

Liberty

Warfare or Workfare?

November 2008

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The Intelligent Person's Guide to Presidential Politics

by the Editors & Contributors

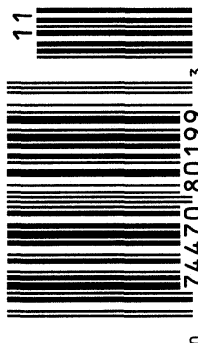
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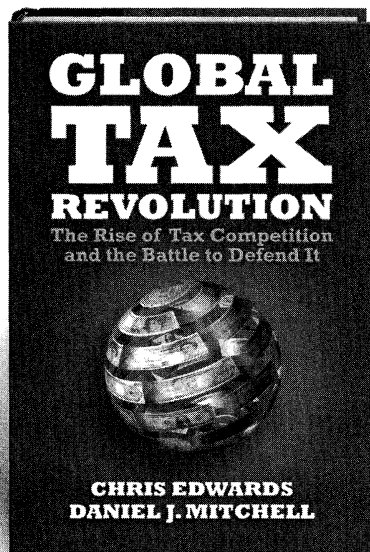
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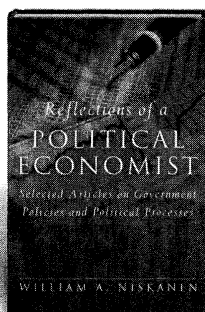
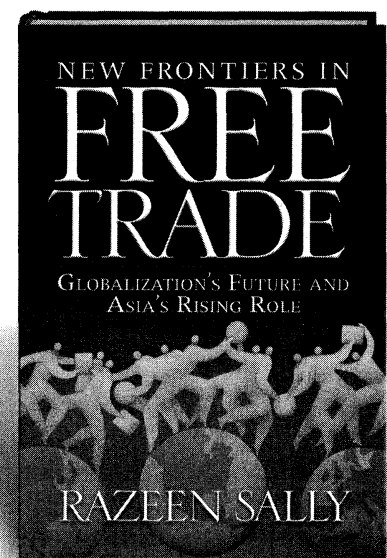
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Letters

Revoluting Calvin

Regarding David Kopel's article, "The Calvinist Connection," (October): the odious John Calvin a libertarian? A proponent of state-administered capital punishment and torture for heresy. The Michael Servetus controversy. Sanctioning the murder (i.e., "execution") of a young woman for the crime of striking her mother.

Mr. Kopel, you have chosen an exemplar of liberty in John Calvin. Congratulations. Perhaps it would have better to conclude your article after the first sentence.

Ronald A. May
Lebanon, Ohio

Kopel responds: I never wrote that Calvin was a libertarian. I did say that the principle of revolution against tyranny, which is one important part of libertarian principles, has Calvinist roots, which it does.

Revoluting Greens

Given my feeling of a certain kinship with Mr. Contoski, having myself spent the last 20 years as an environmental consultant, I would, after reading his debunking of global warming and the IPCC ("Global Warming, Global Myth," September), like to see him write on the state of science within environmental agencies in general.

Specifically, I would like to see someone with Mr. Contoski's clout write about the Green "sustainable revolution" adherents who have infiltrated and nearly taken over federal, state, and local agencies implementing a new brand of

arbitrary and capricious, even whimsical, administration of environmental laws and regulations. Not only do these individuals ignore the law in favor of regulating based on the fears and fantasies of their own minds, in many locales they also seem to be involved in conspiracies with questionable legal firms to foment baseless and hugely expensive claims to wreak havoc on industry under the guise of protecting human health, welfare, and the environment.

If Contoski thinks unethical data selection within the warmist camp is rampant, he ought to take a look at data selectivity to spread fear within such pursuits as the new vapor intrusion craze. (This being just one example of many.)

Unfortunately, the American citizenry has no idea what is happening and is even green-brainwashed to naturally fall on the side of evil. Sure, a few people understand the utter criminality of the global warming hucksters, but few if any realize that on a much smaller scale we are all being swindled daily and quite mightily with far less sexy, yet very economically damaging, nonissues.

After my years observing from the inside of the environmental-industrial complex, I can come to no other conclusion — we are being screwed by yet another revolution that will lead, like the majority of revolutions in history, to tyranny.

Galen Davis
Federal Way, Wash.

A Matter of Degrees

In the September issue, Edmund

Letters to the editor

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Liberty (ISSN 0894-1408) is a libertarian and classical liberal review of thought, culture, and politics, published monthly except February by the Liberty Foundation, 1018 Water Street, Suite 201, Port Townsend, WA 98368. Periodicals Postage Paid at Port Townsend, WA 98368, and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Liberty*, P.O. Box 1181, Port Townsend, WA 98368.

Subscriptions are \$29.50 for eleven issues. International subscriptions are \$39.50 to Canadian and Mexican addresses and \$59.00 elsewhere.

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Contoski writes about what he thinks is the myth of global warming. In his first sentence he writes that the earth had a temperature decrease of 0.63 degrees Celsius from 2006 to 2007. Although he does not give a reference for this specific data, he does state later that there are four sources of global temperature measurements: NASA, the Hadley Center for Climate Studies in the UK, the University of Alabama at Huntsville, and Remote Sensing Systems (in Calif.). If you look at the data from these four organizations, here is what you will find:

From NASA (<http://tinyurl.com/2qv7x9>) there was a 0.03 degree increase from 2006 to 2007. From the Hadley Center (<http://tinyurl.com/2wp27p>) there was a 0.02 degree decrease in temperature. From UAH and from RSS there was a 0.02 degree increase in temperature. Since there is likely an uncertainty of more than 0.05 degree C in this data perhaps the best we can say is that the global temperature was nearly the same in 2006 and 2007. Where did Mr. Contoski get his 0.63 degree decrease number from?

Additionally, Contoski claims on page 35 that "Global temperature has declined since 1998." This is cherry picking. If we use one of Contoski's acceptable sources of data (the Hadley Center in the UK), we

find that yes, there was a small decrease if we compare 2007 with only 1998. But how about comparing 2007 with 2000? How about with 1999? How about 1997, or 1996? All of these choices and all years from 1997 back in time for at least the last 2,000 years show 2007 to be warmer: The graphs of data are here:

<http://tinyurl.com/3nx3a>

<http://tinyurl.com/56yblz>

<http://tinyurl.com/7avvb>

So why 1998? That year just happened to have a big rise due to an El Niño event. Here is what Wikipedia says about it:

The El Niño of 1997–1998 was particularly strong and brought the phenomenon to worldwide attention. The event temporarily warmed air temperature by 3 degrees F, compared to the usual increase of 0.5 degrees F associated with El Niño events.

This is why you will probably find the year 1998 as the comparison year in all of the articles trying to deny global warming.

Contoski also claims that regarding the 20th century, "most of the century's temperature increase occurred before 1940." Using one of his accepted sources (the Hadley Center) we find that there was a 0.2 degrees C increase from 1900 to

From the Editor


Bruce Ramsey has an interesting article in this issue about the fate of a building that should be an American shrine, H.L. Mencken's house in Baltimore.

Now, every libertarian can find mistakes in Mencken's work. I found some, I thought, and itemized them in my biography of Mencken's fellow cultural critic, Isabel Paterson. You can go out and find your own. But after you've done that, just try generating the kind of excitement about individual liberty that Mencken did. Good luck.

Two decades ago, when R.W. Bradford was planning this journal, he talked with me about three journalistic precedents: the Freeman, edited in the early 1950s by the gentle and sincere John Chamberlain; the beautifully produced New Individualist Review (1960s), whose keen-witted editor, Ronald Hamowy, Liberty now boasts as one of its own Contributing Editors; and the American Mercury, Mencken's magazine (1924–33). The Mercury was a literary earthquake. No journal of American letters has ever been more influential; no journal has ever exposed more hypocrisy, lies, and pomposity, or inspired more intellectual revolt against them.

Bill Bradford called me the night after he'd visited Mencken's house. In those days, the great editor's abode was still filled with his own possessions. When Bill sat at Mencken's desk, in Mencken's chair, in the little second-floor room that was the epicenter of the earthquake, his happiness was complete. So is mine, every time I reflect on my own good fortune in watching the tree of liberty branch and flower, as it did in Mencken's life and Bill's life, and as it continues to do in the life of the journal you're reading.

For Liberty,


Stephen Cox

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1940 and a 0.4 degree increase from 1940 to 2000. This is in the first of the three graphs cited above and is exactly opposite to what he claims.

Regarding Contoski's four sources of temperature data, he writes: "NASA is out of step with the other three. The others show temperatures declining since 1998 while NASA shows them increasing at a record pace." Wrong. NASA shows no significant change from 1998 to 2007:

<http://tinyurl.com/5er9jn>

<http://tinyurl.com/2qv7x9>

The other sources show relatively small changes from 1998 to 2007. From the Hadley data above the temperature increase from either 1999 or 2000 to 2007 is much greater than the decrease from 1998 to 2007.

My concern is that if there is careless and biased writing about scientific issues in libertarian publications, the general public may conclude that everything else in these publications is nonsense as well. Again, I am not an expert in this field, but nothing more than high school science is needed to see the serious errors in fact and logic.

Gaylord Olson
Princeton, N.J.

Contoski replies: The four sources of global temperature measurements, NASA (GISS), the UK's Hadley Center for Climate Studies, the University of Alabama at Huntsville, and RSS (Remote Sensing Systems) all show large temperature drops January 2007 to January 2008. This is the period I was referring to although the article said simply 2007. The average here from the four agencies is -0.640 degrees C, very close to the -0.63 I used.

In Olson's comparison of the warming 1900–40 with that of 1940–2000, he seems to have simply misread the chart. I do not question his statement regarding the temperature increase 1900–40, but in going from 1940 to 2000 he apparently has used the figure for 2001 or 2002, rather than 2000. The second website he cited is also of the Hadley data for this period and shows the same pattern. However, in addition to showing "best estimate", it also shows three bandwidths with varying degrees of uncertainty, including "total uncertainty." For clarity, Figure 1 displays only the Hadley "best estimate." From this, one can clearly see that "B" is greater than "A", i.e., the warming was greater in the earlier period.

NASA and Hadley obtain their data from surface-based thermometers. The other two global temperature-measuring agencies get theirs from satellites, which are far more accurate. This satellite information has been available only since 1979, but it shows important differences from the surface data. Figure 2 is a chart from a paper by Baliunas and Soon, astrophysicists at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics. Its satellite temperature measurements do not show the strong uptrend for the same period in the Hadley chart (Figure 1).

S. Fred Singer, in a paper in 2000, noted that since 1979 conventional thermometers have shown a rise of about 0.1 to 0.2 degrees C per decade but "satellite data, as well as independent data from balloon-borne radiosondes, show no warming trend between 1979 and 1997 in the lower troposphere, and could even indicate a slight cooling (if one ignores the unusual warming of 1998 by El Niño)." He also notes, "Direct temperature measurements on Greenland ice cores show a cooling trend between 1940 and 1995 [Dahl-Jensen et al.]. It is likely therefore that the surface data (from poorly distributed land stations and sparse ocean measurements) are contaminated by the local warming effects of 'urban heat islands.'"

On Aug. 26, 1996, some of the nation's preeminent scien-

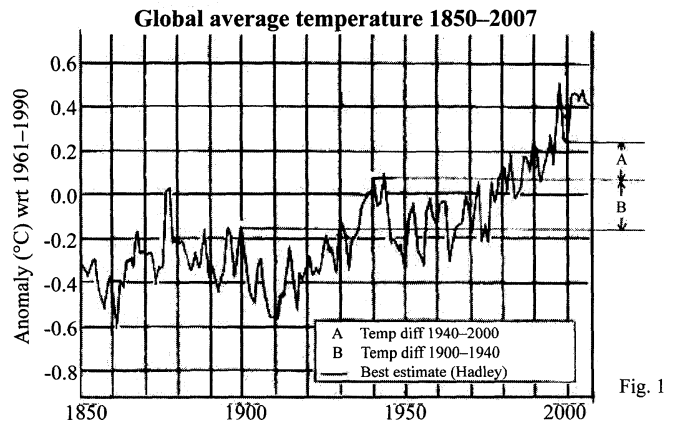


Fig. 1

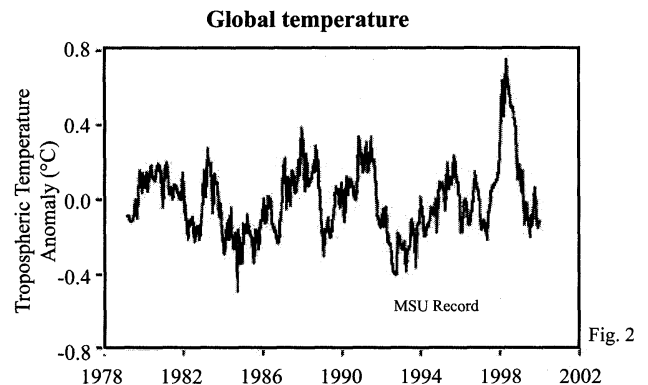


Fig. 2

tists involved in climate issues sent a letter to Timothy Wirth, Undersecretary of State for Global Affairs and the man most responsible for setting up the Kyoto Treaty. The letter stated: "We wish to remind you that *at least two-thirds of the warming in this century occurred before 1940*, i.e., before most of the increase in greenhouse gases" (emphasis added). The letter also stated "the highly accurate global temperature data from weather satellites show no warming whatsoever in the last 18 years." Among those signing the letter were Frederick Seitz, past president of both the National Academy of Sciences and the American Physical Society; William Nierenberg, director emeritus of the Scripps Institute of Oceanography; and S. Fred Singer, professor emeritus of environmental science, University of Virginia, president of the Science and Environmental Policy Project, and founder of the U.S. weather satellite service.

Olson has missed the significance of my comment "NASA is out of step with the other three." The point is that the other three topped out in 1998 while NASA went on to make a new high in 2005. The two charts below (Figure 3, Figure 4) contrast the NASA highs with the downturn shown by Hadley.

Steven Goddard describes the difference: Hadley data "shows worldwide temperatures declining since 1998. According to Hadley data, the earth is not much warmer now than it was in 1878 or 1941. By contrast, NASA data shows worldwide temperatures increasing at a record pace — and nearly a full degree warmer than 1880." Note, too, how far the 2007 NASA figure remains above the years around 1940, compared to the Hadley chart. Goddard also states that both the satellite data sources (UAH and RSS) "show decreasing temperatures over the last

continued on page 52

Reflections

Good and hard — A new variant of the Obama campaign slogan that came out during the Democratic Convention is “The Change America Needs.” I myself am not convinced that Obama is the change America needs. Sadly, and with apologies to the writers of “The Dark Knight,” I suspect he is the change America deserves. — Ross Levatter

A pox upon our house — Obama has a National Security adviser a heartbeat away from his presidency; McCain has a beauty queen a heartbeat away from his presidency. Now we get to see if the far-right evangelicals love national security more than they hate *Roe v. Wade*.

