during a panel discussion on terrorism. Since I consider electoral politics the milquetoast equivalent of terrorism, my opening statement was a condemnation of voting. My arguments were aimed at libertarians who consider themselves anarchists yet jump to their feet in ebullient applause upon hearing that a fellow libertarian wants to be a politician.

In the two raucous hours that ensued, a question was posed: "If you could have had cast the deciding vote against Hitler, would you have done so?" I replied, "No, but I would have no moral objection to putting a bullet through his skull." In essence, I adopted a stronger line — a "plumb-line," as Benjamin Tucker phrased it — on eliminating the Hitler threat.

I consider such a bullet to be an act of self-defense in a manner that a ballot could never be. A bullet can be narrowly aimed at a deserving target; a ballot attacks innocent third parties who must endure the consequences of the politician I have assisted into a position of power over their lives. Whoever puts a man into a position of unjust power — that is, a position of political power — must share responsibility for every right he violates thereafter.

The question then shifted: "If there had been no other strategies possible, would you have voted against Hitler?" This postulated a fantasy world which canceled out one of the basic realities of existence: the constant presence of alternatives. In

essence, the question became, "If the fabric of reality were rewoven into a different pattern, would you still take the same moral stand?" Since my morals are derived from my views about reality, it was not possible for me to answer this question. But my first response was to wonder what I would have been doing for the months and years that led to the momentous dilemma of whether to scratch an X beside Adolf's name. Or did I have no alternatives then either?

I can address only the reality in which I live and, in a world replete with alternatives, I would not vote for or against Hitler. Let me address a more fundamental question: What is the nature of the state? According to Max Weber, a state is an institution that claims a monopoly of force over a geographical area. It is a form of institutionalized power, and the first step in dissecting its essence is to analyze the defining terms "power" and "institution."

Albert Jay Nock wrote of two sorts of power: social and state. By social power, he meant the amount of freedom individuals *actually* exercise over their lives — that is, the extent to which they can freely make such

choices as where and how to live. By state power, he meant the *actual* amount of control the government exercises over its subjects' lives — that is, the extent to which it determines such choices as where and how people live. There is an inverse and antagonistic relationship between social and state power. One expands only at the expense of the other.

I stress the word "actual" because the power of the state does not rest on its size — the number of laws on the books or the extent of the territory it claims. A state's power rests on social conditions, such as whether people will obey its laws and how many resources it can command to enforce obedience. A key social condition is how legitimate the state is seen to be. For without the veil of legitimate authority, the people will not obey the state, and it will not long command the resources, such as taxes and manpower, that it needs to live.

In other words, freedom does not depend so much on repealing laws as on weakening the state's authority. It does not depend — as political strategists expediently claim — on persuading enough people to vote "properly," so that libertarians can occupy seats of



political power and roll back legislation. Unfortunately, this process strengthens the institutional framework that produced unjust laws in the first place: it strengthens the structure of state power by accepting its authority as a tool of change. But state authority can never strengthen social power.

This brings up the issue of institutional analysis. People apply the word "institution" to such wide-ranging concepts as "the family," "the free market," "the church," and "the state." An institution is any stable and widely-accepted mechanism for achieving social and political goals. To a great extent, these institutions function independently of the good or bad intentions of those who use them. For example, as long as everyone respects the rules of the free market, it functions as a mechanism of exchange. The same is true of the state. As long as everyone respects its rules — voting, going through state channels, obeying the law — it functions as a mechanism of social control.

F.A. Hayek popularized the notion of *unintended consequences*, observing that conscious acts often produce

unforeseen results. This explains why good men who act through bad institutions will produce bad results. Good men acting through the state will strengthen its legitimacy and its institutional framework. They will weaken social power. Ultimately, whether or not they repeal any particular law becomes as irrelevant to producing freedom as their intentions.

So, returning to the question of voting for Hitler: purely for the sake of

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*Freedom does not depend so much on repealing laws as on weakening the state's authority.*

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argument, I'll grant the possibility that I could morally cast a ballot. Yet even then, I would still refuse to vote against him. Why? Because the essential problem is not Hitler, but the institutional framework that allows a Hitler to grasp a monopoly on power. Without the state to back him up and

an election to give him legitimized power, Hitler would have been, at most, the leader of some ragged thugs who mugged people in back alleys. Voting for or against Hitler would only strengthen the institutional framework that produced him — a framework that would produce another of his ilk in two seconds.

Killing Hitler does less damage. But it — like voting — is an admission of utter defeat. Resorting to brute force means that all avenues of social power have been destroyed and I have been reduced to adopting the tactics of the state. Under tyranny, such violence might be justified as long as I could avoid harming innocent third parties. In these circumstances, however, voting could not be justified, because there is a third party. No one has the right to place one human being in a position of political power over another. A consistent libertarian can never authorize one human being to tax and control peaceful activities. And the state is no more than the institutionalized embodiment of this authorization.

You cannot help freedom or social power by bowing your head to Leviathan. □

### Steelman, "Conscription Fever," *continued from page 43*

seemed to be on its last legs. But in May 1994, President Clinton announced otherwise: "Maintaining the SSS and draft registration provide [sic] a hedge against unforeseen threats and is a relatively low-cost 'insurance policy' against our underestimating the maximum level of threat we expect our Armed Forces to face." The SSS had been given yet another reprieve.

The Republican "revolutionaries" of 1994 initially moved to abolish the agency. The subcommittee on Veterans Affairs, HUD, and Independent Agencies voted to allow SSS only \$6 million this year — just enough to close down operations. As Rep. Jerry Lewis (R-Calif.), chairman of the subcommittee, stated, "Dollars are mighty dear, and it seemed to us that one agency you could do without is Selective Service."

Ignoring Defense's own conclusion that registration was pointless, some Democratic leaders opposed eliminating it. Sen. John Glenn (D-Oh.) favored

SSS because "it's an inexpensive way to keep records on the cadre of people who would be available if they were ever required to be used." But it was not Clinton's friends in Congress who were most active in fighting the proposed cut. It was Gerald Solomon (R-N.Y.), chairman of the powerful Rules Committee, who made it clear that he would support registration at every turn. The day before the subcommittee voted to end SSS, Solomon said, "The small amount of money is worth it. Killing it is not going to put any more school lunches on anybody's table."

After the vote, Solomon lobbied tirelessly until the House Appropriations Committee voted to refund the agency at a cost of over \$28 million. Proud of his work, the GOP leader noted that "these young men who have to go down to the post office and register — it makes them very much aware of the military and our need for it."

Solomon's single-handed rescue of

the useless agency drew little criticism from advocates of limited government. The reaction of Peter Sepp of the National Taxpayers Union was typical. "We don't expect any member of Congress to vote the right way every time. It's an unrealistic expectation given the political pressure on them from all directions. What we would hope is that all legislators try to practice fiscal responsibility — and in the case of Congressman Solomon, he has made it mostly a habit."

Any hope that the Republicans would change the way Washington is run has been squelched. Gerald Solomon is not an aberration. He is typical of the supposed Republican revolutionaries, who do not understand that if the welfare-warfare state is ever to be dismantled, programs such as SSS must be pulled out by the roots.

And until weak-kneed lobbyists like Sepp are replaced by men of conviction, that's not going to happen. □

## Exchange

# Kill the Mockingbird!

*by Jesse Walker*

### Memo

To: B.

From: R.

With the O.J. trial over, I think the time is finally ripe for the *To Kill a Mockingbird* project we've been talking about. Here's a rough outline of the movie, as I see it:

We open with a shot of Gregory Peck close to the end of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Then cut to him today. (I figure his character should still be alive. When was *Mockingbird* supposed to take place? Let's figure 1959 or so — there was segregation then, right?) He's old but tough, with a sour look on his face. Through flashbacks, we show the great tragedy of his life: in 1975, Scout was assaulted and killed by a gang of black toughs — who got off scot-free, thanks to crook-coddling liberals in the justice system. He turns his back on his liberal values and dedicates himself to one end: "Putting every nigra criminal behind bars."

Jump back to the present. A black athlete has just killed his wife. (We should use a made-up name for the athlete, of course — but could we get O.J. to play him? At the very least, Kato should get a cameo.) America is outraged, and Peck offers his services to the prosecution. They rebuff his offer and blow the case. Outraged, Peck makes the final step over to vigilantism — "Law? Who needs the *law*? I stand for justice!"

At this point we move into familiar Charles Bronson territory. In the end, Peck leads a group of other enraged citizens in capturing the athlete and hanging him.

I think we should call the movie *Kill the Mockingbird!* What do you say?

### Memo

To: R.

From: B.

Unfortunately, I think *To Kill a Mockingbird* was supposed to take place earlier than 1959. I'm sure we can find some way around that, though — maybe something about cryonics. Anyway, that's not the biggest problem I see with your idea.

As you know, the studio has a firm policy against making films that are insensitive or racist. Your story may cross that line when it employs the word "nigra." Can we cut it?

Also, one of the toughs who kills Scout should be Latino, and one should be a white guy wearing his baseball cap backwards. The rest can be black, but should not be given many lines.

The biggest problem, though, is that I'm not sure Gregory Peck is still a bankable star. In fact, I'm not sure whether he's still alive. How about Jim Carrey?

With those changes, I think this may be ready for development.

## Memo

To: B.  
From: R.

Good suggestions, except that I don't think people were wearing their baseball caps backwards in 1975. Someone should check this.

Rather than cryonics, why don't we use time travel? Jim Carrey and his daughter are suddenly, unexplainably pushed into the future. Almost immediately, she is killed by a gang, and then . . . etc.

In fact, why don't we push this completely into the future — say 2010? Then we could have them pursued by a Terminator-like creature from the further future that wants to stop some important thing they do in the year 2010. Ideally, O.J. would play the Terminator character.

We'll keep Scout alive in this one, and make her a cute, spunky, wisecracking kid. Let's drop the justice stuff and make it a straight chase movie — O.J. coming to kill Carrey and his daughter. We'll call it *Kill the Mockingbirds!*

Interested?

## Memo

To: R.  
From: B.

Of course I'm interested! But it needs a little more work. What, for example, is O.J. trying to keep them from doing? And why are they in 2010 to begin with?

My people have spoken with Carrey's agent, and he seems interested. Is there any way we can rewrite this to make better use of his comic talents?

## Memo

To: B.  
From: R.

Naturally. Let's say he's brought to 2010 because the people of the future *have forgotten how to laugh*. Someone reads an old book about Carrey's zany courtroom antics and decides he's just the man they need — and they pick up his wisecracking daughter as well, by mistake. (I must admit I haven't actually seen the original *To Kill a Mockingbird* — are there any zany courtroom antics in it? Even if there aren't, we might dig up some in the original book — I'll have one of my readers check it out — or else we'll just come up with some flashbacks of our own. I seem to remember a great scene in the original *My Cousin Vinny* script that was never filmed; maybe we could use it.)

Instead of O.J. coming back from the future to kill our heroes, let's say he's already there in 2010, and that he's responsible for the grim state of the day. We could add an environmental message as well: he's trying to wipe out endangered species for some reason or another (I doubt we'd have to explain it) with a terrible flying machine, "the killing bird." Our heroes' eventual mission (and our movie's title): *To Mock the Killing Bird*.

## Memo

To: R.  
From: B.

Bad news — Carrey's getting cold feet. Says he wants to be "taken seriously as an actor" and won't be doing any more comedies after his upcoming sci-fi project, *Ace Double*. While we're searching for a new lead, I thought you might turn your attention to the *Amadeus* followup we've been kicking around. I'm thinking we should go for a horror angle — say, a summer camp haunted by the spirits of dead composers.

Did they have chainsaws in the eighteenth century?

□

# Peace, Love, and Violence

Until recently, Canadians would have shrugged off the idea that the Quebec secessionist movement could lead to violence. Many are now having second thoughts.

After the October 30 referendum, when 49.4% of the Quebec electorate voted to secede, a few separatist dissenters started a new movement that, they announced, would not rule out mild violence. Then a few Montreal English Canadians noted that if the province seceded, regions of Quebec where a majority opposed secession might choose to split off from Quebec and remain with Canada. If Canada is divisible, they reasoned, so is Quebec (a thought I had already expressed in a 1983 book). Their stance won approval from Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien and other federal politicians.

Ottawa politicians have treacherously challenged the Quebec government to commit itself to use no violence against such breakaway regions. Quebec politicians have requested that Ottawa commit to not interfering with the whole province seceding, so long as it is "democratically decided." Both sides claim to be the most democratic — and neither deals with the issue.

Indeed, they cannot. Violence is inherent to the situation. Forcing somebody to live under a state he does not want may not lead to open violence if the victim does not take up arms, but it is still violence, albeit covert. Such is the situation under a Tocquevillian, administrative, intrusive state — like both the present federal government and the promised sovereign Quebec. A large chunk of the population will be bloody angry whatever the majority decision is, and whichever majority makes it.

The question is only whether the violence will be covert and legal, or open and revolutionary.

Canadians are normally very patient subjects. They trust their government, even when it confiscates more than 50% of what they earn, even

when it disarms them. In this respect, Quebecers are disturbingly Canadian. Federal Immigration and Citizenship Minister Lucienne Robillard recently voiced the conventional wisdom: "It's not the Canadian way of doing things, it's not the Quebec way of doing things," she said. "We are a tolerant country, a peaceful country." But this may be changing with the increasing confrontation and frustration that always accompany growing state power.

There is another reason why politicians do not want to paint themselves into the peace-and-love corner. Irrational emotions are running very high. One half of Quebecers, and an awful lot of other Canadians, believe that Quebec secession would destroy the greatest country in the world, the country that has given them free medical care, cheap education, the welfare state, wall-to-wall security — even if the walls are cracking and liberty is being swept under the rug. The other half of Quebecers passionately long for "the Country" (as former Quebec prime minister Jacques Parizeau used to say with tremolos in his voice), even if all it would give them is a bit more of the same under their very own local tyranny.

The third reason for the politicians' dumbness about open violence is that they can find no rational answer to the partition argument. On the one hand, if Canada is divisible, so Quebec must be — and so must be any region or subregion within Quebec, up to the sovereign individual. On the other hand, if none of these territories is divisible, why is North America, or the world, partitioned into different countries? What right has the Canadian government to rule on, to use Voltaire's expression, these "few acres of snow"?

The root of this logical contradiction lies in the very definition of the sovereign, democratic state, the system under which — as Quebec Prime Minister Lucien Bouchard implied —

the majority of "the people" has the right to do anything. Once you get into this system, there is no way other than violence (overt or covert) to define just who "the people" is. The ones with the guns will win, the ones without guns will cave in. What's interesting about the present partition debate is that it raises fundamental questions about the nature of the state, questions that are long overdue in Quebec and Canada.

In some ways, French Canadians are clandestine individualists. They never made revolutions. They passed their turn when the French Revolution was waged and when American revolutionaries called on them. When authority gets too heavy, they quietly retreat in tax evasion, the underground economy, and other kinds of illegality — provided they think they can get away with it. The recent report of Quebec's auditor general is revealing in this respect: a whole chapter deals, in a kind of panicky way, with means to fight endemic tax evasion and the growing underground economy.

Some individualists are coming out of the closet. For the first time in Quebec, libertarian ideas are making headway. A group of young Quebecers have created *Les Amis de la Liberté* ("The Friends of Liberty"). A sign of the times: the Canadian parliament refused to hear their brief against its recent firearms control bill. Another sign is the radicalization of ordinary people. The Quebec Federation of Motorcyclists, for example, is adopting a tough ideological stance toward police harassment of peaceful bikers.

If there is violence in this country, let's hope, for our children's sake, that it will be against statism, and not between two irrational and tyrannical brands of nationalism. Remember Thomas Jefferson's words: "The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants."

—Pierre Lemieux

# Reviews

*It Takes a Village: And Other Lessons Children Teach Us*, by Hillary Rodham Clinton. Simon and Schuster, 1996, 319 pp., \$20.00.

## The Woman Who Knew Clinton

Stephen Cox

No one knows who produced this curious work of fiction. Published rumors suggest that the person we have to thank for it is a writer named Barbara Feinman. In any event, the idea of attributing authorship to "Hillary Rodham Clinton" is a masterstroke of irony. Mrs. Clinton, as everyone knows, is one of America's toughest and wiliest politicians. No one who follows public affairs can fail to notice the difference between the style of the real Mrs. Clinton and that of this novel. *It Takes a Village* is equaled in blandness only by the self-help articles in the nicer Sunday supplements. The comic effect is similar to what one would receive from the presentation of General Patton as the author of a book on the art of flower arranging.

The intention behind *It Takes a Village* can be surmised only gradually. Does the author want to demonstrate that commanding figures like Mrs. Clinton are, at heart, merely reservoirs of banality? Or is there a darker purpose, an attempt to probe the complexity of a human mind that disguises its aggressive instincts beneath a harmlessly banal exterior? Is the intention still more deeply ironic — a desire to show that aggression and banality can,

in some minds, complement each other perfectly?

I will return to these essentially psychological issues. What commands immediate attention is the novel's literary method. In this respect, *It Takes a Village* challenges comparison to such satires as Sinclair Lewis' *The Man Who Knew Coolidge*. Lewis invented a representative bourgeois American and permitted him to talk, at whatever length he wanted, about whatever he thought was interesting. The longer and more excitedly he talked, the more clearly he revealed the horrifying emptiness of all his works and days.

"Hillary Rodham Clinton," the protagonist of *It Takes a Village*, is allowed the same scope for self-revelation, but her creator takes a bolder and more complicated approach than Lewis. "Mrs. Clinton" has the rhetorical cunning that *The Man Who Knew Coolidge* lacked. She pretends to be concerned, not with herself, but with her ideas about the welfare of children:

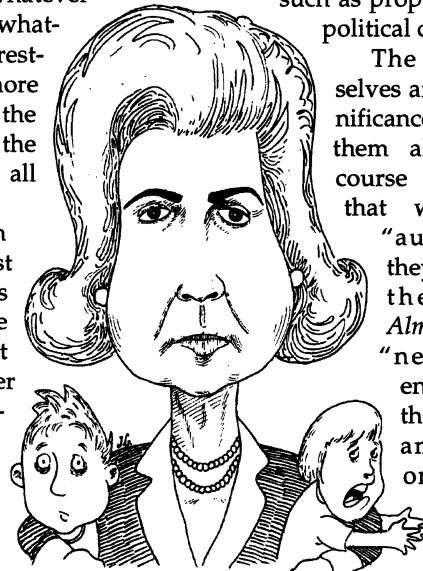
This book is not a memoir; thankfully, that will have to wait. . . . It is a statement of my personal views, a

reflection of my continuing meditation on children. Whether or not you agree with me, I hope it promotes an honest conversation among us. (p. 17)

Too modest to enjoy writing a book about herself, the "author" will merely convey some "personal views" — meanwhile ignoring the question, which one might expect to arise, of why her "views" should be of any greater interest than her life. But she has views about children; who could quarrel with that? But you might! You just might quarrel! If so, fine; she generously grants you the freedom you already had, and she hopes that you are capable of "an honest conversation." Of course, the "conversation," honest or otherwise, is bound to be rather one-sided, since "Mrs. Clinton" is writing the book and you are not. She doesn't dwell on that. She simply continues to talk about her views, allowing them to ooze modestly to the surface in a series of "meditations" on children and matters supposedly connected with them, such as proposals for social and political change.

The proposals themselves are of no special significance. We've heard them all before, and of course the satirist knows that we have; if the "author" thinks that they constitute what the *Old Farmer's Almanac* used to call "new, useful, and entertaining matter," this is just another amusing comment on the pride she takes in her profound meditations. "Mrs.

Clinton" wants government to raise the minimum wage, send unemployed people to college, send unemployed people into AmeriCorps programs, pay parents not to work, make all children take phys ed,



make all children do "public service," use the schools to teach "empathy" and "social development," impose new laws on the insurance industry, regulate television to make sure that children don't see too many advertise-

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ments, subsidize and regulate people who offer daycare: the list of this "author's" great thoughts is long. Its most deliciously humorous feature is a proposal for the government to provide "funding" to help people "break through" government-funded bureaucracies (264)! Apparently the government should just take charge of everything.

But lest one accuse "Mrs. Clinton" of believing that, she spends scores of pages lecturing her readers — who are presumably adults — about their own personal responsibilities: they need to spend time with their children, talk with them, teach them the difference between right and wrong, get them to eat healthy food, find out whether their babysitters have some minimal standards of cleanliness. . . . This list is also long. All the things that are instinctively obvious to other people strike this highly educated "author" as so many bolts from the blue, revelations that she must urgently communicate. She has recently discovered, for instance, that children improve their chances of developing intellectual skills when their parents provide them with intellectual stimulation. Modern "researchers" have taught her that, and she explains the concept at some length.

Naturally, one would like to know how such a slow thinker as "Mrs. Clinton" could actually have come to regard herself as an expert on how other people should think. For this reason, if not for any other, one begins to desire some facts about her life. But her creator has given "Mrs. Clinton" a strong impulse to secrecy, or, perhaps more accurately, to pseudo-revelation.

The "first lady" selects a few shiny fragments from her life and uses them to decorate the edges of her political and social sermons. She relates some little stories about her parents, her childhood, her husband and his childhood, their marriage, the birth of their daughter, their experiments in rearing her, and so forth. But we learn next to nothing about the political struggles on which, as we know, a president and his wife must have lavished most of their waking hours for many years. On the novel's first page, the protagonist refers to her "work," but she confides so little information about it that, three hundred pages later, one is still not sure

exactly what it is. She says that she has "advocated for" children, but what precisely does that mean? And what other roles has she played in her long public career? The answers never come.

Basic facts are not the only things that the "author" leaves obscure. There is also the question of motives. "Mrs. Clinton" believes, or at least suggests, that her life has been guided by very simple things: her childhood in a close and loving family, her sense of social responsibility for those less fortunate than herself, her commitment to her church, her collection of inspirational quotations. She implies, in other words, that a lifelong quest for political power has developed more or less automatically from such homey sources. Is this sincerity — or another sample of the "author's" cunning attempts to ingratiate herself?

It may be sincerity. This is a character who, despite her efforts to manage and manipulate her audience, is blind to the most bizarrely obvious clues to her own nature. One such clue is planted by the novelist amid the protagonist's thoughts on the inspirational value of literature. "You never know," she says,

where you might find such guidance when you need it. One of Chelsea's [her daughter is named "Chelsea"] and my favorite nursery rhymes summed up the absolute unpredictability and frequent unfairness of life: "As I was standing in the street/As quiet as could be/A great big ugly man came up/And tied his horse to me." (148)

A peculiar rhyme, one thinks, in which to look for "guidance"; a grotesque rhyme to repeat to oneself, and a frightening rhyme to foist upon a child. But it helped the protagonist, or so she believes:

I thought often of that rhyme during our first year in the White House: My father died, our dear friend Vince Foster killed himself, my mother-in-law lost her battle against breast cancer, and my husband and I were attacked daily from all directions by people trying to score political points. (148)

Here, the author seems to be saying, is a woman who regards the deaths of other people as things that happened to her, as weird impositions on her nice-



girl quietude, as intrusions comparable to unwarranted political attacks; she sees them as horses that ugly people tied to her. And she accepts her reaction as perfectly natural — as laudable, in fact.

The passage is brilliantly inventive. Few people in real life would be willing to talk this way out loud, but in the context of the novel, it all makes sense: that is the way this character would think. The passage achieves two important aims. First, it allows the reader to imagine all the horrors of a personal relationship with this demanding, entitled, self-righteous, and self-pitying character; it shows what being her relative or

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*The satirist's insight into the central character is clear, and devastating.*

---

friend would have to mean, thus providing information about the social and domestic atmosphere that the protagonist herself would not convey directly. Second, the passage confirms the reader's impression that the truth of the protagonist's life will never emerge from her own analysis. That truth must be sought in her unwillingness, perhaps her sheer inability, to analyze anything.

Ideas are not things that she can identify, distinguish, and reflect upon. They are material that she kneads together, like so much wet dough, until it suits her purpose. The simplest examples of this agglutinative mental (or merely verbal) process can be found in her political remarks, because her politics, unlike her motives, is simple to the point of inanity.