This reminds me of the old Chinese curse: may you live in interesting times. — Marilyn Burge

He chose . . . poorly — I despise nearly everything McCain stands for and hope he loses but his choice of Palin was extremely clever. It reinforces his conservative base and helps him with women as well as independent and libertarian-leaning voters. He might just win this — a depressing thought.

Obama’s selection of Biden, by contrast, was singularly uninspired. Biden’s record as the ultimate insider and spear carrier for the war party directly contradicts Obama’s “change agent” message. Obama’s best hope was to have reinforced that message by picking an independent Democrat or Republican, such as Sen. Chuck Hagel of Nebraska or Gov. Brian Schweitzer of Montana. So much for that.

It increasingly looks as if I’ll have to pay off a sizeable bet on election day. If that happens, my only consolation will be that it was Obama’s fault, and only Obama’s fault, for blowing nearly a sure thing. — David Beito

Barr: none — The libertarian wave that was so strong during the Ron Paul campaign fizzled out under Bob Barr. It turns out that a libertarian running as a Republican works a lot better than a Republican running as a Libertarian.

— Tim Slagle

Strange crew — Now that the fog of the primaries is behind us, we can more easily view the results — and they are strange indeed. Experience dominates on the presidential side of the Republican ticket and the vice presidential choice on the Democratic side (not always a reassuring thing). In contrast,

while the Dems go for youth and novelty on the presidential side, the Republicans do the same for their vice presidential selection (but, of course, in politics, what you don’t know can hurt you). One wonders about the whole process — 300 million people in this country and this is the best we can do?

Still, we know what three of these candidates stand for — more regulations, restricted speech, and higher taxes (I know what Obama says, but the cap-and-trade system, if actually implemented, would represent a \$5 trillion[!] tax increase). One candidate might not be disastrous . . . “in the world of the blind, the one-eyed man is king,” and all that.

It promises to be an interesting contest and aftermath. No matter which team prevails, free-market types will be operating in a target-rich environment. — Fred Smith

Bottling it — In 1996, Michael Sanera and I wrote a family-friendly book, “Facts, Not Fear,” to counter alarmist environmentalist claims. The book had a free-market, self-help orientation.

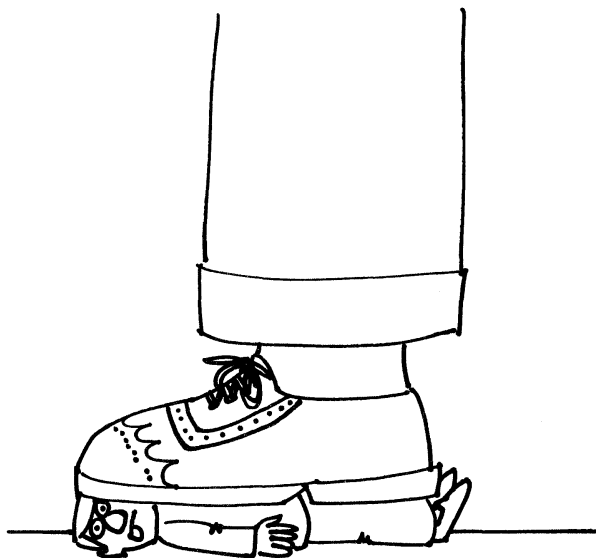
In the chapter on water pollution, we suggested (as an activity for parents and children) a shopping trip to learn about “products that help people get cleaner or better water.” We mentioned bottled water. We implied that for some people, it has merit, even though it is much more expensive than tap water. “The point of these discussions,” we wrote, “is to show that people can take action on their own to make sure that their drinking water is to their liking.”

Did we handle that gingerly! Mentioning bottled water sounded elitist; who would buy bottled water except the rich?

I was afraid that readers would attack us for favoring the wealthy — there is already a tendency to make that charge when you champion markets.

Twelve years later, bottled water is ubiquitous. Teenagers who browbeat their parents for overusing energy and not recycling newspapers are blithely drinking out of water bottles, paid for by parents, wherever they go. It is chic. There are so many water bottles that they, too, are the object of recycling drives. But no one is ashamed of drinking “private” water. No one complains that we are paying \$6.00 a gallon. I guess we’re all wealthy now. — Jane S. Shaw

Panderphonics — I might otherwise vote to reelect the Republican incumbent of the Alabama Congressional



BIG OIL MEETS BIG GOVERNMENT

S. H. Chambers

district where I live, but his much-repeated TV advertisement turns me off. It is full of promiscuous pandering, including promises to do something about the price of gasoline and to help working families in unspecified ways. The candidate even takes pride in having abandoned his party's line by enacting (single-handedly?) a minimum-wage increase. To make matters worse, he pesters voters with recorded phone calls. I, for one, resent having my attention preempted and my time consumed by a caller who has a machine make his pitch to avoid consuming his own time.

— Leland B. Yeager

Voter's remorse — When I attained my 18th birthday, it was a wonderful time to be a Republican. The operative word was *gridlock*: Bill Clinton was president, Congress was up in arms against him, and between the two the federal government could barely agree on anything. Hell, they couldn't even keep the lights on.

So stupidly I assumed that, given control of government, the Republicans would continue deflating our capital bloat; I believed (foolish child!) that candidate Bush would maintain

the isolationist policies educed on the campaign trail: no more Serbias, no more Sudans, just four to eight years to mop up Great Society detritus while our juggernaut economy jagged on. I went from casting a vote against Al Gore (which I would gladly do again . . . and again . . . and again) to casting a vote for Walker Bush. And I have rued it ever since.

A decade on, it seems to be a great time to be a Democrat. There is the sole antiwar candidate; there is the opposition to a man who will surely go down as one of the worst presidents in our nation's history. (I wait, and not exactly on the edge of my seat, for the day when Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt, and Lyndon Johnson take their well-deserved places above him.) I can understand the excitement of pulling the lever that will dump the Republicans out of power. But so many people I've spoken with seem to be making my mistake, of confusing a vote against McCain with a vote for Obama, and I suspect many of them will come to regret it.

Obama would have to work hard to lose this election: anti-Bush sentiment has seen the GOP suffer heavy losses in con-

Word Watch

by Stephen Cox

There are some issues I just can't leave alone. In my last column, I talked about all those nosy people who burden radio, TV, and "public service" billboards with their unwanted advice. I suggested that the old expression *busybody* should be kept in the verbal arsenal of every intelligent man or woman, and that it should be taken out and used at least once daily by everyone interested in mental or linguistic health.

Now I want to discuss the genus of which *Busybody Americanus* is a species: *Do-gooder horribilis*. These creatures are numerous and active. Their cries are many, raucous, and grating. I can mention only a few of them here. The main thing to remember is that there's nothing so terrible as an organism that's determined to Do Good.

Do-gooders (or do-goods, if you prefer the old-fashioned short form, which requires you to spend less time on the varmint) have started more wars, oppressed more people, and confused more impressionable children than any outright villains or nihilists who ever lunged through the portals of history. True villains rarely last long; they are parasites that kill their hosts. Do-goods, by contrast, may do awful damage, yet still not destroy all life. Their venom may, indeed, have a stimulating effect on their victims, not unlike the effects of alcoholic beverages — euphoria, delusions, manic behavior, lachrymose displays of sympathy for all those miserable people whose chemistry has not been altered in this way. When the hallucinations wear off, the victim often discovers that he did something dreadful the night before, such as writing a check for some political cause. Sometimes there are even worse results. The victim becomes addicted to the venom and remains a do-good for the rest of his life.

Do-goods are actually good for only one thing. They are good for this column. They never cease to provide amusement, dark though it may be. They're always talking and writing, and consequently they're always making fools of themselves in entertaining ways. The important thing is not to let these fools make

a fool of you.

Some degree of immunity is provided by the ability to ask, "What the *hell* are you talking about?" If more Americans had asked what President Wilson's friends could possibly mean by a "war to end war," or what President Johnson specifically meant by a "war on poverty," they wouldn't have been so enthusiastic about enlisting in either of those conflicts, or have been so disappointed afterward. The same can be said about the current do-goods' proposals to "end global warming," "end the healthcare crisis," "end obesity," and, indeed, end just about everything on the planet.

It's strange that Americans, in particular, have so much difficulty keeping up their immunity to phrases like this. Some of the do-goods' tricks are so outlandish that it's hard to see how anyone could fall for them. A small example: a friend informs me that he attended a communion service at which the minister described the Last Supper as an occasion on which Jesus distributed bread and wine "to all the men and women at the table." Of course, no one at the Last Supper happened to be female; the do-good simply thought that somebody *should* have been, and was determined to right the wrong. Childish — yes. But the congregants put up with it. They let the preacher keep making fools of them; some expressed their pride in his "orientation toward social justice." And what the hell was *that* supposed to mean?

I'm sure you've heard well educated people say things like, "Each of the nuns wore their habit" and "every mother took their child to school," as if gender equality didn't permit the use of gender-specific pronouns, even when every member of the target group is a woman. Strange! You'd predict that people who worried about women's equality would be eager to put feminine pronouns into every sentence they write — and some do-goods do this, in ways that never seem strange to them. I'm thinking especially of the current custom among academic philosophers of using "she" and "her" in every place where "he" and "him" for-

gressional races, and McCain is in dead heats even in states that have been GOP locks since Reagan. His election will likely be accompanied by a consolidation of Democrat gains on the Hill: he should have the numbers, even if not filibuster-proof, to push through any bill he wants.

Thus his acolytes are expectant. They believe in him. They look to him to end the war in Iraq, and dish out the goodies. But Obama's chest-thumping over Afghanistan and, of greater concern, Pakistan, indicates that he will reallocate rather than reduce military expenditure. (Confirmation comes in the form of the punchably-faced Joe Biden, who spent much of his Denver convention speech agitating for a new Cold War.) It will be interesting then to see which campaign promises he chooses to break, and how deeply he disappoints. Bear in mind that when Democrats really hit the heights, they tend to get involved in major wars.

But maybe it'll be 1993 all over again, and Obama will be forced to spend most of his time dealing with a newly recalcitrant Republican minority. Maybe his supporters' regrets will

be limited to complaints about not getting enough largesse. Maybe glorious gridlock will return. No matter what, like his Democrat predecessors listed above, President Obama's name will never, ever appear on any list of "worst presidents." Let us hope it doesn't deserve to.

— Andrew Ferguson

Prognosis — The white, middle-aged, upper middle class right-wingers that I know all seem to believe that McCain is going to win the election. I tend to think their status insulates them from the real pain many people are feeling. \$4.00 gas and \$4.50 heating oil doesn't mean all that much if you have a six-figure income. The well-to-do for the most part don't have sons or daughters in Iraq or Afghanistan, either.

Of course, left-wingers in the same demographic are likely to believe Obama will win. These folks are insulated from reality, period — that's what makes them leftists. But they happen to be right about this particular election.

As I write this, it's still a long way to November 4. Something extraordinary — a big foreign crisis that threatens to involve the country in another war, for example — could

merly appeared: "The original reader would have understood how she should interpret Hume's irony"—as if, in the 18th century, readers of philosophic treatises were chiefly women. You would think that anyone who really cared about the history of women's former exclusion from intellectual life would hesitate even to hint at such a falsehood. But a do-good never hesitates.

And do-goods don't care about the truth; they care about their own bad consciences. Only someone who feels guilty about fighting a war feels inspired to call it an attempt to end all wars. Only someone who feels guilty about "social inequality" conducts a constant verbal war on it. Only someone who is guiltily eager to prove his *sensitivity* can mangle history, language, and common sense in the ways I'm noting here.

There's a popular Christian hymn (a good one, too) that proclaims, "The darkness shall turn to dawning, and the dawning to noonday bright." Concise, dramatic, euphonious phrasing — but some *sensitive* and *inclusive* hymnals now find substitutes for "darkness" ("midnight," for example). Well, why in the world would anybody want to destroy the alliteration? Apparently some people's bad consciences make them see "darkness" as a slight to African-Americans. Who but a person with a bad conscience would imagine that metaphysical "darkness" had anything to do with skin tones — and then become anxious to prevent anyone from sharing their sordid thought?

It wasn't a bad conscience, however, that motivated a radio announcement I heard this summer. It was a plea for a certifiably good cause — organ donations. But there's something about a good cause that makes the do-gooders' heads come off. The radio ad went on for a long time, in the way you'd expect it to; then it came to a climax: a command that every listener sign an organ donation card, because "you, or someone you know, could live tomorrow, because of your gift of life today!"

I ask you: How can I live "tomorrow" because I donated my heart "today"? Remember, what I'm being urged to do is sign a card to let someone else use my organs *after I'm dead*. Admittedly, there are theologians who argue that good works in this life can purchase happiness in the next. St. Paul didn't believe it, and neither do I, although the doctrine is virtually irresistible to do-goods. Yet I don't think the Gospel of Works was being invoked

in that radio ad. Do-goods and their victims are simply so prone to hysteria that they seldom know or care what they're actually saying.

You can see this tendency in a more threatening form in the current craze for *community* service. In some high schools, public and private, kids are required to do "community service" in order to graduate. Other kids are coerced into "service" so they can increase their odds of getting into college. Once in college, they're expected to "volunteer" to work for some do-good organization, so they can increase their odds of getting into a professional school. And now they're being told, by politicians of various stripes, that after they graduate they should do "community service" to "pay back" what "society" has spent on their "education." Yes, I put "education" in scare quotes, because most contemporary "education" has nothing to do with learning or thinking. If it did, why would all the "educated" people be advocating nonsense like this? If you think that kids can demonstrate their fitness for higher education, or life in the real world, by running a Xerox machine, making sandwiches for bums, or taking dogs on visits to old people's homes, you're not educated; you're merely one more victim of the do-good mentality.

I've had many conversations with people who "just feel," for reasons unknown to either them or me, that community service is a wonderful thing; and I've always asked them, "So what are these servants supposed to *do*?"

"Oh," they reply. "Oh . . ." They have no idea.

"Let me put it this way," I continue. "Do you want them working in *your* office (or shop, or lab, or classroom)?"

"Uh . . . no, I guess not," they always say. "I wouldn't have anything for them to do. They're not . . . they're not, uh . . . trained . . . or anything." Meaning, they're not *educated*.

"Besides," I ask, "who's going to pay for all this?"

"Well," they say. "I don't know."

"Maybe," I suggest, "they'd do more good by getting normal jobs, if somebody wanted to hire them. That's what you did, isn't it? You went out and got a job."

"Yes," they say. "I think you're right. I guess community service isn't a very good idea."

So that's my way of doing good.

change the dynamic and elect McCain. The extraordinary event most likely to occur, however, is a meltdown by McCain in the debates. The man is crankier and far less sharp than he was eight years ago. The betting here is close to even that he will implode during one of the debates. That would mean a big Obama win in November.