As far as "Mrs. Clinton" is concerned, "government is not something outside us"; it simply "is us" (312).

[W]hat, after all, as a fellow was saying to us at the Kiwanis Club the other day — what is the Government but the union of all of us put together for mutual advantage and protection? (*The Man Who Knew Coolidge*)

If you believe that, you'll believe almost anything, and "Mrs. Clinton" does. According to her, new laws cannot be considered "unwarranted government intrusion" so long as their purpose is "important enough" (86–87).

Importance is pretty much the same as legitimacy, isn't it? To "Mrs. Clinton," means and ends are as one; she cannot tell the difference:

[T]ry applying the invective you hear leveled broadly at "government programs" directly to the children who are among their most important beneficiaries. Are the children sustained by government-subsidized day care or fed by government-supported school breakfasts and lunches a "threat to our economic freedom" or guilty of "waste, fraud, and abuse"? (313)

But the protagonist's principal failure of analysis appears in her constant conflation of herself with other people. Although the book consists almost entirely of Eleanor Roosevelt-like nagging, there is never the impression of a person speaking to other persons, never the sense of listeners who might have their own ways of life and thought, separate from those of "Hillary Rodham Clinton." In this book, "we," "us," and "our" are the salient words.

That makes for some odd literary effects. Regretting the fact that America doesn't look much like a "village" anymore, the protagonist observes:

Instead of strolling down Main Street, we spend hours in automobiles and at anonymous shopping malls. We don't join civic associations, churches, unions, political parties, or even bowling leagues the way we used to. (13)

Apparently, the first lady of the United States doesn't join bowling leagues the way she used to; she prefers to hang out at anonymous shopping malls. But no, that's not quite what she means, is it? By "we," she must mean "you," yet she somehow includes herself in that "you," not as someone who actually does the stupid things that "we" do, but as someone who can embody and "advocate for" all of "us."

Thus the real author suggests that the protagonist is the kind of individual who fantasizes herself as the spiritual consummation and savior of the group. The individuals whom she encounters do not interest her as individuals (and why should they? they're usually just driving around, or shopping) but as illustrations of her own ideas, as people

whom she thinks she hears saying things like: "This is real, America. . . . We ask you the government, and you the employer, to help us, the working people, to make it work. We can't do it alone" (238). So proclaims one of this book's many subsidiary characters, a moment before she is hustled off the stage, like all the rest of them. Her sole function is to act as a ventriloquist exponent of the protagonist's own great thoughts. When she's said her piece, that's it.

But notice that last phrase: "We can't do it alone." The protagonist's great theme is the dependence of every individual on the help of others. "It takes a village to raise a child" — this, she says, is an "old African proverb" (12). It may, of course, be simply the real author's invention, since it expresses so clearly the leading character's conception of other people's primitive weakness. Her ideal America is a humble village whose humble residents never think of doing anything alone, because they understand their unconditional need for one another — which is to say, given the close and clammy relationship between the putative author and her country, that they understand their unconditional need for the president's wife.

Once again, the satirist's insight into the central character is clear, and devastating. The protagonist is a naive and unreflective egotist, a person who is always right, a person who could never mean anything less than perfectly well, a person who would be perfectly satisfied with herself if she lived alone on a satellite of Neptune. Yet she is vulnerable. She has the obscure sensation that there are other people on her planet, unpleasant people, people whom she cannot avoid no matter how "good" she is:

As I was standing in the street  
As quiet as could be  
A great big ugly man came up  
And tied his horse to me.

The protagonist has two options. She can rebel against her surroundings and tell other people how ugly and stupid she thinks they are. Or she can protect herself by asserting a benevolent mastery over those people, pretending that her will is "our" will and that her plans are, or ought to be, "our" plans.

She chooses the second option, which is obviously the more profitable

one, since it simultaneously asserts her power and assuages any guilt that she might contract from asserting it. Guilt itself is a vulnerability, but how can one feel guilty about trying to help the billions of other people who depend on one? The protagonist's own vulnerability is thus projected outward, onto society in general — and one sees how right, how perfect it is that the author of this novel should have portrayed its protagonist as preoccupied with children, with the weakest and most vulnerable segment of the population.

Indeed, from the protagonist's point of view (and this is another literary

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*The comic effect is similar to what one would receive from the presentation of General Patton as the author of a book on the art of flower arranging.*

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masterstroke), the adults who surround her are actually weaker than the children whom they have been trying so fecklessly to rear without her help. "I have never met a stupid child," she claims (239), though it is obvious that she has met many adults too stupid to understand this mighty truth.

But that is not the cream of the jest. The poet Wordsworth addressed the child as "Mighty Prophet! Seer blest!" The president's wife is naive enough to take such notions literally. "Some of the best theologians I have ever met," she says, "were five-year-olds." Even she and the president, she admits, had a tough time dealing with these mighty intellects. The First Couple "struggled" to answer the theological inquiries of their daughter and her little friends, who came up with such brain-twisters as: "Where is heaven, and who gets to go there?" "Does God ever make a mistake?" "What does God look like?" "Why does God let people do bad things?" and "'Does God care if I squash a bug?'" (169–70) It apparently never occurred to either the president or his wife that people who asked questions like this might not be great theologians, after all.

Neither did it occur to them that they could answer the children by

simply saying:

Beyond the material world.

Good people.

No.

Nobody ever caught sight of him.

Because he's given people freedom.

Go ahead and squash that bug.

These are answers that any child can understand. But the president and his wife never asked themselves whether people who have to struggle to come up with simple answers to childish questions could possibly be very bright themselves.

The protagonist's identification with children, which is her means of infantilizing and thereby dominating the world around her, is a much more accurate identification than she guesses. Although much of "her" writing attains the elevated tone of a term paper written by the best darned student in Everytown High School, some of it descends to the kind of conversation that goes on in *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*:

Imagine a country in which nearly all children between the ages of three and five attend preschool in sparkling classrooms. . . . It may sound too good to be true, but it's not. (221)

The country so breathlessly imagined turns out to be France! And oh, don't those French children have nice things! They spend the day in "bright and colorful" buildings, and the buildings are "modern," and they actually have walls that are "specially constructed to absorb sound." The sound just vanishes! And, oh, gosh, they have "spaces" that are specially set aside "for play," and for "sleeping," and for "eating, and even for good-byes and big hello hugs with parents" (222). Special spaces for hugs! Gee, I'd like to live in France! Wouldn't you?

We have now, perhaps, come full circle. Aggression and banality have met together; yea, they have even kissed each other. The "Hillary Rodham Clinton" of this novel — and how cruel it now appears that the satirist should have exploited the name of any living person — will feel useful and good about herself only if "nearly all" her fellow-citizens submit to being nagged, led, managed, nursed, instructed, conscripted, protected, and "advocated for" by people like her, from age three on. That's aggression.

And the height of her imaginings is a European preschool, with special spaces for great big hugs. That's banality.

The chief virtue of this novel is the acuteness and broad applicability of the psychological case-study that it presents. "Mrs. Clinton" wants to be a species, not just an individual; and so she is. There are millions of people like her; they are a distinctive feature of the American middle class. The novelist has captured all of them in "Hillary Rodham Clinton." Bored, entitled, shallow, ignorant, they seek refuge from self-analysis in verbal formulas, in the various kinds of counterfeit thinking that "professionals" who have no real work to do mistake for intellectual wealth. Hence "the first lady's" babble about "parenting" and "emotional intelligence"; her aversion to "extremism," which she defines as, basically, anything but her own "middle of the road" position; her piety toward "experts," so long as they favor her own vapid prejudices; her purely culinary attraction to what she calls "both big and bite-sized ideas" (18); her total lack of interest in any history except the progression of her own emotional states. And hence the striking similarity

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*She hopes that you are capable of "an honest conversation." Of course, the "conversation" is bound to be rather one-sided, since "Mrs. Clinton" is writing the book and you are not.*

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between "Mrs. Clinton," the dynamic first lady, the hardball politician, the world's greatest exponent of humanitarian ideals, and all those people to whom you are forced to listen politely at the annual office party.

Such "conversations" usually last far too long. If this novel has a defect, it is the enormous length to which the protagonist is allowed to pursue her so-called thoughts. Three hundred nineteen pages! — as if the novelist, like "Mrs. Clinton," did not know where to stop. □

*The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy*, by Christopher Lasch. W.W. Norton, 1995, 276 pp., \$12.95.

# The Expropriation of Everyday Life

Jesse Walker

The world lost a unique voice when Christopher Lasch died in February 1994. In his nine books and countless articles, Lasch constantly defied easy categorization. He was a radical critic of capitalism, a conservative critic of modern culture, and a populist critic of concentrated power; a man who abandoned the Left but could not bring himself to join the Right; a man who shared the libertarian antipathy to the state but fiercely opposed unrestrained individualism. He was a small-r republican, not a small-l liberal, and had little love for social mobility or follow-yeer-bliss. Yet there is much for an individualist to value in his work.

His posthumously published final book, *The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy*, is not a single, focused argument. A majority of its chapters were previously published as separate essays, and as a result, the book sometimes seems lost on one tangent after another. But all these detours relate back to his theme of an elite at odds with democratic culture.

## The Illusion of Certainty

Underlying all of Lasch's arguments is his philosophical pragmatism. Lasch argues that Left and Right alike attribute too much importance to certainty. If "the hope of grounding our knowledge of the world in propositions unassailable by doubt" (p. 188) fails, intellectuals across the political spectrum agree, society's moral foundations must crumble as well. We thus see conservatives desperately trying to defend untenable absolutes, while the academic Left

effectively throws out values and truth altogether.\* Both sides assume that the standards and traditions that provide our social glue have to be grounded in some universal principle. As a result, they give up concrete attachments, one side replacing them with dubious abstractions, the other with a nihilistic fascination with fashion.

Reading this reminded me of my first exposure to existentialist literature, in my teens. (This sounds odd, I know, but bear with me.) The existentialist idea that human beings are condemned to be free, to create our own meaning in a meaningless universe, struck me as both obviously true and curiously misstated. Free we are, but why should this be a bad thing? It's exhilarating to create our own meaning — and besides, it isn't as though we're flying blind. We're embedded in a human culture that has survived for thousands of years; values, morals, and meaning have evolved for as long as people have interacted with each other. Some of the cultural stock we've accumulated may be worth throwing out, and a lot of it may be entirely arbitrary (which doesn't necessarily mean it's worth trashing); but it's there, and it's a base on which we all depend.

The beauty of a free society is that it allows individuals and institutions to experiment, to succeed, and to fail; to create different ways of living, and to fall back on the wisdom of the ages if their efforts go awry. Liberty is thus both radical and conservative, and

\* These are generalizations, of course — some might say ludicrous overgeneralizations. But they are a useful rough model of the intellectual world.

above all else *skeptical*. It implies a skepticism about tradition that allows for the most radical experiments, and a skepticism about change that erects a conservative bulwark against social engineering.

Many under the spell of existentialism tend to downplay the rich body of tradition that has evolved over the years. Lasch takes the opposite route. He shares the libertarian's conservatism, but not his radicalism. He rejects the "romantic subjectivity" of Oscar Wilde, the French rebels of '68, and the postmodernists; he does not share "the modernist ideal of individuals emancipated from convention, constructing identities for themselves as they choose, leading their own lives . . . as if life itself were a work of art" (234).

And less exotic sorts of individualism are in for criticism as well. The unlimited experimentation of the marketplace, Lasch suggests, has undermined communal ties as surely as

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*Lasch refuses to let anyone else do his thinking for him, making him exciting to read even when he's saying something that's completely nuts.*

---

statism has. One might reply that some communal ties are worth undermining — that when people vote with their dollars or with their feet to change their way of life, this is a creative destruction that should not be constrained. For Lasch, this is dangerous thinking.

Lasch argues that while "the market appears to be the ideal embodiment of the principle . . . that individuals are the best judges of their own interests and that they must therefore be allowed to speak for themselves in matters that concern their happiness and well being," this tells only part of the story. "[I]ndividuals cannot learn to speak for themselves at all, much less come to an intelligent understanding of their happiness and well-being, in a world where there are no values except those of the market. Even liberal individuals require the character-forming discipline" of family and community. And these intermediary institutions are undermined by the marketplace, which "notoriously

tends to universalize itself. . . . It puts an almost irresistible pressure on every activity to justify itself in the only terms it recognizes: to become a business proposition, to pay its own way, to show black ink on the bottom line" (97-98).