Assuming McCain doesn't implode, Obama is still the next president. Despite the Clintons' best efforts to ruin his candidacy, despite the tepidness of his support among blue hairs and Bud drinkers, Obama will benefit from bigger than usual youth and minority turnouts. Combine that with bad economic times and you get Obama, by my count, winning between 275 and 302 electoral votes. The popular vote also will be close; I'd say Obama gets less than a million votes more than McCain.

Oh, and what does the election portend for the Libertarian Party candidate, Bob Barr? This crystal ball says Barr gets 0.7% of the popular vote, tops. "Wait till next cycle," I can hear the LP members chanting. Or will they simply pine for the good old days of 1980, when they got 1%?

You read it here first.

— Jon Harrison

Loco parentis — A 12-year-old sixth grader in Quebec was disciplined by her dad for posting her photos on a dating website. He kept her from going on a school trip. Was this too harsh a punishment?

Well, any person can have views on this, but really, what they do as a family is pretty much their own business. Or at least that is what any sensible person with the slightest of dignity and respect for other people's personal lives would have thought. But not the most Honourable Madam Justice Suzanne Tessier, to whom the sixth grader went with a case against her dad. Tessier, instead of laughing the case off, reprimanded the father for having been too harsh, insisting that the girl be allowed to go on the school trip.

My suggestion to the dad: pack your daughter's bag and leave her at the Tessier's door. Your daughter will quickly learn the most important lesson of life — the world very often is not what it seems, and bleeding-heart folks like Tessier are no benevolent judges, but people who like to do charitable things as long as such things don't involve risking their own money, time, or personal enjoyment. Instead of getting attracted toward these "benevolent" characters, the daughter should learn to feel repelled.

— Jayant Bhandari

California schemin' — This November, a \$1 billion light-rail line is on the ballot in Kansas City. A \$400 million commuter-rail line is on the ballot in Sonoma and Marin counties, California. A \$45 billion high-speed rail project, promising 220-mile-per-hour trains from Sacramento and San Francisco to Los Angeles and San Diego, is on the ballot in California.

All these propositions depend on persuading voters that rail lines will reduce congestion. In fact, Kansas City's light rail will make congestion worse. The Sonoma-Marin train promises to take less than 1% of cars off the road. California's high-speed train is predicted to take less than 4% of cars off the road. Yet every piece of campaign literature for these measures mentions congestion relief.

This is an example of what Bent Flyvbjerg, author of the book "Megaprojects," calls "strategic misrepresentation."

Flyvbjerg says that these types of projects suffer from "optimism bias," meaning that their proponents deceive not only the public but themselves with overly confident assumptions.

For example, most of the predictions for California's high-speed train are based on estimates that the train will carry 30 times as many people each year as Amtrak's 150-mile-per-hour Boston-to-Washington trains, which serve a higher-density corridor. Meanwhile, given past experience, it is reasonable to add 40% to the cost of all these projects.

Because of its high cost, the California high-speed rail is most frightening. If this measure passes and construction begins, it will create a high-speed rail lobby in the U.S. that will promote white elephants so expensive as to make all our light-rail boondoggles look cheap.

— Randal O'Toole

Mustang Sarah — I just wrote to L. Neil Smith, author of speculative fiction, and accused him of writing the backstory and bio in secret, and then hiring an excellent actress to portray Sarah Palin. I'm still not sure that didn't happen. Of course, she might also be from an old unpublished manuscript of Heinlein's. At any rate, we have here a unique opportunity to help get an ideal American type into the vice-presidential office. Before this happened, I would have bet it would be impossible for John McCain to do anything at all that could persuade me to vote for him. I was wrong.

Is McCain the Yeltsin of America? Yeltsin did two great things — he got up on that tank, and years later he named Putin his successor to clean up the mess he'd made in his own years in office. McCain survived a captivity that would have destroyed most of us, and years later he named Palin.

It may be the one of the few genuine acts of genius in American political history, and ol' McCain did it.

Not only is the opportunity to get her in office, and maybe to elect her president in a few years, a wonderful thing, but the icing on the cake is to experience the reaction of the Left. It's hard to oppose her without opposing the very fabric of the American soul, and that's what they're doing. She's not a typical American type, as many have said — she's the ideal American type. Annie Oakley and June Cleaver. Dana Scully, Nancy Drew, Molly Brown . . . the list goes on.

I'm off to get a bumper sticker.

— Rex May

Why feed the bear? — Russia has used the billions the West has poured into its coffers to rebuild its military and stoke its revanchist plans to get its empire back. If this wasn't obvious from Putin's words over the last few years, as well as his ruthless suppression of dissent and freedom of the press in his country (including targeted assassinations of journalists critical of his regime), it is now crystal clear with his invasion and dismemberment of Georgia.

Putin, the crafty chessplayer, played the game deftly. He flooded money, arms, and citizens into the two rebellious regions of Georgia (Abkhazia and South Ossetia) after France and Germany blocked Georgia's (and Ukraine's) admission to NATO. When the Georgians — in a tactical blunder Putin was waiting for — tried to reestablish control of over those regions internationally recognized as their territory, the Russians moved in rapidly and in force. The result is that Russia now has de facto annexed those regions, and its tanks are close to the capital. All the while Europe and the U.S. have looked on passively.

Besides wanting Georgia back in their empire, the Russians have a larger objective: to control the energy supply of Europe. Georgia just happens to have a major oil pipeline (the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, owned by BP), through which a million barrels a day flows. This pipeline is a vital source of oil for Europe, and Russia intended the message to be sent that the pipeline is now under its control. In case the Europeans — obtuse to be sure — didn't quite get the message, the Russians underlined it by hitting the pipeline with 50 missiles.

Putin's plan is to achieve, by controlling Europe's energy supplies, what Stalin couldn't achieve with his armies: hegemony over the continent.

Absent some stern response from Europe and the United States, we can expect Ukraine to be hit next. Ukraine has a large number of ethnically Russian citizens loyal to Russia, and is a democracy — something which authoritarian regimes like Russia despise. More to the point, Ukraine has the Crimea — a strategically important peninsula where a large Russian fleet is harbored. This fleet is supposed to be leaving by 2017, though that is unlikely now that the Bear has gotten away with attacking Georgia. I doubt it will be even a year before Putin attacks Ukraine.

We should consider some peaceful but meaningful measures here. Certainly we should end the joint operations with the Russians on the space station and boycott the 2012 Olympics scheduled in Russia. But more importantly, we should end all connections with Russia vis a vis our nuclear power industry. Earlier this year, for example, Bush submitted to Congress the "123 Agreement," which would allow the transfer of nuclear materials and technology to Russia, allowing Russia to reprocess spent fuel from our reactors. The deal was already suspect because of Russia's enabling of Iran's nuclear weapons program. It should now be off the table permanently. The last thing we need is to have the Bear's claws on our nuclear power in the way they are on Europe's oil and natural gas supply.

Most importantly, we need to quit feeding authoritarian regimes like Russia, Venezuela, and Iran the billions for energy that we currently do. We need to build nukes, drill domestically, allow importation of ethanol from places where it is produced more cheaply than here, and continue to develop alternative sources of energy.

— Gary Jason

Hire purpose — Chicago Mayor Daley recently asked city employees to take unpaid furloughs as a way to meet the budget shortfall without layoffs. I don't really understand this. Most municipal government positions are necessary things; if the garbage man doesn't show, eventually someone else has to pick up the trash. So how is it possible that so many employees can take off so much time and the city can still function?

In the private sector, those employees would be considered unnecessary, and have to find more productive places in the economy to apply their talents. But in a city that counts on the assistance of municipal employees around election time to maintain the power structure, layoffs are unheard of.

It is a big part of why the government can never outperform the private sector. In the private sector, people are hired when there is a task that needs to be done. In a government, people are just hired.

— Tim Slagle

Natural enemies — With environmentalists increasingly upset about bottled water, energy independence, resource waste, landfill adequacy, and so forth, one might hope to harness their energy to a useful cause. Why shouldn't they take on the TSA? Think of the billions of bottles of cosmetics, hairspray, fast drinks, and even (gasp!) water that have been confiscated at airports throughout America. (Full disclosure: I lost a bottle of Laphroaig scotch myself.) Sure, they argue that it makes us safer. But what about the safety of our planet, now menaced by dumpsites loaded with confiscated fluids?

Could we divert the Greenies' political clout into repealing the Homeland Security Act?

— Fred Smith

Olympic pillage — Who won the 2008 Olympics? For all the talk about the Olympics being an individual event in a post-Communist world, it's still a war of ideology. Communist China ranked first in the official Beijing Olympics website because it garnered the most gold medals, 51, compared to the USA at 36, and Russia, 23. But surely silver and bronze mean something, and in terms of total medal count, the United States came in first at 110, followed by China at 100, and Russia at 72.

Given that pundits confidently predicted that China would surpass the United States in the total medals count, I think that's a victory for the decentralized free-enterprise model of the United States, versus the centrally planned, government controlled model. China and many other governments spent millions, if not billions, funding their Olympic athletes, but not the United States. The U.S. Olympics Team is financed almost entirely from individual, corporate, and community sources, a feature that sets American amateur sports apart from athletic programs in much of the rest of the world.

South Korea far outdistanced North Korea, 31 to six in total medals, though unfree Cuba won 24 medals, compared to only 11 for free Jamaica. Venezuela earned only one bronze medal, an indication of the instability in that oil-wealthy nation.

But what about Russia? It came in third, but if you count all the old Russian satellite countries, such as Belarus, Georgia, Lithuania, Kazakhstan, and the other stans, the old Soviet regime received almost 170 medals, much better than China or the United States. Apparently breaking up the Soviet system was a good thing. Any way you slice it, freedom wins.

— Mark Skousen

Drug thugs strike again — Now for the latest in the government's war on personal liberty . . . oops, I mean the War on Drugs. On July 29, in Prince George's County, Maryland, law enforcement officers raided the home of Berwyn Heights mayor Chye Calvo, kicking in the door with guns drawn and seizing a package that contained 32 pounds of marijuana.

Unfortunately for Mayor Calvo, the package was delivered to his door as part of a smuggling scheme involving a Federal Express employee who left drugs on innocent people's porches, to be picked up later by a confederate. Coincidentally, the police got wind of the scheme just before the mayor's home was selected as a dropoff point.

Did I mention that the cops kicked in the door with guns drawn? Yes, I did. They also handcuffed the mayor and his

mother-in-law for six hours. Oh yes, and they shot and killed the mayor's two black Labradors, saying they felt "threatened" by the dogs.

Mayor Calvo claimed the thugs — I mean, the police — killed the dogs "for sport." One was shot while running away from the storm troopers. Officials later stated that the Calvos were "most likely" innocent victims (in fact, there's no doubt they were just in the wrong place at the wrong time), but they refused to apologize for killing the dogs. Black labs, for you non-dog lovers out there, are gentle creatures and don't pose any threat to big, grownup cops, armed or not.

The official response to this act of official terrorism: the conduct of the police is being "reviewed" by the FBI. I don't know about you, but I'm not particularly reassured that the Felonious Bureau of Investigation is on the case. One hopes that the mayor will sue, and that he wins damages large enough to reduce the county's budget for waging the "War on Drugs" for years to come. The officers who conducted the raid should of course be hamstrung, but alas, there's no provision in the law for this.

— Jon Harrison

The dignity divide — Watching Sarah Palin during the initial days of wonderment, the thought came to me: if she and John McCain win, the Left is going to be so angry. That the victory goes to this woman and not a progressive feminist like Hillary Clinton will make them feel cheated by history. The Left will feel even more wronged and ashamed at a defeat of Barack Obama, a man they feel is owed the White House because of who he is, and who for months, they thought, had it in the bag. Big figures will accuse America of cultural sickness, of uneradicated racism, of being a nation unworthy.

If the Republicans lose, they will be disappointed, of course, but they will take it quietly. The Democrats will howl.

— Bruce Ramsey

Economy: stupid — Barack Obama is going to win in a walk. I make this prediction with mixed feelings. Obama will boost our standing in the world's eyes. He will inspire a young generation of blacks and other minorities to believe that they can succeed in America. But his economic policies will prove disastrous.

— Randal O'Toole

The liberty club — In our study "The Libertarian Vote," David Kirby and I estimated that about 15% of American voters hold libertarian views — not libertarian in the ideological sense held by many readers of *Liberty*, but views that are neither liberal nor conservative and that tilt in a broadly libertarian direction, skeptical of government involvement in both economic and personal matters. One of the questions we got in response was, "Then why don't libertarians have more influence?"

You can argue that libertarian voters do have a lot of influence. In the past generation or so, the United States has ended conscription and Jim Crow laws, slashed marginal tax rates, ended the tight regulation of the transportation and telecommunications industries, and revolutionized the roles of women, blacks, and gays.

Nevertheless, there have been plenty of policy changes in the other direction, the Libertarian Party remains infinitesimal, and libertarian voters are frustrated in every election by a choice between big-spending Democrats and religious-

right, military-interventionist (and, ahem, big-spending) Republicans. So if 15% of voters would like something different, why can't we organize them into an effective faction?

Here's one hypothesis: One reason why libertarians underperform politically is that they are politically split, not just between radicals and incrementalists, as can happen in any political movement, but also among various political movements — while being too small to influence any of them very much.

It seems to me that libertarians come in several political groupings:

(1) Those who care primarily about free markets and thus support conservative Republicans. Given the candidates on offer, that means helping to move the GOP to the right on social issues (and war and civil liberties) as well as on economic issues. This group would include the Club for Growth, Republican "Leave Us Alone" activist Grover Norquist, many donors to free-market thinktanks, and probably most libertarian-leaning politically active people.

(2) Those who want to make the GOP more socially tolerant and thus support moderate Republicans, which effectively means Republicans who aren't very free-market. This would include Log Cabin Republicans, pro-choice Republicans, and lots of Wall Street and Silicon Valley businesspeople.

(3) Those who think the GOP is irredeemably bad on social issues and civil liberties and thus support Democrats. This would again include some Silicon Valley businessmen who are pro-entrepreneurship and fiscally conservative but just can't support a party that is opposed to abortion rights and gay rights. A dramatic example is Tim Gill, the founder of Quark, who calls himself a libertarian but has contributed millions of dollars to Democrats because of Republican opposition to gay rights. There are also broadly libertarian people involved in the ACLU, the drug-reform movement, and other civil libertarian causes.

(4) Those who support the Libertarian Party. They don't get many votes, but they include a large percentage of libertarian activists.

It would be a better world if libertarians of the Cato-Reason-Liberty stripe were the intellectual vanguard of a broadly libertarian, or classical liberal, or "fiscally conservative, socially liberal" party or faction. But that's not the case. I don't have a real solution for this problem. We could hope for a libertarianish politician to emerge who could appeal to all these groups. But that's very difficult, given the existing divides both between the parties and within the Republican Party. And it may also be that libertarians just don't have the drive for power that characterizes major political leaders. I wrote back in 2006 that "three libertarian-leaning governors — the brilliant lawyer William Weld, the eccentric entertainer Jesse Ventura, and the true citizen-politician Gary Johnson" — all walked away from politics sooner than most politicians do.

Since then, of course, Ron Paul has emerged as the most successful libertarian politician around. He did have some crossover appeal, attracting young antiwar people as well as free-marketers and constitutionalists. But his support seemed more intense than widespread, and his seeming hostility to trade and immigration would limit his appeal to the broader libertarian constituency.

One possibility might be to create a nonpartisan libertarian advocacy group. Right now there are lots of libertarian (or at least free-market) thinktanks. But there's no libertarian equivalent of MoveOn.org, the Family Research Council, or other such mass-membership organizations. In the February 2001 issue of *Liberty*, Randal O'Toole suggested converting the Libertarian Party into the Liberty Club, which like the Sierra Club could organize, inform, educate, agitate, and lobby on a wide range of issues without requiring its members to support particular candidates or parties. Maybe he had a point.

— David Boaz

Mocha Manicheans — The weekend before the Republican National Convention, I fled my loud house and took my laptop to a nearby Starbucks and its less distracting white noise. The only available table was near one of the doors and a small newspaper rack; I took it and plugged in. Over the next two hours, I witnessed a kind of focus group of frappuccino drinkers heading out to the beach.

The two newspapers most clearly visible in the rack each featured above-the-fold photos of John McCain. Just about everyone walking by commented. And the most common responses involved a lot of stammering and some use of the word "evil." "My God, he's like — I mean he looks — evil." Or just a click of the tongue followed by a hissed "Evil!"

Now, I'm no fan of Sen. McCain. I think he's a statist and his campaign finance "reform" schemes amount to an effort to regulate political speech. But I don't feel the need to express my criticism in stark moral terms. "Evil" invests too much power in a politician; the truth is that most, almost all, are clerks. They're too trivial to warrant categorical damnation.

I could understand if Sarah Palin's evangelical Christian acolytes described Sens. Obama or Biden as "evil." Such crude terms fit their manichean cosmology. But Obama's *bien pensant* supporters are supposed to be worldly and sophisticated. Not the sort who'd liken an avuncular, gray-haired politician to Beelzebub. Yet, there they were. "He's just, I mean, evil." "I can't believe anyone'd, um, ever, you know, vote for that evil old fuck."

There were too many "evils" for this to be coincidence. I did a quick check online to see whether any popular pundit or comedian had called McCain evil. I couldn't find a smoking gun. Nothing from Jon Stewart or talk radio's likely suspects. DailyKos contributors call McCain evil a lot . . . but the people walking through Starbucks didn't look like the sort who'd drill deeply into the NetRoots.

Maybe the explanation is simpler. Among Sen. Obama's appeals is that he conveys a cheap sense of sophistication upon his supporters. And crude, ignorant people — conditioned to categorize people they've never met as "good" and "evil" — are drawn to this cheap appeal.

— Jim Walsh

Faith-based technology — The papers are rife with the distortions to rational science policy stemming from the power of religious groups. The bulk of that criticism has been aimed at right-of-center Christian groups. But I'm not too worried about that aspect of the problem. The drive toward medical advances is unlikely to be slowed appreciably by bans on government-sponsored embryonic stem cell research (note that adult cells turn out to be more adaptable than once believed) and science can fairly easily handle cre-

ationism without my help.

But, today's dominant religion (at least among the *soi-disant* intellectuals) is "statism," not Christianity, and that form of religious interference is more troublesome.

Perhaps the best example of the fervor of leftist religiosity is the push for technology mandates. Everything from our refrigerators to our light bulbs to our SUVs must adhere to a leftist vision of energy "efficiency" (no matter how much product quality and reliability must be sacrificed to achieve it). America itself must return to energy use levels last met at some date in the virtuous past. Cars would be required to achieve fuel efficiency levels of 35 mpg (by legislation pushed by Republicans and Democrats alike). But to our more devoted advocates this isn't enough. They argue for ever more restrictive standards and much shorter compliance periods.

All agree that the environmentalists' plans will require technologies that don't yet exist or that do exist but at levels well beyond those commercially feasible (that is, levels that you and I can afford). No worry, say the efficiency advocates; technology will soon exist to do all this while also lowering costs, increasing employment, reducing imports, and increasing workforce diversity! And that's from the Republicans!

Faith in God can be troublesome, but faith in the state can be downright dangerous.

— Fred Smith

Beyond the Palin — America is absolutely smitten with Sarah Palin. She's pretty, well spoken, and not afraid to speak her mind. She supports the 2nd Amendment, is not ashamed of her youthful experiments with marijuana, and is rumored to have joined a secessionist party. I can't help but wonder why she isn't on our side.

If Sarah Palin had ever wandered into an LP event, I imagine that she would have been so overwhelmed with the attentions of lonely Libertarian men that she would have felt like a stray dog wandering the streets of North Korea.

Normally a candidate with John McCain's actuarial tables is scored negatively. But with Palin in the bullpen, McCain's advanced age is quite an asset.

— Tim Slagle

Thoughtless crime — Recently, I read an article in the *Atlantic* about the excessive number of traffic signs in America as compared to England, and how many fewer accidents occur in England than in America. The point was that having too many traffic signs decreases driver discretion. In other words, American drivers don't think; they let the signs tell them what to do. It is a good article, and I recommend it. But beyond general agreement with its critical view of the state of the American road, it got me thinking.

Here in America, we pride ourselves on a society that operates under the rule of law. Most people likely think of this as it is defined by Black's Law Dictionary (6th ed.): "The rule of law, sometimes called 'the supremacy of law,' provides that decisions should be made by the application of known principles or laws without the intervention of discretion in their applications." Or, more generally, we are governed by set laws and not by the capriciousness of men.

Sounds good, but in America today, that definition is increasingly alien from what we citizens regularly experience.

Whether we call it a nanny state, or creeping socialism, or some other phrase, "rule of law" is very steadily becoming

"Rule of Law." Instead of laws that guard against governance by whim or selective application, we face multiplying sets of statutes, acts, regulations, and litigation that effectively to govern almost every bit of our lives. Thanks to "well-intentioned" law, the act of purposeful decision-making — and the necessary independent thinking that precedes it — is in danger of becoming a relic.

Think about it (as I know Liberty readers do). We can smoke in fewer and fewer areas (some residential configurations even ban smoking in one's own home); we can drink less and less socially as states continue to ratchet down legal blood alcohol limits for driving; our fast-food and trans fat intake is being regulated; we must "click it or ticket"; in some states we can't talk on handheld cell phones while driving . . . just to name a few legal intrusions. The list does not even begin to touch more fundamental issues, such as suicide.

Sure, I'm no fan of smoke-filled rooms; I detest drunk drivers; I automatically put my seatbelt on when I am in a car, calculating that my accident survival odds are better if I'm strapped in. And I can appreciate some of the good intentions behind these measures. But, well meaning or not, this Rule of Law is creating a fundamental problem. Making choices for oneself, no matter how large or small, requires much independent thought, calculation, and deliberation. To function, a free society must be made up of citizens equipped with the deliberative ability to make their own decisions, people who accept responsibility for the consequences of their actions. By allowing government, through Rule of Law, to make our choices for us, we abrogate both independent thought and responsibility.

Sometimes decision-making and its required forethought are inconvenient or aggravating, and at first glance it might seem pleasant to be free of responsibility. Surely we have all played silly party games about "what would you do, if you knew you would never get caught." But, in real life there is a price to pay. By giving up responsibility for our actions, we ultimately give up the right to choose our actions, and we give up the thought process that goes into decision-making, ceding independence to the reflex of doing what's chosen for us. We go from being the governing to being the governed.

When citizens lose their ability to think, they are no longer free to govern themselves, and society itself is no longer free.

— Marla White

Waste line — The fact that Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security, even if run honestly, will consume the entire budget of this nation in a couple of decades is already tough to take. But when you hear of fraud and waste committed in those programs, it gets even tougher. Two recent Wall Street Journal articles bring this home.

The first (July 9) reports that Medicare is grossly overpaying for rentals of "durable medical equipment" (DME). DME prices were set in law in the 1980s and have been increased since then to allow for inflation — even while the cost of DME has gone down, like that of most high-tech equipment.

So an oxygen concentrator (something that delivers oxygen to patients by means of a tube) that goes for \$600 on the open market gets rented by Medicare for \$7,142 (over a three year period). Of that cost, the taxpayer eats \$5,714.

Attempts to institute competitive bidding have been tried,

starting in 2003. What little of this has been done has cut DME costs by over a quarter. But not only is Congress not broadening competitive bidding, it is entertaining a bill crafted by lobbyists for the equipment makers in order to delay what little we have.

The second article (also July 9) reports on outright Medicare fraud. It turns out that crooks, during the years 2000 to 2007 alone, ripped off Medicare to the tune of over \$90 million. They filed about half a million fake claims under the names of 16 to 18 thousand dead doctors!

The GAO, the Fed's fiscal watchdog, estimates that Medicare alone shelled out over \$12 billion in 2005 (and over \$21 billion in 2004) in fraudulent or inflated charges. Quite a record, indeed.

— Gary Jason

In limbo — In July's issue, this reflector told you about Susan LeFevre, the San Diego housewife who was arrested after 32 years on the lam from a Michigan drug conviction, for which she had received a 10–20 year sentence. Despite her youth at the time of her offense, and her spotless life since, officialdom has exacted its pound of flesh and more: LeFevre will serve at least five and a half years on her drug conviction. In addition, Michigan is pursuing an escape charge against her. Michigan governor Jennifer Granholm ought to commute her sentence for the drug conviction and pardon her on the escape charge. Will she? Of course not. She wants to be Obama's attorney general. The irony here is that the man she hopes to serve is an admitted former user of illegal drugs — only, he never got caught.

What a purgatory we have made in this country, as we ruin the lives of thousands of people in the name of suppressing victimless crimes.

— Jon Harrison

An evangelical libertarian? — Like many limited government advocates, I am usually unimpressed and unsatisfied with the candidates put forward by the establishment parties. And my skepticism about his road-to-Damascus conversion from conservative statism prevents me from voting for Bob Barr. But I am intrigued by Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin — though I have little interest in the rally-the-base role the McCain campaign has designed for her as its vice presidential nominee.

I'm more interested in the reformist, limited-government persona that she had developed before her ascent to the national stage. Politics in Alaska are, like many things about the 49th state, unique. The Republican Party dominates the scene up there. But it's not the limited-government GOP of the rest of the West or the evangelical GOP of the New South. It's a mutant, big-government party that's institutionally corrupt, addicted to taxes on oil production, and marked by cronyism and nepotism. Sen. Ted Stevens' recent arrest on corruption charges highlights the extent of the trouble.

You might say that the Alaska GOP is an extreme version of what the national GOP has become during the W. Bush years. So, it's easy to see why McCain saw potential in Palin. She ran against Alaska's mutants and won. Her reformist persona resonates well with ordinary Alaskans. (Plus, there's something viscerally appealing about a woman who knows how to handle a firearm and field dress game.) This all implies the common sense and self reliance that are essential to individual liberty. And Palin has called herself a limited-government

advocate throughout her political career.

Of course, this is not the aspect of Sarah Palin that we're likely to see and hear in the days leading up to the election. The McCain campaign will emphasize her appeal to social conservatives and — very likely — her evangelical faith. The Obama campaign and its proxies will emphasize the tawdriness of her working-class lifestyle . . . and her evangelical faith.

This gets to an issue of interest to all libertarians, especially if limited-government beliefs and evangelical faith are both on the rise: can evangelical faith and limited-government philosophy coexist in the same person?

I think the answer is yes.

The genius of the Establishment Clause and the spirit of our separation of church and state is that it allows a person to support and participate in government regardless of his religious faith (or lack of religious faith). Of course, some Christian evangelical sects make proselytizing and active conversion central tenets of their faith. They charge their members to proselytize everywhere — at work, in business, and in government if they reach public office. This runs against the spirit and the letter of the Establishment Clause.

To participate effectively in a rational limited government, evangelicals will have to curtail some of their proselytizing fervor. My guess is that the leaders among them understand this.

Palin would add value to the public discourse by talking how she balances religious faith with belief in a limited government. I suspect that that's not something that will fit in the frenzy leading up to the 4th. But the prospect of hearing her talk about it is just about enough to make me fill in the oval next to her name.

— Jim Walsh

Between Barack and a nut case — OBAMA! Whenever my friend Porter Stansberry refers to Barack H. Obama, he does so with caps and an exclamation point, as if he were a NEW! and IMPROVED! product that's being marketed. It's an astute observation on Porter's part, and I'll follow his lead.

I suspect OBAMA! will be our next president. My main reservation in saying so is that I haven't been a great handicapper of U.S. political races. I just don't have my finger on the pulse of *Boobus americanus*; as cynical as I am about politics, I'm not cynical enough. In moments of realism, I've come to recognize that if I like someone, the average American will probably hate him; and if I dislike him, the mob will probably love him. This year I wonder how anyone could like any of the candidates for president. The left wing of the Demopublican party offered a choice between OBAMA! and Lady Macbeth. The right wing of the Republicrats offers a tired, hostile, mildly demented old man. You'd think that out of 300 million people, there would be a wider choice.

My colleague Marin Katusa, who is not only academically smart but almost preternaturally street-smart, believes McCain will win simply because people are still essentially tribal. They may talk a politically correct line about supporting a young black man, but in the privacy of the voting booth they'll atavistically vote for someone more like themselves — which is to say, an older white person. I don't disagree, but point out that OBAMA! would actually be our third black president, after Bill Clinton, and then Morgan Freeman who,

you'll recall, was the president in that movie about an asteroid hitting the earth. We have a bottle of Johnnie Walker Blue hinging on the outcome, but the truth is that, no matter who wins, we all lose.

My case for OBAMA! winning rests on three premises.

One, he says he's against the war in Iraq. However belatedly, this disastrous, unprovoked attack has become almost as unpopular as it deserves to be. Many people will vote for OBAMA! largely for the reason they voted for Nixon in 1968, because he claims to be a peace candidate. McCain, as an outspoken warmonger, isn't even an option.

Two, the economy is on the edge of a precipice, and the collapse will be attributed (not incorrectly) to the stupidity of the Baby Bush Regime, with which McCain is associated. As Bill Clinton correctly observed: it's the economy, stupid! With a depression in the offing, they'll reflexively vote for the other party. Especially considering the mythos that surrounds Franklin Roosevelt, who they mistakenly believe brought the country out of the last depression.

Three, I believe one reason Bush was elected and was so popular early on is that he's demonstrably dimwitted and ignorant. This resonated with the average voter, who, lacking a more substantial basis for self-esteem, could reasonably feel he was at least as well qualified as Bush to be president. But with serious trouble on the way and the basic survival instincts awakened deep within their reptilian brains, they'll prefer someone who is bright and knowledgeable, or at least someone smarter than they are. Someone who can not only express coherent thoughts but was even an editor of the Harvard Law Review. Someone like OBAMA!