If this were so, one would expect the ongoing erosion of civil society Lasch documents to correlate with eras of relative *laissez faire*. But social bonds were stronger, by Lasch's account, in the years before the Great Society, stronger still before the Progressive Era. How does this indict the market?

Lasch is far too smart to make an argument so easily knocked down. The erosion of community, he contends, actually goes back to the Industrial Revolution and the transformation of artisans into proletarians. "By the end of the nineteenth century," he writes, "'laboring classes' no longer referred to the vast majority of self-reliant, self-respecting citizens; the term now referred to a permanent class of hirelings, escape from which appeared to be the only compelling definition of opportunity." The meaning of democracy began to change as well. It now referred

not to "the democratization of intelligence and virtue" but to "the opportunity to 'rise' in the social scale" (72-73). Today, he concludes, the transformation is complete: the ruling class's idea of democratic reform amounts to allowing more people into the elite, not breaking down the class barrier itself. This can be seen, for example, in the present university system, where racial diversity has become a smokescreen for class homogeneity. "Increased enrollment of lower-income groups, notably black and Hispanic, has obscured a more important development, the gentrification of the leading colleges and universities, both public and private. . . . Economic stratification means that a liberal education (such as it is) has become the prerogative of the rich, together with small numbers of students recruited from select minorities" (176-177).

The fact that this situation has worsened during the statist twentieth century only supports the second half of Lasch's argument: that the welfare state has been a cure as bad as the disease. "The replacement of informal types of association by formal systems of socialization and controls weakens social

trust, undermines the willingness to hold others accountable for their actions, destroys respect for authority, and thus turns out to be self-defeating" (98). Lasch's heroes are nineteenth-century Populists, not Progressive Era planners. His ideal is a decentralized republic of small property-holders, not a socialist bureaucracy.

This is an incisive analysis. Still, Lasch doesn't actually cite any credible process by which the market must force every other institution into its image. Supposedly, the late-

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*Conservatives desperately try to defend untenable absolutes, while the academic Left throws out values and truth altogether.*

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nineteenth-century experience proves that, "Instead of serving as a counterweight to the market, . . . the family was invaded and undermined by the market" (96). But is that great abstraction, "the market," really to blame? The chief villains in Populist demonology — the capitalists whose power angered radical democrats of the day — were the banks and the railroads, both even then subsidized (and soon cartelized) by the state. More generally, the industrial era, especially from the Civil War on, was a period of intense angling by business for public power, public protection, and public subsidy.

And were intermediary institutions really wiped out during this period? The vast array of voluntary associations that characterized the nineteenth century extended well into the post-Civil War era. The urban neighborhoods Lasch praises for their informal social bonds actually blossomed during this time. Working-class organizations devoted to economic mutual aid continued to grow, and did not decline until after the Progressive Era. One need not prettify Gilded Age America to recognize that much freedom and conviviality survived the Great Barbecue.

### The Coerced Market

There is a better explanation for the atomized, stratified society Lasch sees. The cash nexus has indeed eroded fam-

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ily and community in recent decades, but the culprit is government-imposed professionalization, not liberal markets. Licensing and credentialism have forced us to overspecialize. Education, medicine, law, construction — all these and more can no longer be provided informally. They now must be bought and sold, and the number of people who can buy or sell them has been artificially reduced. What has happened is not so much the market forcing itself into informal life as the state forcing informal life into the market.

This professionalization has marched arm-in-elbow with the growth of the welfare state. Both have progressed over the same time period; both have been supported by the same policy-makers and intellectuals; both represent the expropriation of everyday life. So does the growth of corporate bureaucracies, built on a foundation of limited liability and fed by the growing split between private ownership and managerial control. Lasch recognizes and appreciates the tremendous wealth created by modern capitalism, even as he bemoans the end of the days of dispersed property ownership and *petit-bourgeois* society. But wealth and

marital and familial ties." The real problem, I suggest, arises when Americans accept any constraints on their behavior *except* those imposed by the people with whom they share their lives. Freedom from the neighbors and children, but submission to the corporate state. Freedom from community, but acquiescence to coercion. Liberation only from those who might have a legitimate stake in how one chooses to live.

### Are We Tolerating Ourselves to Death?

Fortunately, we have not plunged totally into this dystopia, though Lasch sometimes writes as if we have. He complains that liberal opinion (and society in general) stresses tolerance too much. "We have become far too accommodating and tolerant for our own good," he declares. "In the name of sympathetic understanding, we tolerate second-rate workmanship, second-rate habits of thought, and second-rate standards of conduct" (107). But in my own brief lifetime, public opinion has turned harshly on more than a few forms of inexcusable behavior. Drunk driving, wife-beating, hazing, and more have come under assault, not just from the state (whose ham-handed opposition has sometimes made the problems more intractable), but from a public willing to be unaccommodating and intolerant in the name of moral standards.

Talk of the dangers of tolerance puts a lot of people, including me, on guard, not because we think anything goes, but because the Bill Bennetts who preach social sanctions tend to have a different view of just what should not be tolerated. It should be incumbent upon any intellectual who calls for a restoration of standards to delineate exactly what it is he is talking about. For my part: driving while wasted is bad; private pot-smoking is acceptable. Shoddy craftsmanship is a problem; neither homosexuality nor homophobia threatens the republic. Deliberately opaque language drives me bugfug; profane language rarely troubles me. In general, I don't like it when people push other people around, put others in danger, act like jerks, are extremely pompous, or do second-rate work where first-rate work is required.

Everyone has his own list, which is

one argument against involving the state in any of this. Lasch argues that "Americans agree even about concrete issues" (110), and that politics therefore can and must "give more weight to the community than to the right of private decision" (113). But to the extent that we agree about values, the state's involvement is superfluous. To the extent that we don't, it is dangerous. The government isn't very good at teaching good manners, so instead it persecutes druggies and queers. Civil society, on the other hand, isn't consistently good at persecution.\* But it is good at enforcing civility and upholding standards.

Talk of "the complete privatization of morality and behavior" is ultimately pointless, since such could only occur

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*To the extent that we agree about values, the state's involvement is superfluous. To the extent that we don't, it is dangerous.*

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*The erosion of community, Lasch contends, actually goes back to the transformation of artisans into proletarians.*

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artisanship are not incompatible. The economy of Italy's Emilia-Romagna region, for example, is dominated by small-scale, family-owned, usually worker-controlled high-tech manufacturing. This was not created by deliberate government policy, but by market forces — forces that have not prevented Northern Italy from maintaining a strong civic culture.

In short, while Lasch is right to link the atomization of society to the growth of the state, one can bemoan the former without attacking market liberalism or individual liberty. In *The True and Only Heaven* (1991), Lasch condemned Americans' "impatience with anything that limits our sovereign freedom of choice, especially the constraints of

under a state so powerful that it prevents people from interacting long enough to form bonds. A society with any degree of freedom will have both public and private spheres. More importantly, it will have many intermediary zones of social interaction, areas of only moderate intimacy, of convivality without intimacy, of friendly familiarity, and of respectful distance. As one of Lasch's favorite thinkers, Jane Jacobs, pointed out in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*: "Cities are full of people with whom . . . a certain degree of contact is useful; but you do not want them in your hair. And they do not want you in theirs either" (pp. 55–56). Such intermediate relations are essential for social order, but can only emerge voluntarily.

The goal of public policy should *not* be, as Lasch suggests, to hash out our

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\* There are parts of the country where it isn't pleasant to be an atheist, a lesbian, or a fundamentalist Christian, but there are always other communities that will either welcome such minorities with open arms or at least let one do or say as one will in private.

communities' values. It should be to create the conditions under which those values can flourish.

## The Yuppie International

Ultimately, Lasch's critique isn't aimed at individual rootlessness. It is directed at a footloose class. Lasch attacks the elite, not just for its domination of the larger society, but for its separation from it. The professional classes are steadily withdrawing from common life, he argues. Neighborhoods are replaced by networks, public life by private cocoons. When the upper-middle class withdraws into its own enclaves, this only exacerbates the class barriers that are inimical to a free society.

But can you really fault people for sending their children to the best school they can find? For choosing FedEx, fax, or e-mail over the Post Office? For protecting themselves against crime as best they can? Indeed, in his discussion of the welfare state, Lasch urges working-class, lower-middle-class, and poor people to do just that: "As formal organizations break down, people will have to improvise ways of meeting their immediate needs: patrolling their own neighborhoods, withdrawing their children from public schools in order to educate them at home. The default of the state will thus contribute in its own right to the restoration of informal mechanisms of self-help" (100).

It's natural to turn to the voluntary sector when the state fails. The root problem isn't that middle-class professionals are withdrawing from common life; it's that the state is a poor substitute for common life. The government has produced poor schools, unreliable services, and unsafe streets, and as long as it continues to control these central institutions, any attempt to build

superior parallel structures will have the unfortunate side effect of removing the innovator from the public sphere.

The danger of Lasch's rhetoric is that it can lend support to the wrong policies. Instead of removing the institutions that have created the credentialist society, policymakers might simply aim new sorts of social engineering at the professional class. Analyses like Lasch's often lead to calls for "national service" (conscription) and punitive taxation. Instead of erasing class privileges, such proposals merely turn members of the

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*Ultimately, Lasch's critique isn't aimed at individual rootlessness. It is directed at a footloose class.*

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professional class (and anyone aspiring to the professional class) into involuntary servants of the state.

This does not mean that Lasch is wrong to bemoan class segregation. Members of the cocooned class, he argues with understandable indignation, are "more concerned with the smooth functioning of the system as a whole than with any of its parts. Their loyalties — if the term is not itself anachronistic in this context — are international rather than regional, national, or local. They have more in common with their counterparts in Brussels or Hong Kong than with the masses of Americans not yet plugged into the network of global communications" (35). When this separation is combined with social, political, and economic domination, it leads to an astonishing arrogance:

Although they are full of "compassion" for the poor, they cannot be said

to subscribe to a theory of noblesse oblige, which would imply a willingness to make a direct and personal contribution to the public good. Obligation, like everything else, has been deper-

sonalized; exercised through the agency of the state, the burden of supporting it falls not on the professional and managerial class but, disproportionately, on the lower-middle and working classes. The policies advanced by new-class liberals on behalf of the downtrodden and oppressed — racial integration of the public schools, for example — require sacrifices from the ethnic minorities who share the inner cities with the poor, seldom from the suburban liberals who design and support the policies. (45)

Lasch also argues that this arrogance shows in the professionals' lifestyle. Here his comments border on the puritanical. "Female careerism," he writes, "provides the indispensable basis of their prosperous, glamorous, gaudy, sometimes indecently lavish way of life" (33). "Indecently lavish"? This is as if, halfway through a high-brow survey of Andy Warhol's art, the critic called the artist a "simpering faggot." If Lasch wants to be a prude, that's fine, but he shouldn't mix his prejudices with his reasoned commentary.

Still, there are good reasons to attack certain attitudes of the rootless rich. I don't — I can't — fault anyone for moving around a lot, eating squid, or listening to exotic music. I do all these things myself. It's the self-satisfied provincialism of these self-styled cosmopolitans that sets my teeth on edge: the kind of *faux*-global consciousness that leads people to use a phrase like "world music," a mindless marketing category that shoves together any folk or pop music produced outside the U.S.A. This is internationalism without the nations, cosmopolitanism without the politics. It is the pretentious posturing of the *Utne Reader*.

## An Independent Mind

*The Revolt of the Elites* is the final testament of one of late-twentieth-century America's most interesting writers. Lasch is always stimulating, because he is always fiercely independent. He refuses to let anyone else do his thinking for him, making him exciting to read even when he's saying something that's completely nuts.

Of how many living writers can that be said? □





**Market-Based Education: A New Model for Schools**, by Kathleen Harward. Center for Market Processes, 1995, 77 pp., \$7.50.