Of course *Boobus americanus* will again be disappointed, Fooled Again, as The Who have observed. Which is, of course, both completely predictable and totally just for anyone who expects good things from politics. They won't get what they want, but they will get what they deserve. Why?

First, Barack was only against the Iraq War on technical grounds, however valid. He is a supporter of the adventure in Afghanistan and has said he wants to send at least two more combat brigades there. He's not against aggressive war in general, saying he'd strike against the Taliban in Pakistan, and defend Israel against its enemies; and as for Iran, it's "a threat to all of us" and the United States "should take no option, including military action, off the table." Although it would appear he's less bloodthirsty than the Republicans, he'll unquestionably continue to involve the United States in all manner of foreign squabbles, treaties and wars. And considering that the generational clock is again coming around to a time like the '30s and '40s, the conflicts are likely to be much more serious than those Bush has gotten us into.

Second, contrary to popular belief, government intervention is the cause of, not the solution to, the economy's problems. As bad as Bush was, OBAMA! promises to be much, much worse. It seems a cinch he'll prove a Roosevelt wannabe. And he'll begin with a government that's vastly more powerful than it was when Roosevelt began his mischief and with a public vastly more sanguine and accepting about the state. He'll give us many more agencies, laws, taxes, and regulations. And much more inflation.

It's possible, of course, he'll do the opposite of everything he appears to stand for. Roosevelt, after all (and, again, com-

pletely contrary to popular belief), campaigned on an almost libertarian platform against the interventionist Hoover. Proving once again, when in doubt, politicians almost always err on the side of more state control. The only exceptions are when the wheels have fallen off and there's almost no alternative to less government, as was the case in New Zealand and Ireland during the '80s or Russia in the '90s. Perhaps things will get that bad in the United States by around 2016, but it seems most unlikely that OBAMA! will make an about-face during his term.

Third, although intelligence is, in fact, always better than stupidity, it's no guarantor of good times. Lincoln, Wilson, Teddy Roosevelt, Johnson, and Nixon were all quite intelligent but disastrous leaders (at least if what is important to you are peace, prosperity, and personal freedom). The fact OBAMA! has a high IQ gives me little comfort.

Although imperfect, the best predictors of a person's future actions are his past words and actions. So let's see what we know about OBAMA!

He's a lawyer who has practiced civil rights law. That likely means he's not very money-oriented, placing instead a high importance on what he sees as social injustice. And he's inclined to use the power of the state to enforce his views on other people. This impresses me as dangerous. In fact, for anyone who values economic and social freedom, almost all his notions promise disaster.

OBAMA! opposes privatizing Social Security because he believes it would lead to Social Darwinism. He opposes education vouchers for use at private schools because he believes they would undermine public schools. He was, and still appears to be, a supporter of the counterproductive biofuels initiative. He opposes oil exploration in "sensitive" areas and appears negative on nuclear power. He's strongly in favor of a scheme of national health insurance. He believes in eliminating any remaining tax loopholes for "the rich" and raising taxes on those who can "afford" them. His proposed budget would substantially boost federal spending. He would significantly increase foreign aid. He's quite green and believes that something must be done about global warming. He's adamantly and radically hostile to private gun ownership. He voted for reauthorizing the PATRIOT Act. The advisers he's gathered around himself all appear highly conventional, big-government types who either already live within the Beltway or can't wait to get there once he's elected. Not least among them is his reputed number-one consigliere, his wife Michelle.

Michelle offers significant clues to the man. It appears she takes being black, an accident of birth, very seriously. I consider this a major flaw, preferring to view people strictly as people, not as members of racial groups. My experience is that people who see themselves first as being black (or white or whatever) generally have a chip on their shoulder. A cum laude Princeton graduate, she wrote a thesis titled, "Princeton-Educated Blacks and the Black Community." While she was earning her J.D. from Harvard (1988), she demonstrated for the hiring of more minority professors. On her first date with OBAMA! they went to see a Spike Lee movie. She has a long history of involvement in NGOs and nonprofit, socially conscious organizations. She resigned as a salaried director of TreeHouse Foods, a big Wal-Mart supplier, immediately after OBAMA! made comments critical of Wal-Mart at an AFL-CIO

meeting; this bit of grandstanding impresses me as at once too self-righteous and disingenuous by half. My impression is that she's very comparable to Hillary and, although if less corrupt so far, much more ideological.

Is there a bright side to this grim litany? OBAMA! is vaguely and mildly in favor of decriminalizing marijuana. He's in favor of liberalizing laws that discriminate against gays. He believes in stem cell research — although that should be an academic point, unless you think the state should be even more involved in science. That's about it. It's a very thin soup that OBAMA! will serve up to civil libertarians, while those interested in economic freedom and technological progress are going to find they're on a starvation diet.

Could I be wrong about OBAMA! winning? I think the only way Republicans have a prayer (and I certainly am not rooting for them) is if they had dumped McCain. The party hacks know there's no way in hell that evangelical Christians, who may constitute a quarter of the United States, will countenance the man; that must be why Sarah Palin is in the VP slot. They also know that libertarians and classical liberals — I'll guess 10% of the population — wouldn't dream of voting for him, even if the dream were a psychotic nightmare. And those are two very important groups, when most elections are almost 50-50 and OBAMA! will definitely get all the black, green, and red votes. Not to mention the Blue states. Have you ever met an enthusiastic McCain supporter? I suspect not.

It's the ignominious end of the line for the WASP establishment. The real contenders in this year's election will then have turned out to be: a dykey female, a rich Jew, a black with a Muslim father, and a decrepit old white guy. That's after they eliminated a hillbilly preacher, a Mormon, and a cross-dresser. Well, in with the new and out with the old, and good riddance. Thomas Jefferson would be amused.

Could I be wrong about what the OBAMA! era will be like? Of course. But I continue to think the Roman Empire remains an excellent model for the United States, and the good news is that it not only survived but grew larger and wealthier even while it was politically and socially deteriorating, starting, I'd say, with the Gracchi Brothers in 133 B.C. Thereafter, civil wars under Sulla and Marius, Pompey and Caesar, a brief respite, then one disastrous emperor after another. Even then, terminal military and economic rot didn't set in until the mid-3rd century CE.

I don't think we're quite there yet, so life will go on. But I plan to monitor the situation on a widescreen TV in a pleasant location, instead of from my front window. — Doug Casey

The cure the same as the disease — I hate the fact that the media is calling the FannieMae/FreddieMac bailout a failure of free-market economics. Only a myopic bureaucrat would call Fannie and Freddie "free-market" anything. They were statist, pseudo-capitalist, and destined to fail precisely *because* they tried to regulate the mortgage markets.

— Jim Walsh

What can't government do? — Shortly before the 1992 election, a column by George Will asked Bill Clinton if there was even one thing that Clinton thought government should not try to do. Sixteen years later, Barack Obama answered this question in his acceptance speech.

"Government cannot solve all our problems," he admitted. But the only specific thing he suggested that government could not do was "turn off the television and make a child do her homework."

Among the things he thinks government can do, and which he promised his government would do, are "protect Social Security" without privatization, end dependence on Middle Eastern oil in ten years, reduce health insurance rates for people who already have insurance, give those who don't have it "the same kind of coverage Congress gives themselves," give every child "a world-class education" by recruiting "an army of new teachers" at higher salaries, and "take out Osama bin Laden" — all the while cutting taxes "for 95% of all working families."

Many of these things are frankly impossible. Others are unaffordable. How would Obama pay for them? "By closing corporate loopholes." That might save a little money, but nowhere near the \$15–20 trillion his promises will cost.

Oh yes, he is also going to "go through the federal budget line by line, eliminating programs that no longer work and making the ones we do need work better and cost less." The Clinton administration tried that with its reinventing government program. It didn't work.

John McCain says that Obama isn't ready to be a commander in chief. I suggest that a bigger problem is that Obama doesn't understand how government works and what its limitations are.

— Randal O'Toole

Make mine Malthus — The new cry is for "sustainable development." A strange policy. Does anyone favor unsustainable development? But the slogan doesn't mean what one might hope — the rational response of a free people to changing values and increased scarcity. That would lead its proponents to adopt the views of the late Julian Simon, who noted that as a substance becomes scarce (and thus more expensive), there are three normal responses: the Supply Side effect — find more of it; the Demand Side effect — use existing supplies more efficiently; and the Substitution effect — find other institutional and technological ways of meeting the need (fiber optic cables instead of copper wire, telecommuting rather than driving to work). These are the normal responses of the market, of capitalism; and, as Julian noted convincingly, those responses had made materials ever more available and affordable, even as demand and population increased dramatically.

The sustainable developers are thinking of something else, something that is never clear, except that its goal is "beyond the normal market response." Mostly their policies consist of rationing (the current push for "energy efficiency" at the expense of actual efficiency) and technology mandates to force adaptations that aren't yet feasible. Their policies would supplant the market with politics, consumer choices with planner fantasies. They fight against any effort to expand supply ("We can't drill our way out of this!" so we shouldn't do anything). Given the record to date, their obstructionist tactics have been all too successful. And, if they do succeed, they'll be right. We will face a future that will be the subsistence existence that the Reverend Thomas Malthus worried about, centuries ago.

— Fred Smith

Dangerous game — Here's an interesting story

from my days as a state prosecutor. Don't resent me because I wielded the full power of the state. You can trust that, as a libertarian, I wielded it sparingly. Besides, you'll like this one; I used my power for good.

One day during criminal arraignments — when cases first come to court to determine whether the defendant will plead guilty or not guilty — in my long list of juvenile misdemeanors and felonies I came across a defendant with a charge that stopped me in my tracks. This was no ordinary juvenile sexual assault, burglary or offensive touching. No, this delinquent was charged . . . by the game warden . . . with possessing and using the wrong buckshot.

Yes, there was an unreasonable and confusing statute on the books, and yes, it carried a fine. "But are you kidding me?" I thought, as I went to talk to the defendant and his father. As both appeared to be normal citizens, they looked distinctly out of place among the repeat customers I so often dealt with in court.

I asked this young defendant what he had been doing that brought upon him the wrath of the ever-vigilant game warden.

He had been hunting.

On public land?

No, private property.

Well, how did the game warden know what buckshot you were using? Did you shoot at him?

No. He came on the property and insisted on looking at my shells.

Well, do you know why he was there? Were you shooting at other people?

No. I don't know why he was there. I just thought he could go anywhere.

I was puzzled. There was no indication on the charge as to why the wrong buckshot was a concern. The game warden — though he thought it important enough to issue the charge — was not present for the arraignment. And the kid had been hunting on private property, hunting in season, and not hunting humans or game wardens.

Not aware of any armor-piercing or otherwise insidious buckshot, I used the small amount of discretion I had as agent of the state and nolle prossed (dropped) the charge against this child.

There is no doubt that certain state powers would have been perturbed if they had known my off-the-record parting advice to the family, should this happen again: 1. Do not offer to show the game warden your shells. 2. Inform him that, as you are hunting in season on private property, you are not *prima facie* breaking any law. 3. Contact your attorney if the game warden wishes to pursue the matter. The family left grateful and relieved.

I realize that my story is not "The Fountainhead," but I rolled back some irritating Mid-Atlantic state government intrusion — for one day at least. And my conscience is clear. The state for which I prosecuted has, to this day, never suffered a crime wave of juveniles terrorizing the countryside by using the wrong buckshot on private property during hunting season.

— Marlaine White

Parisian touch — In attacking Barack Obama, John McCain worked to paint him as a mindless celebrity. He

compared him to Paris Hilton, thus putting Hilton in a bad light, despite the fact that her parents had made maximum contributions to the McCain campaign.

If you haven't seen it, you must watch Hilton's satiric response, readily found by googling "Paris Hilton Responds to McCain Ad."

Its best aspect is not its humor, which is very good; neither is it the clear if surprising fact that Paris is by no means stupid. No, the best aspect is the underlying assumption, clearly accepted by her, by the people who helped make and distribute the clip, and by many of the millions who viewed it: McCain is an ass, probably Obama is not much better, and it's perfectly proper and acceptable to satirize those running for the office of president.

On that, Paris has my vote.

— Ross Levatter

The future is now — What is it that drives people to seek control? I often wonder if it isn't a bad case of obsessive compulsive disorder. Just as afflicted people will obsess about arranging spilled beans into nice even columns and rows across a table, some wish to arrange people the same way. I was thinking of this during China's opening Olympics ceremony.

The performance was amazing: 15,000 comrades of similar appearance moving with perfect synchronization, and in matching spandex outfits. I used to think that budget constrictions led science fiction films to dress future people in matching tights and sweater sets. I am beginning to think that perhaps those costume designers were more prescient than I realized. The OCD are inheriting the earth.

— Tim Slagle

Legacy economics — Recently, while I was away, my two eldest daughters borrowed my car to go see an early-evening movie at the local multiplex, which is the anchor tenant of our town's struggling shopping mall. While they were watching the movie, someone slashed all four of my car's tires. And the tires of several other cars in the lot.

When my daughters came out from the theater, two exasperated policemen were standing by. One of the other slashed-tire car owners had called 911; the cops were waiting around to take incident reports. The policemen were as helpful as they could be — but there wasn't much they could do. And they seemed cranky about having to show up at the mall again.

Yes, again. The tire slashings had been going on for a couple of months. According to the cops, the M.O. of the crooks was to single out cars that looked valuable and slash all four tires. Standard, harness-style tow trucks won't tow cars with four damaged tires; you need a flatbed tow truck for that work. Since there's only one flatbed tow truck in our town, a car with all four tires slashed usually has to stay where it is for a while.

You'd expect that a mall parking lot would be a reasonably safe place to leave a vandalized car overnight. But this mall, struggling to stay open, didn't provide security for its parking lots — a fact the crooks seemed to know. They would come back, well after midnight, and break into the cars they'd immobilized earlier. They'd take the usual stuff, stereos, speakers, personal property; but they also would cannibalize some parts.

Working the phones, my daughters arranged for my car

to be picked up first thing in the morning by the flat-bed tow truck. Fortunately, there was a seasonal fireworks stand in a far corner of the parking lot. It had a person on site 24/7. So, my daughters and several of the other car owners negotiated a deal with the guy watching the fireworks stand to keep an eye on their cars. They moved their wounded vehicles close by, like pioneers circling their wagons. This was enough to prevent any further damage.

The next morning, the flatbed tow truck came and took my car away. Six hundred dollars later, it had four new tires.

Back in town, I asked around about the tire slashings. Few people had heard about them. This was an unusual thing in our small town. Apparently — and understandably, I suppose — the management of the mall had been trying to keep the matter quiet. The mall is owned by an out-of-state real estate investment trust. Its strategy seems to be to drag out the mall's fate as long as possible. Aside from the movie theater, there are two other anchor tenants on different ends of the building; but they're fighting a losing battle against the big box stores and popular retail chains just 45 minutes away in Olympia.

The mall has slowly emptied out, except for the movie theater and the two big stores. The local managers have assumed the retail version of a bunker mentality; maintenance has grown slack and, clearly, they've cut back on security. Rather than deterring vandals, they count on the town police to show up after the fact. Hence, the cops' crankiness about dealing with the slashed tires.

But the multiplex theater still does decent business. Why doesn't it provide security?

Again, the answer seems tied to legacy business decisions. When the mall was first being planned, its developers were desperate to have a multi-screen movie theater in the place; but they were having trouble attracting one. So, they offered subsidized rent — rumored to be \$1 a year — and got a lease signed.

Now, although it draws reasonable crowds, the theater's corporate owners consider it a marginal operation. One local mandarin told me, "If they upped the rent to \$2 a year, they'd be gone." No budget for overnight security there.

So, my family doesn't go to evening movies at the mall any more. Locked into their legacy leases and bunker mentality, its managers watch life fade away from their building.

While I'm no fan of the corporate ethics that many big box chains force on suppliers and others, those chains do seem to be efficient. Our hapless local mall exudes the kind of inefficiency that must have made Sam Walton eager to get to work every morning.

— Jim Walsh

Taking initiative — "How many times must we relearn the lessons of Prohibition?" That's the question asked by the 130-odd college presidents and chancellors behind the Amethyst Initiative, an effort aimed towards "rethinking" our nation's 21-and-over age limit for the purchase of alcohol.

Until 1984 (natch), it had been left to individual states to set their drinking age, at which point the federal government behind spokesmarm Liddy Dole ordered them to get in line or else lose their yearly allowance. Since then (quoting from the Initiative's statement), "A culture of dangerous, clandestine 'binge-drinking' — often conducted off-campus — has

developed. Alcohol education that mandates abstinence as the only legal option has not resulted in significant constructive behavioral change among our students." Wipe away the academese, and what these 130 or so administrators are saying is that the 21-plus drinking age encourages college kids to get ripped to the tits.

It's a little sad that the Amethyst Initiative has to be considered bold or brave, but as it's about 24 years past time for someone in an official capacity to stand up and say that this is not working, and as those who must deal daily with 18, 19, and 20-year-old problem drinkers are probably the best placed and best qualified to say it, bold and brave it is. What they are up against is, as they correctly diagnose, a resurgent prohibitionist movement, led by the anti-alcohol fanatics who have taken over Mothers Against Drunk Driving. Our new Carrie Nations are on the record as opposing sub-21 drinking even in the home, under the direct supervision of parents: no glass of wine with Thanksgiving dinner, no can of beer while watching the game.

Surely alcoholic appreciation in the home is a better educational model than turning teetotalers loose at a welcome-to-campus kegger? One would think, but for now the Initiative is simply calling for "an informed and dispassionate public debate" on the issue. M.A.D.D., of course, finds this "deeply disappointing," and recommended that parents refuse to send their kids to any of the schools on the list.

Meanwhile it's the first week of school and already I'm stepping around the broken brown glass littering the sidewalk between parking lot and school hall. Trashcans hold cashed kegs waiting for pickup and refill; fuzz-faced bros and apple-cheeked girls slump between classes (if they get up at all), learning about hangovers the hard way. And, per M.A.D.D., we can't even debate the methods we're using? That places the drinking age in the category of "received truth"; kudos to the Amethyst signatories for seeing past the preachery and putting their reputations on the line.

— Andrew Ferguson

Going negative — Nowadays pundits urge candidates to stop negative advertising — casting aspersions on each others' characters — and instead concentrate on "the issues." This is a ridiculous expectation.

Realistically, candidates try to outdo one another with attractive promises. They pay little attention to the costs of keeping them, as in the costs represented by other public and personal goods that would necessarily be sacrificed, and in the long-run fiscal consequences. Promises are not analysis. Nowadays they cover the price of gasoline, personal and national economic conditions, taxes, disengagement from Iraq, supposed or genuine issues of energy and global warming, emotional distractions such as abortion and gay marriage, and unspecified "change." Discussion of some issues necessarily crowds out discussion of others.

"It's the economy, stupid." But the current stage of any business cycle does not depend on what party controls the White House or Congress. Over the long run, true enough, the accretion of policies, adopted piecemeal and haphazardly, does improve or worsen prospects for prosperity and economic growth; but no single cohort of politicians deserves special credit or blame.

Candidates especially avoid talking substance on such

tough issues as the long-run impossibility of servicing the avowed national debt and also keeping Social Security and Medicare commitments, without crushing tax increases. The likeliest eventual outcome is partial repudiation disguised by inflation. This fiscal recklessness traces to the short time horizons and personal irresponsibility of politicians, all of which Public Choice theory can explain and none of which politicians will examine.

A political campaign just is not a format for serious discussion of deep issues. Candidates do not have the time and money required, and probably not the factual and analytical understanding. The average voter would not pay attention anyway. A lesson lies in the failed 1948 reelection campaign of Sen. Joseph Ball, who reputedly went around Minnesota delivering gloomy lectures on political economy. The best to be hoped for is that ongoing research and discussion among academics and thoughtful journalists might eventually inform broad philosophies such as classical liberalism, left-liberalism, and conservatism. Voters might eventually come to make choices based on candidates' broad economic and political philosophies.

Meanwhile, negative campaigning, even attacks on opponents' personal characters, remains legitimate. Character matters more than conjectured stances on specific and often unexpected issues. To character and to human-interest vignettes, voters will pay attention, relatively. Clues to a candidate's character appear in his or her personal as well as public behavior, truthfulness or prevarication, consistency or chameleonism, and current and past associates. Sound negative advertising must be honest, of course — neither misrepresenting the opponent's behavior and statements nor citing them out of context. Dishonest advertising, quickly identified, is a black mark on the character of a candidate who uses it or tolerates its use by campaign assistants.

— Leland B. Yeager

Generation gap — I'm tired of two kinds of Gloomy Gusses: first, those who claim that the economic sky is falling; second, those who refuse to recognize the material abundance that's produced by the cornucopia of America.

No, man can't live on a loaf of sourdough alone. You need a couple slices of roast beef, some turkey, some salami, mustard, pickle, slaw, and tomato. Now, that's a sandwich. With a little work, a little luck, we can all sit down at the American kitchen table and enjoy.

Take my grandparents. No, not like Henny Youngman. I mean really. Consider my grandparents. They lived in two dusty rooms above their Main Street store. They did not own a car; neither had a driver's license and they had no extra money for private transportation. The bus would do.

They didn't pay a lot of attention to the young boy who was me in the late 1930s. They were my grandparents. But it was a half century ago, when grandparents were too busy making a living to dote on kids.

Their two attic rooms were an inauspicious beginning in a new land, but it certainly beat a wood-planked frame dwelling with an al fresco bathroom where the north wind from the Baltic was the only visitor, besides murderous Cossacks.

In the background were the grandparents. Literally, in the background. They were not at our sides with constant comfort. They didn't service our childish whims, like today's

grandparents. Such behavior wouldn't be canonized in the grandparents' instructional manual for another three decades.

Hugging and kissing? Go to the movies where professionals were paid to do it. My grandmother's conversation was loaded with:

1. "He looks pale. Have a piece of bread and butter."
2. "Did he have a BM this morning?"
3. "Teddy, have a nice chicken back — it's the best piece, so full of flavor, besides the neck."
4. And remarkably, "Why don't the kids visit us more often?" Why would we visit, if there was only inquisition?

They were short on gifts and expressions of love. That tide in those days flowed from us to them. Our parents, with whispered guidance, instructed *us* to pamper *them*.

"Get your grandmother a glass of water."

"Get up so Pop can sit in the armchair. He's been on his feet all day, you know."

It was their world, not ours. And their motto was *survive*. They needed the armchair and a cool glass of water because they worked 12-hour days — six days a week. Who had time for hugs and kisses for grandkids? Hugs and kisses were for customers. The American Promise of the '30s was opportunity, not security.

Sunday — a day of Christian rest edicted by Memphis blue laws — they sipped hot tea at the kitchen table and congratulated themselves on paying the bills for one more week. They did not spend the day meditating on a list of toys for their grandson.

Joe and Lizzie, my grandparents, lived in three drafty rooms, essentially an attic above their downtown store. But the next generation, my parents, had a neat, brick, three-bedroom home in Midtown.

My generation came along and outdid its parents by two baths, two bedrooms, and a tree-shaded lot in the suburbs. Then my kids, with more opportunity and usually fewer kids than their grandparents or me, bought a palatial house that the richest landowner in Vilna couldn't imagine. The monthly mortgage payment equals my grandparents' annual income. That's the way the wind is blowing from generation to generation. Yes, there are exceptions, but the opportunity is there to correct them.

— Ted Roberts

Title nined — A recent article in The New York Times (July 15) provides a lot to think about. It is interesting on several levels — the political, the psychological, the economic, and the moral. The article, "A New Frontier for Title IX: Science," by John Tierney, raises the touchy issue of using the power of the federal government to enforce equality of results in science.

Specifically, Tierney notes that many members of the present, very leftist Congress, spurred on by various feminist organizations, are pushing the federal government to use the tool of Title IX, the federal law banning gender discrimination in education, to make the number of women in math, engineering, and physical science equal to the number of men. That is — to speak bluntly, which Tierney refuses to do — the push is on to use gender quotas, set-asides, and preferences to ensure numerical parity between the sexes in these fields.

Tierney notes that women have overcome whatever hand-

icaps and impediments were set by patriarchal society to the point where they now constitute half of all medical students and the majority of Ph.D.s in the life sciences and social sciences, virtually dominating such professions as biology and psychology. He doesn't mention this, but women now predominate as undergraduates generally, at about 56% of total enrollment. Yet men still receive the bulk of the doctorates in math, engineering, and the physical sciences.

Naturally, victimologists have argued that this statistical disparity in the physical sciences is conclusive evidence that women are being massively discriminated against. But Tierney cites a number of psychologists whose studies indicate another, more plausible explanation: a simple difference in interests. Statistically — we're only talking statistically here, not individually — these studies indicate that women tend to be more interested in subjects involving living things (including human beings) and less interested in subjects involving machines and other inanimate things. So, he suggests implicitly, perhaps the government should not use the Title IX axe to chop away at the physical sciences.

Now, the fact that the Times published this timorous piece is in itself interesting. The Times is the Pravda of the modern liberal power elite. It crafts, elaborates, and promulgates the party line, which is then absorbed by left-liberal policy makers of various sorts. That this politically correct rag, which has been such a major player in creating and loosing the elaborate and powerful affirmative-action machine that has been such a wickedly intrusive force in American higher education, is now allowing a note of questioning, albeit an extremely timid and politically correct one, is fascinating in its own right, and calls out for explanation. Why is this propaganda organ now piping a note of feeble dissent against an obvious extension of the very policies it itself is so responsible for spreading?

I can hazard a guess. On the sociological side, you have a conflict at the center of leftist ideology that goes back at least to the French revolution. On the one hand, leftists are devoted to equality (of result, not just of opportunity). Hence their insistent push for redistributing wealth through "progressive" taxation, not to mention outright theft and in some cases butchery. But the Left also has traditionally set great store on identifying itself with Science, conceived of as a secular force of reason, perfect for eliminating the "superstitions" of tradition and religion. This goes back at least to Auguste Comte's positivism. The Marxists were typical in this regard, viewing themselves as "scientific socialists," wielding an ideology designed to remake society along more rational lines.

On the economic side, left-liberals such as the denizens of the Times are not out to destroy the economy. In this regard, they aren't like (say) ultra-Left anarchists, Earth-worshipping environmentalists, or drug-addled Yuppies still living in the 1960s. And they are aware that an affirmative-action war on physical science and engineering would have disastrous economic effects.

Let's face it. Title IX was very effective at killing off a lot of male sports programs. But however unfortunate it has been for male athletes deprived of aid in pursuing their chosen sport, it was and is of little economic impact. Most athletes in college don't enter pro sports, and pro sports are in any case merely a small part of the total entertainment industry, and that industry as a whole is not a large part of the economy.

But start denying a large part of the highest-achieving engineering, math, and physical scientific talent a chance at higher education, and the shock to society will be severe. Our economy is very high-tech, computerized, and science-based.

However, Tierney is strangely quiet about two other issues that one would expect he would address in his daring little intellectual voyage. First, his entire emphasis is on whether there is a difference in women's and men's interests in physical science. But also interesting is whether there is any statistical gender difference in cognitive traits and abilities. There is a fairly robust literature suggesting that indeed there is. (For a recent survey, see for example Doreen Kimura's "Sex and Cognition"). If indeed there are differences in cognitive abilities in mathematical ability, say, or spatial reasoning, then the case for quotas and the other methods of affirmative action warfare to ensure gender equality in the physical sciences may simply collapse.

As to why Tierney doesn't mention this issue, I think it is obvious: fear. When Lawrence Summers, good liberal boy that he is, and briefly president of Harvard, had the bad form to suggest that perhaps the underrepresentation of women in the physical sciences was possibly due to differences in relevant abilities, well, he came to grief. For that heresy he was castrated by the faculty and forced to resign.

The second issue Tierney avoids is the obvious one about the morality of affirmative action schemes. Given the figures he cites, the moral question doesn't just beg to be asked; it positively grovels. He notes that women are now 60% of biology majors and 70% of Ph.D.s in psychology. Well, if the fact that men earn 80% of all Ph.D.s in physics necessarily means that the Title IX flamethrower must be used to lower that perfidious percentage to 50%, why doesn't the fact that women earn 70% of Ph.D.'s in psychology require that it now be used to lower that percentage to 50%? Doesn't the consistency (or, in philosopher's jargon, universalizability) of moral principles demand as much?

The answer is clear. Racial or gender preferences are inherently immoral, but Title IX was crafted to be a weapon in a political rather than an ethical struggle. And it is inevitable that it will next be wielded against the physical sciences. But Tierney doesn't explore this, because he is in the snare of political correctness. That is, he accepts the moral legitimacy of such preferences, as a good NYT modern liberal must, no matter how much he may squirm about their consequences.

Such moral obtuseness is seldom met in ordinary life — just in journalism.

— Gary Jason

Making sausage — McCain and Obama both advocate getting money out of politics! A wonderful world, they argue, would result if only the monied interests were denied any role in determining the policies that govern our lives. And there is indeed much corruption in Washington and the state capitals of America.

But politics is about interest groups, sub-units of the citizenry who have a special interest in and often special knowledge about specific policy questions. The interplay of economic groups (often business people but also labor and state or city governments) and ideological groups (environmental and human rights and, yes, an occasional free-market alliance also) determines the policies that govern our lives.

Imagine if only the ideological groups were allowed to influence this process. I don't trust business just because it is business, but it is somewhat constrained by market forces. Statists — especially the coercive utopians that dominate statist movements today — face far fewer disciplines. Can one imagine a better economic future if the Greens dominate the process?