# Market-Based Miseducation

Nathan Crow

Kathleen Harward's *Market-Based Education: A New Model for Schools* has all the characteristics of a term paper by a not-quite-bright education major: the same earnest tone, the same vague argumentation, the same half-witted references. Purporting to challenge the status quo of American schools, it manages only to reiterate the half-baked "innovations" of several generations of educationist reformers, in the process serving up a digest of quasi-libertarian rhetoric about schools and learning. John Holt, John Taylor Gatto, A.S. Neill — all the luminaries of libertarian school-chat are here, directly or indirectly, stirred in with partially digested lumps of "cognitive science" and Charles Koch's amateurish theorizing about "market-based" this and that.

What is "market-based education"? The reader might presume it means education that is delivered in a free market, with all the diversity that implies. But Harward and, presumably, the Center for Market Processes have their own definition. "Market-based" schools, Harward tells us, recognize the importance of "treating each student as an individual" — a "reform" that Ms. Harward's elaboration merely renders more vague — and the centrality of "projects" to the educational process.

This second notion is by far the more important. Indeed, "projects" are urged upon us on almost every page of the book, if not every paragraph. Defined with Harward's characteristic cloudiness and elucidated by few examples, the nature and necessity of

"projects" never quite comes into focus. What is clear is that "market-based" schools will do away with classes in "subjects," which are badly outmoded. Math is condemned, as is English. History? It's history. Exeunt biology, chemistry, physics. Exit the whole shebang. "Students," Harward tells us, channeling her imagined consensus of "cognitive scientists," learn "best" when teachers involve them in large-scale "interdisciplinary" tasks instead of organizing classrooms around study of a single discipline broken down in manageable chunks. Classes in English,

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*I haven't seen anything like Harward's fevered faith in technology since the elementary-school film strip that promised me atomic power so cheap it wouldn't be worth metering.*

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math, and physics are "fragmented" and therefore boring.

This is the sort of junky cliché-mongering that has made "education reform" a synonym for nonsense. Maybe Harward really believes students need "projects" to learn algebra, or Newton's laws, or genetics, or paragraph structure, or how to write a half-baked pamphlet on education reform and sell it at \$7.50 a pop. That is her option. But to persuade us, she should cite some concrete examples of how the thing works.

As it is, the closest we get to a real-life portrayal of "projects" is in John Taylor Gatto's gushing introduction, in which he recalls a couple of his former

junior high school students, whom he managed to shuffle out of school on Fridays to wait tables and do menial chores at a local soup kitchen. This, Gatto insists, was "real work," which is unquestionable, although what he describes sounds suspiciously similar to the "real work" performed at the local McDonald's. Less believable is his assertion that the boys' "real work" was "mathematical, linguistic, choreographical, artistic [why not "artistic"?], sociological," and that it "directed" them, not to jobs as minimum-wage fry cooks, but to "rich webs of ideation." This is more than generic ed-school optimism about "experiential learning" — it's sheer stupidity. "Mathematical"? They made change. "Linguistic"? They talked to bums. "Choreographical"? They tried not to drop the dishes. Etc.

The notion that school ought to come as close as possible to "real life" is one of those Deweyite fantasies that just won't die. Like most romantic fancies, it contains more than one kernel of truth. Schools ought to do more to link academic skills to applications in the world outside. The skills taught are often arbitrarily selected, and the mandated regimen of courses shamefully neglects non-"academic" studies. Students ought to be encouraged to pursue learning on their own, and room should be made for apprenticeships. Textbooks are often wretchedly written and deliberately devoid of controversial matter. All true.

Yet the system survives — not because it is in thrall to what Harward refers to as the "factory model," but because however dismal its results, it demands a bare minimum of rigor that vanishes utterly when experimentalists are given a free hand to offer "open classrooms," "experiential learning," "whole language," or whatever is the flavor of the month in ed colleges. Harward is advocating the latest pop trend in education, "constructivism," though she does not use the term. Constructivists believe knowledge ought to be acquired through engagement with "complex problems without simple solutions," and that teachers who break skills down into components and test for mastery each step of the way are actually getting in the way of students' learning. Harward's claims

notwithstanding, such beliefs are contradicted by research comparing the effectiveness of various teaching methods.\*

"Whole language" is probably the most influential movement within the constructivist camp. Its theoretical presumptions are based on a view of all human learning as analogous to the development of oral language. Enthusiastic believers in projects, "individualized" learning, and selection by students of their own goals and texts, whole language advocates would have

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*The most curious thing about "market-based education" is that it has nothing to do with markets.*

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teachers junk phonics "in isolation," instead mentioning the letter sounds as non-readers proceed through whole books. (In many first-grade whole language classes, entire books are sometimes read repetitively for weeks on end. The children, of course, memorize the text, which makes their teachers and parents feel good but does nothing to teach them how to read.) Students are continually presented with the "complex problem" of learning to read, and the teacher gives very little direct instruction in facts, concepts, or principles.

This works fine for the kids who would learn how to read regardless; the rest either struggle along or simply give up. Thus, in whole language, "individualizing" becomes a code word for dumbing down expectations to meet the level of the teacher's incompetence. If Johnny cannot read, it isn't Ms. Goodman's fault; his time has not yet come. When middle school rolls around and the class is asked to do a "project" for "language arts," teacher graciously individualizes the work, allowing him to construct a papier-

mache model of Middle Earth rather than write something, which would be tedious and difficult, maybe impossible. (After all, to write about a book, one must read it.) And so on through the grades.

Harward, to be sure, is dimly aware that this sort of thing might cause problems, so she strenuously supports "accountability." But she rejects "standardized tests," which she thinks are bad because they "fragment" skills and "dictate what is taught in schools." Well, so what? The most popular standardized achievement tests, such as the Metropolitan Achievement Test (MAT), evaluate how well students can understand what they read, perform math computations, etc. It's true that there is more to life and to school than this, but students ought to know at least how to multiply seven by eight and interpret a set of directions. If standardized tests "dictate" that faculty have a go at teaching such skills until they are either learned or put aside come June, so much the better.

But the problem, in Harward's view, is that the bad old standardized tests keep our schools from taking off into the heady realms of "analyzing problems, proposing solutions, . . . communicating with others," etc. This is nonsense. Standardized tests merely ensure that citizens get some feedback about how well their children are mastering basic skills. A few years after California rushed headlong into "whole language," the standardized test results came in from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), showing that California's fourth-graders scored dead last. How long would it have taken Californians to get the message had Harward's "alternative" assessments via "projects" and "narrative evaluations" been instituted in place of the NAEP?

Indeed, one wonders whether Harward has ever seen a "standardized test." She states that the tests measure "low-level skills" (such as knowing how to read) and "facts" (whose acquisition is, of course, trivial). But no popular standardized test measures factual knowledge to any appreciable extent. The most important scores are reading comprehension and mathematics, which the MAT breaks down into concepts, computation, and "problem-

solving" (story problems). The so-called subject tests demand only a basic familiarity with the area along with the ability to read charts and graphs and draw simple conclusions from the text — in short, they measure "reading comprehension" in a slightly different way. Any student capable of taking on a "project" should do just fine on such tests.

If standardized tests are out, how would Harward hold teachers accountable? With characteristic vagueness, she suggests that everyone — administrators, parents, students, teachers — write "narrative and descriptive" evaluations. This works in commercial enterprises where decisions are based on *market incentives*, but absent those incentives, the evaluations are just so much paper to be filed and forgotten. In public schools such evaluations measure nothing.

"Performance assessments," including portfolios of work completed, are another popular alternative to standardized tests. Something like this was implemented in Vermont, where, teachers reported, it led to increases in "discussion of math," "explanation of math solutions," and "writing about math." That's nice. Most of us, however, are more interested in the following question: can the students solve math

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*"Mathematical"? They made change. "Linguistical"? They talked to bums. "Choreographical"? They tried not to drop the dishes.*

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problems? Draw your own conclusions as to which is more likely to give us the answer, a standardized test or a portfolio containing essays about fractions or matrices.

Harward's ostensibly radical reforms are as stale as they are vague. But when she suggests something original, it is inane almost beyond belief. Noting that teachers don't communicate their knowledge to each other, she proposes a solution: install *phones* in the rooms. This, she assures us, will have "a tremendous impact on teachers' ability to learn and communicate." Well. As a teacher, I've had a phone in my class-

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\* Indeed, a key piece of constructivist propaganda, the "standards" of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, recently set forth constructivist methods as models for professional practice — incidentally acknowledging that there is no research validating the methods described.

room and I've gone without. The major difference was that the phone allowed the office to interrupt lessons with trivial messages about Kimberly's visit to the dentist, pep rally notes, and so on. Harward's fevered faith in technology is really touching; I haven't seen anything like it since the elementary-school film strip that promised me atomic power so cheap it wouldn't be worth metering.

The most curious thing about Harward's "market-based education" is that it has nothing to do with markets. If "market-based education" means anything, it means schools that exist within and successfully respond to market incentives. But when Harward says "market-based," she means schools that have tinkered with essentially socialistic structures in a feeble attempt to imitate commercial enterprises — what used to be called "market socialism."

For example, she notes that "a shortage of talented and experienced teachers exists in high-risk geographic locations [sic] such as inner city schools"; paying higher salaries to tempt "experienced" teachers to these areas "would solve this problem." Well, it might help. But let's be realistic. Chicago pays less than, say, Evanston largely because it has less money, and it has less money largely because many Chicagoans have low earnings or receive welfare.<sup>†</sup> Would anything short of a federal or state takeover of the system allow Chicago to pay more? How would the citizens of Evanston, who pay more taxes, feel about that? And does Harward really believe a 10% bonus is going to tempt top-notch teachers into Chicago's inner-city war zones?

Furthermore, Harward fails to grasp that public schools, rich or poor, have little incentive to search out, hire, and promote talented teachers — even if they could identify talent or figure out what to do with it once hired. I recently worked in four rural school districts in Illinois, one of which spent more than twice as much per student as the other three. Their average salary per teacher exceeded \$56,000 a year,

and expenditures per student topped \$10,000. From what I saw in the classroom (and from standardized test results), student performance in the rich district was markedly inferior to performance in two of the other

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*"Individualizing" becomes a code word for dumbing down expectations to meet the level of the teacher's incompetence.*

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districts and no better than the third. The rich district had made sincere efforts to hire away (or "steal," as the other districts said) the "best" teachers from their neighbors. But since they also had plunged headlong into constructivism, their students were missing out on outmoded trivia like dividing six by two or reading accurately or defining the term "democracy." They were busy doing "projects."

If Harward's suggested changes in how schools pay teachers are merely naive, she has other proposals that are sheer folly. She suggests, for example, that in "market-based" schools, "instead of striving to be the best English teacher possible, a person would strive to be an enthusiastic member of an interdisciplinary team." Yuck. I wonder if Harward has any idea just how difficult and rare it is to find someone who gives a tinker's damn about being "the best English teacher possible." Or if she understands what would happen to such a man were his specific excellence deemed inadequate by yuppie consultants demanding he drop all that nasty boring English stuff, grammar and paragraphing and Hawthorne, and become an Enthusiastic Member of an Interdisciplinary Team.

Harward is wrong when she asserts that *all* students learn best by engaging in complex "projects" that demand determination, solid basic skills, and a fertile and inquiring mind. Some students thrive under such demands; some don't. Many, in fact, crash and burn.

But the fundamental problem with Harward's vision is that it fails to address what education would look like in a society freed from the death-

grip of government schools, a society in which students and their parents seek out or invent methods and institutions that meet their particular needs. Since those needs are as diverse as the children, we would expect a wide array of offerings. Some youngsters benefit from a highly structured classroom with explicit instruction and goals established by a teacher. Others jump ahead with, well, "projects" that allow them to follow a will-o'-the-wisp or an intellectual passion — tarot reading or physics, as the case may be. That range of services is what markets would provide. Calling anything less than that "market-based education" is misleading and, ultimately, destructive. □

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<sup>†</sup> Another reason is that most of the money is absorbed by the bureaucracy downtown.

***America First! Its History, Culture, and Politics*, by Bill Kauffman.  
Prometheus Books, 1995, 296 pp., \$25.95.**

# Inward Ho!

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Michael Levine

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Bill Kauffman is a populist with libertarian sympathies. He despises the federal government and thinks private property is dandy, but he attacks big businesses — especially those in the culture industry — more than the average libertarian does. Rather than rail against the government's destruction of individual sovereignty, he decries the destruction of the sovereignty of Batavia, New York; or Fairfield, Iowa; or the Maxwell Street neighborhood of Chicago. He argues that individualism flowers in strong localities — and he's right — but I imagine that, if pushed, he'd favor community cohesion over market forces more often than not.

Thus, although he is a frequent contributor to *Liberty* and a former assistant editor of *Reason*, his new collection of essays, *America First!*, might be hard for some libertarians to appreciate.

The book might also confuse those interested in American history. The name is obviously a reference to the America First Committee, which opposed American entry into World War II. But while this group certainly gets high marks from Kauffman, it isn't what the book is about. (A humorous aside to this is Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.'s idiotic *Washington Monthly* review, which faulted the book for failing to focus on the AFC. That's like criticizing *The Name of the Rose* for not being about botany.)

Yet the title is not inappropriate, for two reasons. For one, it emphasizes the book's major thrust, that there is something distinctive about America and that it lives and breathes in the different regions of the country. Putting America first means cultivating the distinctiveness of these various places,

through art that celebrates locality, commerce that is Ma- and Pa-ish and not Wal-Mart-ish, and politics that is decentralized and federalist. The politicos in D.C. and plutocrats in N.Y.C. and pinheads in L.A. are waging a war against Americans' sense of place — our sense of America — by putting England first in 1940 and Bosnia first in 1996, and the dollar first in (pick your year).

Second of all, the reference to the isolationist AFC indicates Kauffman's preoccupation with "populist antiwar sentiment." Localism breeds contempt for interventionist excursions: "As our bloody century winds down, the loudest arguments throughout the world are between the apostles of local autonomy and the panjandrums of the New World Order. . . . [T]he promise of America First [is] an America of distinct regions, flavorful localities, self-governing neighborhoods, and the foreign policy of the coiled rattlesnake, defending its nest but letting the outside world go its own way, unmolested" (pp. 254–255).

## Forces of Evil in a Bozo Nightmare

Kauffman expresses these views mostly through sketches of various America Firsters and their opponents, the friends of empire. Taken collectively, a fun tale of good versus evil can be teased out from the essays. To wit:

During the Civil War, the evil Abraham Lincoln set out to destroy the regional character of Jeffersonian America. Over the next 80 years or so, good men and women — exemplified by Hamlin Garland, Amos Pinchot, Alice Roosevelt Longworth, and Sinclair Lewis — arose to challenge this turn away from tradition, but they

were beaten back by the evil Woodrow Wilson, Teddy Roosevelt, Franklin Roosevelt, and their lapdogs in the press and Hollywood. This led to the dark age known as the Cold War, but even then the good did not fall, and they have kept hope alive by celebrating what was — and often still is — great about America. The roll call of heroes continues: Gore Vidal, bridge to the Old Republic; Edward Abbey and Jack Kerouac, partisans of wilderness and the road; Murray Rothbard, the "Happy Warrior of the Old Right"; Vermont politician John McClaughry, prophet of a decentralized future.

"So let us think about the people who lost." Kauffman quotes William Appleman Williams to set the tone for the book, and one look at the above figures confirms that evil has routed the good — or the almost good, at least. Some of Kauffman's heroes hold precariously to that honor. The inclusion of Abbey, for example, seems slightly peculiar. A wonderful essayist — witty, nasty, iconoclastic — Abbey nonetheless was devoted to nature before America (and before humans, for that matter). He certainly was a localist in the sense that he became a part of his

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*Kauffman is always wearing stomping boots. No toe is safe around him.*

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adopted American Southwest in a way few people cleave to a place. But I cannot imagine Abbey's ideal Arizona being made up of "flavorful localities." More likely, it would be empty of people, as socially flavorless as the tofu eaten by the yuppies Abbey so despised.

But anarchist Abbey did rail against empire, war, and centralized government. He had no interest in controlling other people's lives, and he thought that the urbanization of America, so contrary to his radical environmentalism, made it easier for the government to be oppressive. In this sense, he is solidly on the side of the good, and Kauffman is not without reason in praising him. This cannot be said for his praise of Ross Perot.

According to Kauffman, "If the

Americanist cause is to capture the presidential flag before the millennium it will be with Ross Perot astride the white horse" (223). Whether Kauffman persists in this view I do not know, but no matter: even when the words were written, the idea of Perot as a populist standard-bearer was dubious. First, he's a plutocrat, fattened on government contracts. He's as embedded in the status quo as any of the politicians and pundits he scared the hell out of, despite the very fact that he did so. Second, he has an authoritarian streak as wide as his native state, with little tolerance for dissent. How many times did we hear him blather about government needing to be run "like a business"? The populist point should be that it *isn't* a business, that decentralized federalism is good because it herks and jerks about inefficiently. The populist leader need only be a figurehead who marshals dissent and disgust, not a hands-on mechanic.

But most importantly, from a practical standpoint, Perot is a moron. See the populist hero marching into Washington, nostrils a-flamin', to be met and defeated by . . . Al Gore? If there was any remaining hope that Ross Perot could lead disaffected Middle Americans against Leviathan, then it was certainly laid to rest by his singularly inept performance against Gore — poster boy for the intellectually challenged — over NAFTA.

### Left and Right: The Prospects for Stomping

But allow me to stop griping for a moment. Despite these problems — and one bigger one, discussed below — this is a great book. Kauffman is an excellent writer. His essays are brimming with fascinating anecdotes and silly but hilarious gossip — e.g., "the grant-grazing conservative herd is rife with closeted gay men who sing the praises of Republican 'family values' by day and cruise for boy prostitutes by night" (131). Best of all, he is always wearing stomping boots. No toe is safe around him.

One phalanx that gets crushed is the increasingly irrelevant Left-Right spectrum. The people gathered here on the side of good confound easy categorization. Writing about Jack Kerouac, Kauffman drives home this point:

When . . . William F. Buckley, Jr., had him as a guest on his TV show, "Firing Line," the host was nasty and condescending and unable to understand how Kerouac could be, at once, against the Vietnam War, deeply respectful of American servicemen, contemptuous of literary communists, and of the opinion that "The hippies are good kids." These views are in perfect harmony, as any American understands . . . (172)

Left and Right are relics of the French Revolution; with the Cold War over, they've lost whatever usefulness they might once have had. Some fringe-types from opposite ends of the spectrum have always espoused a few dovetailing positions — localism comes to mind — but with the final demise of the Bolshevik International, average

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*The politicians in D.C. and plutocrats in N.Y.C. and pin-heads in L.A. are waging a war against Americans' sense of place.*

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Americans seem to be avoiding pigeon-holes, too. The quick and dirty evidence of this is the increasing number of people unwilling to identify themselves with the two major parties.

The growing irrelevance of Left and Right can be linked to Kauffman's claim that we are in the early stages of a Middle American rebellion. "Left" and "Right" typically describe attitudes held toward international matters — specifically, toward Communism and how to deal with it. Now that there is nothing to confront, Kauffman's assertion that average Americans want to focus on their backyards — even to the extent of asking "Who cares about Castro?" — gains plausibility. This turning inward makes it harder to weigh today's attitudes on yesterday's scales.

### Confederacy of MARTians

But *are* Americans more concerned with local than international issues? In one sense, of course, we are: we will always prefer to work in our neighborhoods, doing what we can in our limited spheres of influence. But this doesn't necessarily entail an ideological

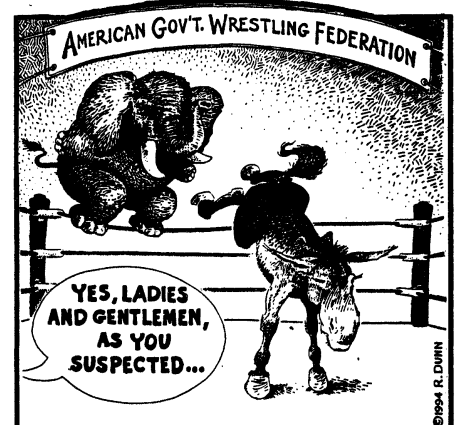
rejection of internationalism.

Yet Kauffman thinks Americans have done just this. Commenting on Gore Vidal's call for American withdrawal from the Middle East, he asks:

Is it any wonder that Vidal is the most popular "serious" novelist in America? His sentiments perfectly echo those of the silent American majority. Call it isolationist, nativist, whatever, but our humble countrymen simply do not want the United States entangled in the affairs of far-off countries, whether Israel, Angola, or Vietnam. On this issue, Vidal speaks with the *vox populi*.

In *Empire* he has his antecedent Henry Adams saying: "I want us to build a sort of Great Wall of China, and hide behind it as long as possible." So too, did — and do — the people of these United States. (137-138)

In 1991, I would have said that Kauffman had gone utterly mad, as Americans, silent or otherwise, seemed wholeheartedly for the New World Order, pushing up the price of yellow ribbons and proclaiming George Bush the Greatest Man Ever. Today, after Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia, he seems to be on more solid ground. But how much is this due to reemerging populism, and how much to Americans being confused about what they want



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their government to do? (Or, even more cynically, how much does it have to do with the government's ability to manipulate public opinion?)

Furthermore, populism isn't simply opposition to military hegemony. There is also the economic factor. Kauffman, of course, realizes this:

The Perot campaign was the most stentorian roar yet from MARs, the "Middle-American Radicals." . . . A Middle-American Radical, according to [Donald] Warren, is anyone "who views his own well-being as threatened by a combination of economic elites on the one hand and governmental favoritism directed toward ethnic minorities on the other." To MARs, the Republicans represent the former interest and the Democrats the latter. (228)

This analysis certainly has some appeal, but even if Americans are turning against a globalist foreign policy, they seem agog over the global economic order. Some people may vote for Ross Perot or Pat Buchanan because of economic insecurity or disdain for the Fortune 500 — or perhaps because they're economically stupid — but this is a minuscule subset of Republican voters, which is in turn a slight percentage of American voters, which is but a tiny slice of the American people as a whole. Most Americans flock to see *Pocahontas*, not to support local arts; they buy two Big Macs for two dollars, not the burger from their local greasy spoon; they line up in droves to purchase Windows '95 — they don't even have a locally produced alternative. The merits or demerits of multinationals are debatable, but one thing is certain: they profit greatly from Middle Americans gobbling up their products. The transition to economic localism is a long way off. As Wendell Berry has argued, it requires a radical restructuring of our economic activities.

I appreciate — even envy — Kauffman's optimism about the American people. And something is brewing across the country. Catron County-type revolts pop up around the West, term limits continue to be popular, the militia movement is still around despite a nasty smear campaign, and, for heaven's sake, Pat Buchanan mounted a serious challenge for the Republican presidential nomination. (I

don't necessarily see this last item as a reason for joy. But it is important to separate Buchanan's supporters from Buchanan himself. He is clearly the current choice of the fed-up, regardless of the merits of his proposed policies.)

Nonetheless, I am not an optimist. My main problem here is my personal demon: an ever-lingering elitism. Kauffman practices the populism he preaches. I cannot, as much as I'd like to. My opinion is closer to that expressed by Robert Nisbet in *The Present Age*:

Repeatedly in history the combination of war and political centraliza-

tion leads to a fraying effect upon the social fabric. Threads are loosened by the tightening of power at the center. Dr. Johnson once told Boswell of a man in London he knew who "hung loose upon society." Loose in the sense of the loose cannon, the ship that slips its hawser, the dog its leash, the individual his accustomed moral constraints. (p. 84)

Such "loose individuals," narcissistic consumers alienated from the social order, could destroy any incipient populist revolt. I hope that my fears are wrong, and that Kauffman's hopes are right. But whether America devolves or destructs remains to be seen. □

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***The Godless Constitution: The Case Against Religious Correctness*, by Isaac Kramnick and R. Laurence Moore. W.W. Norton, 1996, 191 pp., \$22.00.**

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# Not Right from the Beginning

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David Boaz

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At a recent talk, I discussed the Judeo-Christian roots of libertarian thought so sympathetically as to impress even a nun in the audience. So to reassure myself of my Enlightenment credentials, let me wax enthusiastic about a new book, *The Godless Constitution: The Case Against Religious Correctness*, by Isaac Kramnick and R. Laurence Moore. We hear from the religious Right increasing claims that America is a Christian nation, such as the statement by James Dobson of Focus on the Family that "the Constitution was designed to perpetuate a Christian order." Kramnick and Moore set out to discover just what the founders thought on the subject. The first thing they found, of course, is that there is no mention of God in the Constitution, and that its only reference to religion is a ban on religious tests for public office. Of course religion played an important role in the struggle for

American independence, as it did in such later American crusades as abolitionism and the civil rights movement. But "one of the most powerful criticisms of the Constitution when ratified and for succeeding decades was that it was indifferent to Christianity and God. It was denounced by many as a godless document."