Ideological groups have done far more damage to humanity than have even the most rapacious businesses. As far as I can tell, Hitler and Stalin weren't motivated by the profit motive.

— Fred Smith

Chicago insurgency — Across the wires came the news that more Americans were killed in Chicago over the last summer than in Iraq. In fact the score was almost double: 125 to 65. It is also curious that Illinois is one of only two states left in the Union where concealed carry is still prohibited. Chicago is proudly defying the recent Supreme Court decision which threw out a similar handgun ban in D.C.

Chicago claims that the Supreme Court decision does not apply to Chicago. Much like the citizens of Iraq do not have rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution, Chicago residents are under the exclusive jurisdiction of the city council.

— Tim Slagle

Muckrakers — When I was a kid, in my city in India there was no flush-toilet system. The toilets were basically holes, with platforms at the bottom, which could be accessed from the toilet-alleys. There was no running water. Human scavengers would come mid-morning to scoop off what was collected. When they arrived, they always made noise to avoid mutually embarrassing situations. They then carried their collection on their heads, in pots, muck dripping down their bodies.

I asked my grandmother if this was not a smelly job. She agreed, but insisted that it was a job that had to be done and that there was no reason to look down at what the scavengers did. However, we kept a very safe distance from them, as I still would, for bathing facilities at their homes — if where they live could be called homes — simply do not exist.

There are about 340,000 scavengers working in Indian villages and towns. This is perhaps a low estimate because the majority of Indians do not have access to even the above mentioned toilet system. They still go out in the open to relieve themselves. Millions more work as ragpickers and whatnot.

In early July 2008, a group of Indian scavengers attended a conference in New York to celebrate the UN's International Year of Sanitation. They participated in a catwalk parade along with Indian top models. The UN paid for this.

Is this what the UN should be doing? With all due respect, could a scavenger really understand the proceedings of a conference, particularly one conducted in an alien language in an alien country?

An Indian scavenger earns \$30 a month, perhaps less. Primary school mathematics would show that the UN spent on each scavenger an amount comparable to what he would earn over a lifetime. Was this by any measure a good use of the money? But what can you expect from the UN, the results of whose work are not assessed by any cost-benefit analysis? Indeed, was there any kind of benefit at all, or was there only harm? If the UN invited the scavengers to the plush corridors

of New York to sensitize them about how “demeaning” their work is, and to spread such a message through them to the other scavengers in India, it did a huge disservice.

The UN’s work has all the unintended consequences that come when outsiders try to impose their value judgments on others. The scavengers will go back to India thinking of modeling as a high-class job. (This is an idea that has become ingrained in mainstream Indian culture over the last couple of decades, although a discussion on this topic is for another day.) They will have been told, again and again, that scavenging is demeaning. But who am I, or the UN, either, to decide which work is demeaning and which is not?

In fact, for India to move one step up, it must increase scavenging, as people change from defecating in the open to defecating in holes. And what will happen to the UN scavengers and those others who eventually receive the messages emanating from the UN conference? After all, these uneducated scavengers can do pretty much nothing else. There will be only one consequence: discontent, and hatred for those they serve in India.

A sustainable solution to most problems, if they really are problems, belongs to the locals, not to the dreamy people in the UN. By raising people’s expectations in the developing world, which does not have the capacity to sustain such expectations, and by inculcating a culture of entitlements and positive rights, the UN and foreign NGOs only create an environment of violence and chaos.

But, there is a problem with scavenging, and there are indeed some demeaning jobs. Given today’s level of technology, there is no reason for scavenging to continue. The real problem is that more than 60 years after independence, India has grossly failed to provide basic sanitary and water facilities. Making provision for such facilities is not financially impossible, but Indian public servants are so corrupt and so utterly cheap that they steal every single penny that can lay their hands on. I have never once met an honest public servant in India.

Contrary to what my grandmother believed, there is one kind of profession that is indeed demeaning, that of irresponsible living, of wasting other people’s money. And that is the profession of people working in the UN programs as well as the corrupt people in the Indian government. Perhaps they should participate in a conference organized by the scavengers on the dignity and morality of productive work.

— Jayant Bhandari

Emptiness and guilt — The issue of Barack Obama’s early-career experience as a “community organizer” has come up as a minor issue in this election cycle. Too bad it hasn’t been a major one. His opponents ridicule the politically-correct vacuousness of the resume line. His defenders (including several of the humorless halfwits who write for the Huffington Post and the pretty but addled NBC news personality Norah O’Donnell) insist that blue-collar voters will relate to the senator’s early work.

Yeah. The same way that Micronesians related to Margaret Mead.

Obama’s defenders don’t seem to understand the fundamentally condescending nature of so-called “community organizers.” Drawn from the ranks of unemployed liberal arts

majors from elite colleges, these do-gooders go to work for self-styled social justice organizations run by lefty anachronisms like the notorious Chicago-based mau-mau artist Saul Alinsky. To call these people statist doesn’t do justice to their politics — they’re often unrepentant communists.

Their skill is in collecting money from universities, utopian charitable foundations, and the occasional state agency. This is where the term “community organization” really comes into play. Its earnest emptiness is the perfect jargon to fill in the blank spaces in a grant proposal. It can mean anything from helping laid-off workers apply for unemployment benefits to getting out the vote on election day.

As I noted last fall in my review of Obama’s book “The Audacity of Hope,” the senator worked as a community organizer in both New York and Chicago. The high point of his work seems to have been to convince the state of Illinois to open a welfare office in a poor neighborhood on Chicago’s South Side.

While the downtrodden locals may have been grateful for Obama’s help, there’s little chance that they related to the Columbia and Harvard grad. Regardless of the color of his skin, it’s more likely that he remained as alien to them as any of the other posh visitors searching for a simulacrum of . . . authenticity . . . in the Church of Alinsky.

Who believes that this condescension creates genuine personal or social connections with the poor? People guilty about their own wealth. People who give money to the utopian foundations that subsidize community organizations. The overpaid screenwriters and TV actors who scrounge for intellectual legitimacy on Arianna Huffington’s website and millionaire pundits feeding on the carcass of legacy media.

Ayn Rand really had a point when she wrote that altruism is a racket.

— Jim Walsh

Enough already — In case you’re convinced by Olympic furor that sports are more important than life, you will appreciate the following. It’s a report about the reaction in the country of Georgia to that nation’s initial victory in South Ossetia (hey! are you still awake?):

“David Womble, National director of WorldVision, a Christian humanitarian NGO with operations in the country,” quoth Time magazine’s online news, dated August 9, “said, thousands and thousands of cars filled the streets of the capital, honking their horns and with their passengers waving Georgian flags. Says Womble, ‘It was as if Georgia had won the World Cup and was celebrating.’”

Imagine! They were treating an apparent military victory as if they were watching a bunch of guys in shorts getting more points for kicking a rubber ball than another bunch of guys in shorts! That certainly proves their patriotic enthusiasm. What next? Will they show more spirit than the contestants on cooking shows?

Look. I don’t want to bring back World War II, but I’m sick of the tyranny of Sport. Something has clearly gone out of life, if people around the world are now expected to care more about ball games than they do about war, and commentators are surprised when they don’t.

— Stephen Cox

Two cheers for Heller — The recent landmark Supreme Court ruling in *District of Columbia v. Heller* is cause for most libertarians to celebrate. Although the case sets a

relatively limited precedent, and D.C. officials are reticent about letting the decision actually take practical effect, the ruling itself sent a clear judicial message that the 2nd Amendment entails an individual right to possess firearms. I've particularly enjoyed watching the case progress, not the least because it heavily involved a couple of people I met more than a decade ago during my internship with the Cato Institute in Washington.

Some people, however, make it their mission to highlight the cloud that comes with every silver lining. Regarding *Heller*, I've seen the argument crop up a few places online that, far from being a (small) victory for freedom, the ruling is one more nail in the coffin of federalism. This has long been a contentious issue among libertarians of various stripes — whether or not the 14th amendment and the subsequent “incorporation doctrine” has, on net, advanced freedom.

I've always found it easy to sympathize with both sides of this argument. On one hand, when a city or state violates somebody's fundamental rights, it's gratifying to be able to appeal to a higher authority. On the other hand, there's no reason we should trust a powerful central government to protect freedom from violation by lesser jurisdictions, more than we might expect it to violate those freedoms itself. And as a central authority becomes stronger, subordinate units are less likely to act as effective checks on abuses.

A reflection is hardly enough space to settle this issue definitively — and I don't claim any special ability to sort out the complicated legal theory and counterfactuals involved. Those of you who save your back issues of *Liberty* would be well served in pulling out the issues from 1999 and 2000 that contain a back-and-forth set of essays about the 14th Amendment by Cato's Gene Healy and Roger Pilon. Regardless of which side you take, Richard Nixon's compliment to P.J. O'Rourke applies just as well to both these guys: “Whether you agree with him or not . . . he writes a helluva piece.”

As much as I love to imagine how history could have played out differently, given a slightly changed set of circumstances, the fact remains that the 14th amendment is now in effect — and it won't be repealed any time soon. The federal government is actually exercising an overarching level of oversight. That being the case, I'll celebrate individual instances in which genuine violations of liberty by state governments are scaled back by federal court decisions. If a few more people in D.C. get to protect themselves with firearms because of *Heller*, it's a victory — no matter how much we might have preferred a long counterfactual string of alternative precedents.

Considered in the wider history of constitutional jurisprudence, this ruling reminds me of a single-panel “Bizarro” cartoon, by Dan Piraro, that I first encountered about 20 years ago in a collection of the strip. In it, we see a guy hiking away from the scene of his smoking, broken-down car. He suddenly finds, at the side of the road, a pair of roller skates that fit him. The caption: “Suddenly it was all very clear. Life would be a series of great disappointments followed by minor windfalls.”

So it goes. If the Anti-Federalists had prevailed 221 years ago (defending, ironically, the concept that we today call federalism), thereby avoiding the increasingly expansive readings of the Constitution we've seen ever since, people living within the United States may well have managed to secure

more overall freedom than we actually have today. But they didn't, and we're long removed from that particular counterfactual. So, in my book, *District of Columbia v. Heller* definitely counts as a windfall.

— Eric D. Dixon

Failed state — Gen. David Petraeus, who has just left Iraq to take over as head of Central Command, deserves credit for the current state of affairs there. Violence is way, way down from its 2006–07 high. The Iraqi government and armed forces are functioning in a fairly cohesive manner. The Iraqi people are enjoying a merciful respite from the psychological toll of witnessing daily scenes of mayhem in their streets and neighborhoods.

There is absolutely no doubt that the counterinsurgency tactics introduced by Petraeus were an important factor in these improvements. Putting troops among the people, instead of isolating them on large firebases, was critical for success against al Qaeda and the various militias, both Sunni and Shiite, which had brought Iraq to the verge of collapse.

Nevertheless, we should not confuse tactical success with strategic victory. Iraq remains a ravaged country with a state apparatus that is more corrupt than competent. One hundred thousand Sunni gunmen, the so-called Sons of Iraq, have not been integrated into Iraqi society. The United States pays them \$25 million a month to keep quiet. There is good reason to believe that the Shiite-dominated government will never allow them to become a power in the army or the state. There is equally good reason to believe that the Sons of Iraq will not meekly accept such an outcome.

Kurdistan is a de facto independent country. It will never allow itself to be ruled from Baghdad again. It will fight for Kirkuk and the oilfields surrounding it. Violence broke out among Kurds, Arabs, and Turkmen in Kirkuk over the summer, and there is undoubtedly more to come.

The Shiite militias no longer present the military threat they once did, and they have lost support among the civilian population, but they still exist and are waiting in the background. There is reason to believe they will return to their violent ways. (I should mention that I never imagined Shiite or Sunni would fight their co-sectarians while the occupiers remained on Iraqi soil. I was wrong. The extremists of both sects have shown themselves not only vicious and cruel, but remarkably stupid as well.)

Tactical success does not necessarily lead to strategic victory. If five years from now Iraq is in chaos, or in the grip of an anti-American regime, what will the surge have achieved? Additional loss of American life, additional treasure thrown away — in short, less than nothing.

— Jon Harrison

Kidneys for sale — As readers of this journal are doubtless aware, I set considerable store in observation. Plain, simple observation. The fool learns from his experience, as the old saw has it; and the wise man learns from the experience of others.

To put this in another way, one must respect the law of unintended consequences. Logic may lead to a certain policy recommendation, but if no one has ever enacted that program, when you enact it, results can happen that you never dreamed of, much less wished for.

Descending now to the particular, I have argued (*Liberty*, October 2007) for a free (though suitably regulated) market

in human organs. Now, it might be asked if other countries are already doing this. The answer is, yes, at least one — Iran. This anomaly is explored by Dr. Benjamin E. Hippen in a paper available from the wonderful Cato Institute (Policy Analysis, March 20, 2008, downloadable from the Cato Institute website).

Hippen notes that kidney transplantation policy in America is by any reasonable reckoning a flop, and a costly one at that. The National Organ Transplant Act of 1984 (the product of the perfervidly moralistic imagination of the Reverend Al Gore) prohibits sales of organs. The result is a disaster. As of 2005, over 340,000 Americans with advanced kidney disease require dialysis. That will swell to between 400,000 and 520,000 by 2010, and between 525,000 and 700,000 by 2020, as the Baby Boomers approach the ultimate trip. 73,000 Americans are on the waiting list for kidney transplants, and by 2010 the number will hit 100,000. Over the past nine years alone, 30,000 Americans have died waiting for a kidney. No surprise, really: the five-year survival rate for those who receive kidney transplants is more than double that for those on dialysis.

By contrast, Iran legalized the sale of kidneys in 1988, after it saw its own waiting list getting large. By 1999, the waiting list was empty, and there has been no waiting list since then.

Iran's system, Hippen notes, is a tightly regulated market. Potential kidney recipients are screened by teams of doctors for suitability. They are advised to try to find family members willing to donate. Failing that, they must wait up to six months for a deceased donor. Only if no deceased donor becomes available is a kidney vendor made available.

The team of screeners works purely pro bono. They receive no money from the transaction. Nor do they advertise or otherwise seek potential vendors — who must voluntarily contact a coordinating group called the Dialysis and Transplant Patients Association (DAPTA). They are vetted by the team for suitability, mental and physical. If approved, the vendor gets about \$1,200 from the Iranian government, plus limited health insurance, and receives anywhere from \$2,300 to \$4,500 from the recipient directly or (if the recipient is poor) from a charity.

Only Iranian citizens are allowed to participate in the system, as opposed to visitors from impoverished third-world countries.

While not perfect, the Iranian system has accomplished a good deal. Not only has it eliminated the waiting list of recipients; it has also ended the black market in organ sales, as well as the fraud and coercion that might occur if you had "freelance brokers" not just locating vendors but also evaluating them and informing them of the risks involved.