Kramnick and Moore trace the founders' creation of a secular state to seventeenth-century English thinkers who favored both economic *laissez faire* and "religious *laissez faire*" and who argued that "the state was best kept out of people's houses, out of the marketplace, and out of spiritual life." They devote a great deal of attention to Thomas Jefferson's ideas on the separation of church and state, and to the Americans who bitterly opposed his political career because they saw him as an infidel and an atheist. Of all the founders, Jefferson may have been the most critical of the clergy. But Washington, Adams, and Madison all defended the secular nature of the U.S.



government and resisted pressure to involve it in religious matters.

There's a fascinating story in the book about Sunday mail. In the early nineteenth century, post offices were commonly open seven days a week; many farmers came to town only on Sunday, so they wanted to pick up their mail then. When a fight over Sunday mail erupted in 1810, Congress passed a law specifying that the mail be moved every day of the week and that all post offices be open every day. In 1828, opposition to Sunday mail again arose, and Sen. Richard M. Johnson of Kentucky, a Baptist, produced a committee report that defended the secular Constitution, reminded Americans that the rest of the human race "of eight hundred millions of rational human beings, is in religious bondage," declared that "the line cannot be too strongly drawn between church and state," and — finally, the point of it all — concluded that commerce and ideas needed to move every day. The report was widely hailed and reprinted, and Johnson was elected vice president in 1836.

After the Civil War, the railroad and the telegraph made seven-day mail delivery less essential, but not until 1912 did Congress formally close the post offices on Sunday.

Meanwhile, from 1863 to 1945, a group of activists organized as the National Reform Association tried to

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*The authors trace the founders' creation of a secular state to seventeenth-century English thinkers who favored both economic laissez faire and "religious laissez faire."*

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amend the Constitution to recognize God and Jesus as supreme authorities. The National Association of Evangelicals made the same appeal in 1947 and 1954. (Kramnick and Moore fail to point out that Rep. John Anderson, the liberal Republican from Illinois, three times introduced such an amendment in Congress; no doubt Anderson's story would confuse their modern criticism of Christian Right

theocrats.)

Only in the past couple of decades have Christian activists reversed their

strategy. Now, instead of deploring the secular nature of the Constitution, they deny it. □

## Booknotes

**Op-Ed Agonistes** — Why do publishers take throwaway items like opinion columns and collect them in books? This form of writing rarely has the staying power to last through the ages. There are exceptions, of course — I can still laugh myself silly reading old Michael Kinsley columns. But Walter Williams falls into the category of read once and then forget.

His writing is pleasant enough, and I agree with a lot of his opinions. His newest book, *Do the Right Thing: The People's Economist Speaks* (Hoover Institution Press, 1995, 183 pp., \$15.95), collects columns from 1990 to 1994. Most of them spout textbook libertarian-conservative thought: Second Amendment good, taxes bad, property rights good, regulation bad. When he discusses foreign policy, though, his views become idiotic, as when he refers to the "treasonous stupidity" of members of Congress who wanted to try sanctions for a while before making war on Iraq. Williams is one of the type that believes the government can do no good at home but no evil abroad.

In comparison to other conservative pundits, Williams is in the middle. He shines in comparison to semi-literate boobs like R. Emmett Tyrrell, but if I'm going to shell out 16 bucks for a thin volume of newspaper columns, it'll be for someone like Joseph Sobran.

—Clark Stooksbury

**Distrust Antitrust** — Mainstream economists are generally skeptical of government regulation. Yet antitrust policy remains a curious exception. Opinion samples reveal that a majority of economists still believe that antitrust laws are intended to promote consumer welfare and that the history of their application, while spotty, has been generally satisfactory. Even economists with strong Chicago School sympathies accept this "public interest" (or Harvard) theory of antitrust and would

retain (at a minimum) the current prohibition on horizontal price collusion and on large mergers between competitors.

*The Causes and Consequences of Antitrust: The Public Choice Perspective* (University of Chicago Press, 1995, 377 pp., \$66.00 hc, \$32.95 sc), edited by Fred S. McChesney and William F. Shughart II, is an important collection of classic reprints and original articles that challenges the conventional antitrust wisdom at both Harvard and Chicago. Several of the articles argue that historical antitrust enforcement produced no measurable economic benefit; that antitrust regulation may in fact have increased unemployment; and that several merger waves can be associated with vigorous antitrust enforcement. These articles hold that the burden of proof is now on those who believe that antitrust in practice promotes the public interest.

The more revisionist pieces in the volume (generally, the newer ones) offer a deeper understanding of the meaning of antitrust enforcement. Articles such as "Antitrust Pork Barrel" and "Antitrust Before the Sherman Act" present important evidence identifying some of the special interests behind antitrust. These articles aim to place antitrust well within the standard regulatory framework, i.e., that regulation is explained generally by the benefits it provides well-organized interest groups. Clearly, antitrust is no exception to this general rule, despite the blinders worn by many academic and legal antitrust practitioners (themselves both important interest groups).

Will Harvard or even Chicago be persuaded and take up the cause to abolish antitrust? Not likely. Even McChesney, in his perceptive dissection of the contradictions in the Chicago School position on antitrust ("Be True to Your School"), is forced to

conclude grudgingly that the conversion from public interest to public choice in an understanding of antitrust regulation is just not imminent. With antitrust critics such as Robert Bork and Richard Posner relatively content with the progress made in recent antitrust enforcement, the move to abolish the entire antitrust apparatus is still premature. Public choice and Austrian criticism of antitrust is still a minority view all but ignored by establishment insiders. Intelligent books like this may help jumpstart the cause.

—Dominick T. Armentano

**Israelites** — F.A. Hayek's insights into the role of religion in cultural evolution go a long way toward rehabilitating the battered reputation of the Hebrew Bible, known to Christians as *The Old Testament* (c. 950–100 B.C., numerous translations and editions).

In recent years, the Old Testament has not fared well among the cultural elites. Feminists decry the patriarchal

society of the Israelites, environmentalists resent Adam's dominion over the Earth, and a few years ago I even heard an Episcopalian sermon that used Abraham's near-sacrifice of his son Isaac to illustrate child abuse.

The late Joseph Campbell, student of mythology and star of public television, was an important protagonist in this attack. Campbell, a prodigious scholar, appeared to tolerate just about any primitive rite or practice, but the Israelites got his back up, for two reasons.

First, the priests who put together the early books of the Bible tried to keep out what Campbell views to be a universal myth, that of Gaia, the Earth Goddess. They replaced the myth of Gaia with belief in a male God, Yahweh, who commanded a male-dominant society. In *The Masks of God: Occidental Mythology*, Campbell wrote that around 1250 B.C., "the old cosmology and mythologies of the goddess mother were radically transformed, reinterpreted, and in large measure

even suppressed, by those suddenly intrusive patriarchal warrior tribesmen whose traditions have come down to us chiefly in the Old and New Testaments and in the myths of Greece" (the Greeks were guilty of suppressing Gaia, too).

Second, the priests and their descendants treated their myths as historically true; the Jewish God, says Campbell, is supposed to be a "living God," not a mere mythic god, like the others of the world." (The Greeks, however, accepted their legends as mere myths.)

In *The Fatal Conceit*, Hayek offers a way of looking at the Old Testament that explains why these changes were not so bad after all. Hayek's thesis is that modern civilization, the civilization based on capitalism, came about through a crucial process of evolution, and the Old Testament chronicles much of that evolution.

What Hayek calls the "extended order" developed slowly through the erosion of traditional habits suited to a small tribe and their replacement by abstract rules of behavior that allowed people to act independently of the

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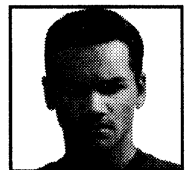
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tribe, at least in some situations. This freedom, within limits, allowed trade to occur and, eventually, populations to proliferate.

The essential rules, says Hayek, were "those dealing with [private] property, honesty, contract, exchange, trade, competition, gain, and privacy" (p. 12). Hayek implies that the Ten Commandments were critical for this emancipation.

Thus, the story of the Old Testament, as many of us learned it in Sunday School, may have captured the historical process rather well. As we were taught it, the Old Testament is the story of a special people (God's chosen people) who kept rebelling against God and His laws. God kept calling them back to Him and His commandments and, in spite of much backsliding, they did return.

Had the Jews gone back to the idol-worship that continually attracted them, they may not have maintained the essential behaviors on which the extended order was ultimately built. The loss of their faith (or the loss of the faith of Christians and Moslems, which

perpetuated at least some of these behaviors), says Hayek, "would have deprived mankind of a powerful support in the long development of the extended order that we now enjoy."

—Jane S. Shaw

***The Revisionist at the Breakfast Table*** — Despite his massive published works on criminology, the history of sociology, and the history of western civilization — to name a few areas — Harry Elmer Barnes is probably best remembered for his work in (and the publicity he brought to) the species of historical study known as Revisionism. After World War I, historians subjected the claim that Germany was solely responsible for the war to withering criticism. Because the unjust Versailles treaty was founded on the principle that Germany alone was at fault for the war, these historians argued that the terms of the treaty had to be revised. Subsequently, "Revisionism" came to refer to an approach to history that was skeptical of the government line on war.

Barnes championed this approach,

writing and promoting work he considered fundamental to "getting the truth out" about World War I, World War II, and the Cold War, all of which he opposed. Revisionism — putting "history in accord with the facts" — was, he contended, "the key to peace." Barnes defied the stereotype of the isolationist with his head in the sand: he was for peace, and as a historian, he was more than capable of showing why. He knew that war benefited the state at the expense of the citizens. He also knew that the Official History of war was inevitably the government version, which is to say, a tissue of lies and distortions.

In *Harry Elmer Barnes as I Knew Him* (High Plains, 1994, 129 pp., \$19.95), the historian's son Robert Barnes has written a splendid memoir of his father's personal life. Here we see Barnes the bargain-hunter, bringing home hoards of defective china, a massive throwaway toilet bowl, and two-day-old bread. We see Barnes the Great White Hunter, searching out rabbits with illegal ferrets. (In this particular instance, Barnes neglected to locate the

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rabbits' escape hole and held the ferret to blame. "Dad caught him by the neck and thrust him back into the darkness with an angry denunciation: 'You're too goddamned fast, you hungry son of a bitch.'" And then we see Barnes the Prohibition-era still-master, serving homemade libations to dinner-guests not long for the world of the sober.

Whether fishing or hunting or swearing or writing, Barnes the man was many things, but most of all an independent spirit and a patriarch on the old American model.

—Gregory P. Pavlik

**History Retold** — As one who has taken a few undergraduate American economic history courses, I can testify to how dearly Gene Smiley's

*The American Economy in the Twentieth Century* (South-Western, 1994, 442 pp., \$48.95) is needed. Smiley, a self-described Austrian economist who teaches at Marquette University, presents an outstanding alternative to the statist pseudoscience offered by most contemporary economic historians. His textbook is consistently libertarian, yet free of the inflamed rhetoric or hyperbole of the ideologue.

The book's most illuminating chapters are "What Caused the Great Depression?" and "Government and the Post-War American Economy." In the former, Smiley gives a thorough and insightful exposition of the Austrian explanation for the Depression, which he contrasts with Keynesian and monetarist positions. In the latter, Smiley ably details the

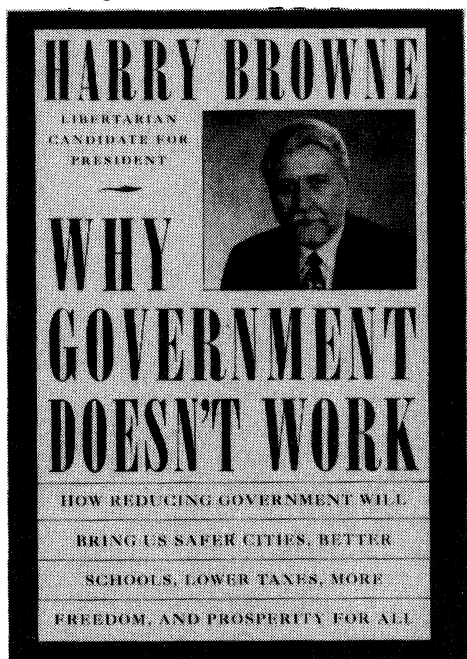
growth of government over the last 50 years. He discloses the harmful effects of regulation, explains the folly of statist attempts to end poverty, and exposes the Social Security system for the Ponzi scheme it is.

Smiley also has excellent discussions of immigration (he points out the tremendous beneficial effects it brings the American economy) and war, which he cites as one of the most significant reasons for in the growth of government. He also deftly attacks the argument that war is somehow "good" for an ailing economy. He devotes considerable space to discussing the economic effects of World War II, including the myth that the war ended the Great Depression by spurring domestic economic activity and employment. He writes, "Between 1940 and 1943 the number of unemployed workers fell by 7.05 million, while the number in the armed forces rose by 8.4 million. No macroeconomic model is required to understand why unemployment — one of the measures of the contraction — disappeared."

*The American Economy in the Twentieth Century* is an excellent book. It merits an audience outside of the classroom.

—Aaron Steelman

## Why Government Doesn't Work



by Harry Browne

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### Letters, continued from page 8

My "ballpark" model (in which everyone uses the roads at their own risk) was offered ("Why Insurers Should License Drivers," January 1996) as an option that is superior to the current system of muddled responsibility and ineffectual enforcement. It is, by far, much less desirable than drivers being fully responsible for any damage they may cause. Liability insurance is one obvious way to take responsibility.

If there are any other suggestions, I'd like to see them.

John Semmens  
Tempe, Ariz.

*The editors reply:* O'Toole is a contributing editor to *Liberty*, but, like many readers, he does not recall every article published here eight years ago. Nor did he claim that privatizing highways is an original idea — he only expressed surprise that in a libertarian investigation of traffic problems, Semmens failed to make this point.

Doherty, continued from page 38

our party conversation, he had said, "I get mad when liberals insult advertising," and called the great cathedrals of Europe grand advertisements for the Catholic Church. He declared advertising the nexus of the greatest aesthetic activity in our culture. Many modern liberals, I now suggested, might agree with him about certain aspects of his pro-liberty philosophy and not others. He was aggressively dismissive of such people. "That's basically socialist, communist, totalitarian. The so-called liberal is totalitarian. Even more so now. [Even] back in the '60s, so-called liberal left-wing magazines were very opposed to psychedelics."

We talked a little bit about his old friends and associates in the world of political commentary. On his old sparring partner Gordon Liddy and his current notoriety as a talk show host: "I listen to him. We've never been in close touch, but I keep him posted on what I'm doing. Liddy is a basic prankster. He's the smartest of the Nixon administration. That's not saying much, but he's highly educated."

On William F. Buckley, for whose magazine *National Review* Leary wrote a scathing anti-'60s counterculture piece in the '70s, and which at that moment was on the stands with a cover story calling for an end to the war on drugs: "Buckley has always been involved in legalization, even back in the '70s. Bill Buckley printed [Leary's '70s article] largely on friendship, on libertarian friendship. He ironically enough wrote a letter to my parole board, intervened somehow in support of my getting parole. Not that I joined his group, but there was a certain libertarianism in common. Buckley comes from the same Irish Catholic Massachusetts [background], so his aunts went to school with my aunts, same background of upper-middle-class Irish Catholics... we all knew each other."

I had spent more than my allotted hour of time, but the hesitancy of the conversation and the many interruptions had forced me to leave many topics undiscussed. But Leary was late for a doctor's appointment. I said my quick farewell, and left.

## Just Deserts

It was Ezra Pound who impressed in me the idea that one should try to meet

*Dominick T. Armentano* is author of *Antitrust and Monopoly*.

*Chester Alan Arthur* is *Liberty's* political correspondent.

"*Baloo*" is none other than cartoonist *Rex F. May*.

*John Bergstrom* is the winner of the 1995 Mencken Award for editorial cartooning.

*Carolina Beroza* is an interactive game designer living in California.

*David Boaz* is executive vice president of the Cato Institute.

*R.W. Bradford* is editor and publisher of *Liberty*.

*Stephen Cox* is author of *Love and Logic: The Evolution of Blake's Thought*.

*Nathan Crow* is an editorial intern at *Liberty*.

*Brian Doherty* is assistant editor of *Reason*.

*James Gill* is *Liberty's* staff artist.

*Bettina Bien Greaves* is co-compiler of *Mises: An Annotated Bibliography*.

*Leon T. Hadar* is a Washington-based journalist whose work appears in U.S. and foreign publications.

*Jim Huffman* is a writer in North Carolina.

*Bill Kauffman* is an associate editor of *The American Enterprise*.

*Greg Kaza* is a member of the Michigan House of Representatives.

*Kevin Knight* is a member of the Minnesota House of Representatives.

*Richard Kostelanetz* has published over 50 books about contemporary literature and the arts.

*Pierre Lemieux* is an anarchist pamphleteer in Quebec.

*Michael Levine* is circulation manager of *Liberty*.

*Wendy McElroy* is author of *XXX: A Woman's Right to Pornography* and the forthcoming *Sexual Correctness*.

*Robert Nelson* is author of *Reaching for Heaven on Earth and Public Lands and Private Rights*.

*Randal O'Toole* is editor of *Different Drummer*.

*Gregory P. Pavlik* is editor of *Forgotten Lessons: Selected Essays of John T. Flynn*.

*Sheldon Richman* is author of *Separating School and State*.

*James S. Robbins* is a foreign policy analyst in Massachusetts.

*Jane S. Shaw* is a former editor of *Business Week*.

*Sandy Shaw* is co-author of *Freedom of Informed Choice*.

*Aaron Steelman* is a publisher emeritus of *The Michigan Review*.

*Clark Stooksbury* is assistant publisher of *Liberty*.

*Timothy Virkkala* is managing editor of *Liberty*.

*Jesse Walker* is assistant editor of *Liberty*.

and learn from the great men one admires in one's times. Using my status as journalist, I've haphazardly attempted to follow his advice. Considering its source, perhaps I shouldn't be too surprised that it hasn't worked out as gloriously in fact as it might in a fantasy. It's said that it's a bad idea to meet people whose work you admire; the man rarely lives up to his work.

As I left Leary's house, easing my old station wagon down through the slopes of Beverly Hills where its decrepit, unwashed, battered self garnered weird stares from neighbors and police, I felt uneasy and disappointed.

Of course, Leary owed me — owes me — nothing. He was a large source of the optimism, hope, and dedication to human freedom that got me through the depressing hormonal miasma of adolescence, and that should be enough. He has lectures to plan, comic-

book adventures to write, his website to fix, movies to work on, a lifetime of friends and supporters to see and enjoy. My overly earnest, pedantic approach to the interview probably did as much as anything else to keep it vaguely uncomfortable. A lesson I could have learned from Leary's pre-LSD work in transactional psychology.

A recent TV mini-profile of Leary on CBS News' *48 Hours* asked the doctor how he hoped to be remembered by posterity — something the dying are supposed to obsess over. Leary replied, "Everybody gets the Timothy Leary they deserve."

As I write this, it's a gorgeous day, as it almost always is, in Beverly Hills, overlooking the most beautiful and dynamic metropolis in the world. I hope Timothy Leary, one of the twentieth century's greatest adventurers, is enjoying it thoroughly. That's the Timothy Leary he deserves. □

# Notes on Contributors

# Terra Incognita

## Washington, D.C.

New directions in opposition research, as reported in *The New Republic*:

A mailing from Phil Gramm's presidential campaign detailed the "ethical problems" of Lamar Alexander, including "pelted out-of-state cars with snowballs," which "earned Alexander at least two paddlings in school."

## Disney World

"You've just survived the government shutdown. What are you going to do now?" The answer, from the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*:

The week after the government's first budget-crisis shutdown, more than 200 federal workers whirled off to Disney World at taxpayer expense for a week of training to be better tour guides.

## London

Crime control in fair Albion, as described in the *Arizona Republic*:

Following a school headmaster's recent stabbing death, the government said it will propose legislation imposing sentences of up to two years for carrying a knife without good reason.

## Burien, Wash.

Mutual fund investing in the American hinterland, as reported in the *Highline Times*:

A federal grand jury has indicted James and Shirley McAleer for inviting people to invest in the "Master Transaction," a \$157 trillion fund allegedly owned by La Cosa Nostra, the Illuminati, the CIA, and the Vatican. James McAleer "has continually represented to investors that funding is imminent," states the indictment. "To date, no such funding has occurred."

## Russia

Reinventing government in the former U.S.S.R., as described in *World Press Review*:

Russia's Pacific fleet is delinquent on its utility bills, so officers are toying with the idea of using their nuclear submarines to generate electricity.

## Portland, Ore.

Politicians of the great Pacific Northwest, as described by the *Oregonian*:

When asked by a reporter, Congressman Ron Wyden failed to locate Bosnia on a map, and refused to guess the price of a loaf of bread or a gallon of gasoline. A few days later, Oregon voters then elevated him to the U.S. Senate.

## United Kingdom

New directions in British jurisprudence, as reported by *The Economist*:

Stephen Young had his conviction for murder overturned after it was discovered that four members of the jury that convicted him used a Ouija board to consult the victim of the alleged murder.

## U.S.A.

The wisdom of Pat Buchanan, from an interview on *Later with Tom Snyder*:

Q: Do we blame the Japanese for the fact that millions of Americans have bought Japanese cars?

A: The Japanese make outstanding, high-quality cars. But in 1953, we had 60% of their car market, and by 1960, we had 1%. That wasn't just because their cars got good. It was because they practiced protectionism, like every Great Power that ever has risen to be an economic power has been protectionist — Britain, the United States, Germany.

## North Korea

The accomplishments of North Korea's leader, as reported in that progressive nation's newspapers, according to *The Economist*:

Kim Jong Il — or "Dear Leader," as he is known — is "an outstanding great master of witty remarks as well as the greatest man ever known in history." Among his "priceless witty remarks":

"Trust produces loyal subjects, but doubt produces traitors."

"To expect victory in the revolution without the leader is as good as to expect a flower to bloom without the sun."

He is also the composer of six operas, each better "than all the operas mankind has ever created," and is a marvelous athlete. The first time he ever played golf, he scored five holes in one and broke the world record for a single round by 25 strokes.

## U.S.A.

Curious word association, reported in *The Wall Street Journal*:

A survey found that the word or phrase voters most associate with Dole is "old." Second is "too old." Third is "pineapple."

## Austin, Tex.

George W. Bush, governor of the Lone Star State, tells Bob Dole why Texas Republicans should cast their ballot for the senator from the Sunflower State, according to the Associated Press:

"You are a man of steel. America needs your strength."

## Taiwan

Protectionism takes root in the Orient, as described in the *Far Eastern Economic Review*:

Government restrictions on garlic imports have caused the bulb's price to climb about 300% in the past few years. Gangsters have taken over the trade, which is now more profitable than the drug market.

## U.S.A.

The path not taken by Rep. Bob Dornan (R-Calif.), as described in *The New Republic*:

When an Associated Press reporter asked presidential candidates what other career they might have chosen, Bob Dornan responded "archaeologist-missionary-exorcist."

(Readers are invited to forward newspaper clippings or other items for publication in *Terra Incognita*.)



# Liberty

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American public life is witless. Politicians show contempt for truth and the intelligence of the American citizen. Democrats loot the public treasury, while they champion government as the solution for every problem, an agenda that made no sense when they first attempted it 60 years ago, an agenda that has already failed. Republicans flirt with the idea that government is a failure, but they haven't a clue about how to stop it. So they mouth slogans critical of the ever-growing state, but lust after the same perks of power that corrupted the Democrats.

And commentators — whether the airheads of television or the elitists of highbrow magazines — take politicians seriously, serving up pompous proclamations whose idiocy is equalled only by their deceit.

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