Hippen does not claim that Iran's system is flawless. It appears there may be a slightly lower quality of organs from vendors than from unpaid donors, because the vendors are typically very poor, and their organs may therefore be more apt to be diseased. Also, there isn't consistent long term follow-up of the vendors after organ removal, so there may be a higher rate of problems for them (such as higher kidney or other disease rates).

Finally, there is the question of whether allowing organ vendors to be paid discourages people from giving organs away for free. Hippen replies that there is no clear evidence for this having occurred, and any loss of kidneys from poten-

tial donors is apparently made up for by vendors. Remember, Iran has completely eliminated a patient waiting list.

When compensation is allowed for kidneys, Hippen notes, it is likely that some potential altruistic donors will switch to becoming vendors — after all, even a family member may prefer being compensated for allowing a kidney to be removed than doing it for free. But in either case an organ becomes available, so the fact that there may be fewer donated organs doesn't mean that there are fewer organs available.

Hippen says that the United States would do well to adopt a similar market in kidney sales, to supplement the living-related-donor and deceased-donor programs. He suggests that such a system include some features that the Iranian system lacks. The long-term health of vendors should be included as part of the responsibility of the vending system, which would create a pricing incentive for brokers to choose the fittest vendors available. Some neutral party should screen potential vendors and inform them of the true risks involved. And here Hippen makes a good point: there is no compelling evidence that poor folk selling kidneys in Iran are in any way coerced, but they can be defrauded, if the risks are not fully revealed to them. Hippen also suggests that information regarding organ sales should be collected in a database accessible to all potential donors, vendors, and recipients.

I would add two more suggestions. First, obviously, all vendor contracts should be voidable at any time (with return of any compensation paid). That is, there should be an indefinite "cooling off period." If I agree to sell you my kidney for \$20,000, and on the day of the operation I change my mind, I return your money and the deal is off.

Second, and more importantly, we ought to put the focus on allowing insurance companies, which make their profit from the law of large numbers, to pay adults now for the right to harvest body parts upon death. Count up the hundreds of thousands of Americans who die from accidents, workplace injuries, and natural causes. If most of them of them had signed organ insurance policies, taking lump-sum checks in exchange for the right to harvest their organs after their deaths, you would have little if any need of brokers seeking living vendors.

— Gary Jason

Black-market Mallomars — According to Perth Now, there is a problem with students in Western Australia smuggling contraband into the schools and selling it to other students. No, it isn't grass or mushrooms, or any of the assorted pharmaceuticals that were available when I was a child in the public schools. It's junk food.

Because of a concern about obesity, a school district south of Perth banned junk food from their cafeteria. Kids responded by bringing junk food from home, and in some cases selling it to other kids. According to the article, teachers were quite frustrated that they were powerless to prevent kids from carrying in their own food.

And so another chapter in the world history of the nanny statism begins. Now that smoking bans are almost universal throughout the world, the focus shifts to eating habits.

— Tim Slagle

Turbine envy — A recent New York Times story noted

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The Intelligent Person's Guide to Presidential Politics

*Choosing
among those
who seek the
presidency is
not necessarily
an easy task for
the intelligent
libertarian.
Liberty's editors
do their best
to help.*

Not Just for Libertarians

by J. Bradley Jansen

In the August 2002 issue of *Liberty* I extolled the virtues of then-U.S. Representative Bob Barr, who was up for reelection in the Republican Party primary in his home district in Georgia. In a recent article in the *American Spectator*, I updated my libertarian defense of Barr. I won't repeat myself here. I will say that Barr is the best qualified candidate in the current election and is especially well suited to deal with the challenges the country faces today. Serious challenges require serious responses and real leadership. Barr has the right mix of experience and commitment to lead the country.

Our policies of foreign interventionism have created an environment ripe for terrorist recruitment against us. The tragic events of September 11, 2001, brought that lesson home. But already in spring 2000, back in the period of our naivete about the threats to our country from international crime, terrorism, and weapons of mass destruction, Barr was there testifying before the House Intelligence Committee. Besides explaining the need to update our laws so as to reflect changing technologies and threats, the former Central Intelligence Agency analyst offered leadership and clear guidance about protecting our liberties as well as our lives. His words are worth quoting at length:

While Americans remain solidly in support of a strong foreign intelligence gathering capability, they are not willing to do so at the expense of their domestic civil liberties. Any blurring of the heretofore bright line between gathering of true, foreign intelligence, and surreptitious gathering of evidence of criminal wrongdoing by our citizens, must be brought into sharp focus, and eliminated. Failure to take the steps to do so will erode the public confidence in our intelligence agencies that is a hallmark of their success.

Failure to take steps to do so is a serious breach of our public duty to ensure the Bill of Rights is respected even as our nation defends itself against foreign adversaries and enemies.

The importance of effective foreign intelligence gathering, and of constitutional domestic law enforcement — both of which must respect U.S. citizens' right to privacy — demands more than stock answers and boilerplate explanations. What is required is a thorough and sifting examination of authorities, jurisdiction, actions, and remedies. This is especially true, given that an entire generation has come and gone since the last time such important steps were taken.

Still further back, in 1998, Barr alone stood with Ron Paul in explaining to their fellow House members why a proposed national ID system would violate our privacy and civil liberties without making us safer. Imagine how much better off we would have been had a Barr Administration responded to the tragedies of September 11.

Bob Barr has a long record working with broad coalitions to make policy. Although a drug warrior in Congress, he often worked with drug war opponents in coalitions to protect privacy and other civil liberties. There is no other choice for those who value our rights and liberties — and our desire to work together to achieve legitimate goals.

Barr, of course, is the candidate most likely to follow a noninterventionist foreign policy and keep America out of unnecessary wars. He not only voted to stop Clinton's military strikes in Yugoslavia but joined a few other congressmen in suing the president for peace. The man who led the impeachment against President Clinton also led the charge against the lawlessness of the Bush Administration.

One of the main functions of the federal government is to protect our national security, but a Barr presidency will keep us safe and free. Barr understands that the two go together. He rejects the false dichotomy that makes people think we need to choose between them.

Turning to economic policies: Barr's background is that of a fiscal conservative. He came to Congress as one of the Republican revolutionaries voting to get rid of whole cabinet

The man who led the impeachment against President Clinton also led the charge against the lawlessness of the Bush administration.

departments — a position not articulated again in national politics until Ron Paul's run in the Republican presidential debates. The growth in government spending under President Bush denies Republicans running on his record any right to be rewarded. The Bush record on fiscal issues is certainly not one that deserves to be renewed.

We need a change, not warmed-over New Deal redistributionist policies. Unfortunately, however, the two major parties offer only small variations of more of the same. One of President Clinton's greatest achievements was the far-reach-

ing welfare reforms that gave states more power to try new policies. Escaping the one-size-fits-all approaches from major party candidates continues to be crucial.

Regarding social policies, Barr's positions have evolved. Many Americans share his concern about drug abuse, for example; but more than anyone else in the libertarian camp, Barr has the authority and insight to explain why using the heavy hand of the federal government is not the best approach. His preference for devolving changes to the state and local, or nongovernmental, level best illustrates the way to avoid what F.A. Hayek called the "fatal conceit," the idea that a few planners at the top think they know more than all of the rest of us combined.

Relying less on the centralized solutions of the past and respecting the spontaneous order of modern life offers the best way of addressing the varied problems we face. Only by allowing maximum flexibility and openness can we realize in public policy the potential of new solutions, just as the internet has increased accountability and transparency in our public life.

In the real world, issues are often not as easy as ideological platitudes suggest. Barr retains his paramount concern for protecting this country, and our rights, against real threats. While he wants to end government policies that fail to produce results (including the drug war), he recognizes the interrelationships of the drug trade, which finances terrorists, with other issues. This explains his positions on the Andean conflicts. Insight and realism show his leadership.

In 2002, David Keene of the American Conservative Union defended Barr, saying, "[The] man's ubiquitous. He fights for his beliefs in committee, on the House floor and in the media. [He's] brimming with ideas, unwilling to compromise on matters of principle, and ready to take on all comers in the fight for what [he sees] as right."

That sentiment is shared by the civil libertarians of the Left. "Social issues journalist" Walter Brasch observes: "[Barr] has spoken out against the neo-conservative movement for its super-patriotic suppression of dissent, rising beliefs in a 'tax-and-spend' bureaucracy, and unqualified support of the PATRIOT Act . . . Bob Barr isn't the ogre portrayed by many liberals and moderates, nor is he the saint that the conservatives believe. He is just a man of principle who believes our Constitution must be protected and defended against all enemies — foreign and domestic."

Barr has earned the respect of the Left and Right as a man willing to stand up for his beliefs. He has demonstrated in office and out that he works for change. His willingness to work with everyone on a variety of issues and try to broker agreements that move the ball in the right direction demonstrates the experience — the principled experience — that is lacking in other choices.

If you approve of the status quo, vote for one of the two major party candidates. They are the candidates of the status quo. But if you want real change based on a new framework, vote for Bob Barr. Only a vote for Barr is a vote for smaller government and respect for individual rights, privacy, and civil liberties. The other choices offer parts of what the country wants and needs. Only Barr offers the best of the two other choices, and the long overdue political realignment that we need.

Barr's name evokes images from many past fights, and the one constant has been his strong defense of the rule of law against transgressions of the Right and the Left. When Republicans excuse current policies, they have forfeited your vote. When Democrats, elected to end a senseless war, end up retroactively endorsing lawless spying and surveillance on Americans, they also have forfeited your vote. But Barr has been tried and tested. He is the best choice to stand up for Americans' rights and liberties.

When I worked in Ron Paul's congressional office, a former staffer wrote a memo explaining that our job was to be leaders and set the goal posts. Dr. Paul did that in the Republican primaries. Now we need a fighter, a person who is not afraid to get his hands dirty, to run the ball down the field. Bob Barr is that man. Not only is he the right candidate to take the freedom movement to the next level, but he is the right choice to lead the country. □

The Case for Obama

by Bruce Ramsey

Barack Obama is not a libertarian, and Bob Barr, the nominee of the Libertarian Party, is. The libertarian case for Obama has to begin with strategic voting: one does not waste one's vote on self-expression but casts it for the greater good, as if one vote could determine the outcome.

The libertarian case for Obama, then, is not a tub of enthusiasm. It is negative: that he is not John McCain.

McCain has his points. From a free-market and self-reliance point of view, McCain's rhetoric and voting record are better than Obama's. McCain is famously anti-pork and is for retaining the relatively low Bush tax rates on ordinary income and capital gains. Obama promises to raise them. McCain is an enemy of the ethanol witchcraft. Obama is for it. McCain would preserve a greater space for private medicine. McCain is a relative free trader. According to the Cato Institute, McCain has voted in favor of trade 86% of the time, and Obama 31%.

Why, then Obama? War, the bringer of death, taxes, and restraints upon liberty.

McCain was for starting a war with Iraq. Obama was against it. When the occupation went bad, Obama talked about taking soldiers out. McCain talked about bringing them in. McCain, having been a prisoner, was sensitive to the issue of torture, and that is to his credit. But a vote for McCain is a validation of Bush on war and the other things, financial, legal, and cultural, that come with war. And on this issue, McCain is worse than Bush. Military service has defined McCain's heritage and his life. His moral touchstone is honor. He's got war written all over him.

That is why some libertarians will cast their vote this year for the nominee of a party that libertarians do not usually support.

One such made the news in February: Scott Flanders, CEO of Freedom Newspapers, owners of the Orange County Register. Flanders publicly disagreed with the Register's libertarian adviser, Ayn Rand scholar Tibor Machan, who said he expected to support the Libertarian nominee. Flanders, who had voted for Libertarian Ed Clark in 1980, Democrat

Bill Clinton in 1992, and Republicans otherwise, announced his support for Obama because of the war.

He was not alone. Megan McArdle, libertarian blogger at the Atlantic, wrote on August 20 that she was "wavering between [Obama] and Bob Barr" but two days later wrote, "I'll probably vote for Obama." Her explanation expresses the feeling of many libertarians:

I am not excited about this election. I do not believe that my vote is going to immanentize the eschaton. I do not think that I am engaged in a titanic battle, in which the forces of good must beat back the cosmic evil that threatens to engulf us all. I think I'm deciding which of two politicians to hand a lot of power I don't want either of them to have.

Some libertarians said they preferred Obama but might not go so far as to vote for him. One was David Friedman, law professor at Santa Clara University and contributing editor of *Liberty*, who wrote on his blog on May 7:

McCain strikes me as a nationalist, likely to be comfortable with retaining and even expanding on the increases in executive authority claimed by Bush. He is also the one pro-war candidate . . . Perhaps I am too optimistic about Obama, but I do not think he is going to turn out to be an orthodox liberal.

Friedman noted a hopeful difference between Obama and Hillary Clinton: Clinton wanted the government to require every American to buy health insurance, and Obama did not.

Friedman also noted that Obama had taught at the University of Chicago — the place where Friedman's father had led a worldwide movement of free-market economics — and that Obama's chief economics advisor is Austan Goolsbee, a Chicago man. Goolsbee isn't quite Milton Friedman, but he is a believer in markets.

On August 24, *The New York Times Magazine* picked up the same theme in David Leonhardt's long piece on Obama's economics. Leonhardt noted the Chicago connection, and

A vote for McCain is a validation of Bush on war and the things — financial, legal, and cultural — that come with war. And on this issue, McCain is worse than Bush.

wrote: "By surrounding himself with economists, however, Obama was also making a decision with ideological consequences. Far more than many other policy advisers, economists believe in the power of markets."

To *Fortune* magazine, Obama had said: "I am a pro-growth guy, and I'm a pro-market guy. And I always have been. What I do get frustrated with is an economy that is out of balance, that rewards a very few — with rewards that are all out of proportion to their actual success."

A libertarian who might be expected to support Obama is Brink Lindsey, the Cato Institute research director who

argued in the New Republic (Dec. 4, 2006) that the libertarian-conservative alliance was dead and that libertarians ought to consider "a new progressive fusionism" with the Left.

I asked Lindsey where he stood on the election, mindful that the folks at Cato, with a 501(c)(3) tax exemption, would be cautious about endorsements. He replied (speaking for himself, not Cato):

I think McCain is terrible on foreign policy, and Obama is terrible on spending and regulatory issues. But since the president generally has much greater influence over foreign affairs than he does on domestic policy, I give the edge to Obama. Furthermore, my sense of fundamental democratic accountability says that when the party in power messes up royally, it should be thrown out on its ear. For Republicans to be rewarded with another term in the White House after eight years of Bush seems really wrong to me. So put me down as preferring Obama to McCain, but I can't come close to calling myself an Obama supporter.

Gene Healy, a vice president at Cato, author of "The Cult of the Presidency" (2008) and a contributing editor of Liberty, gave this answer:

I'm certainly not for Obama. I generally vote for people who can't possibly win; that way I don't have to feel guilty for what they do when they're in office. After our recent experience with a "conservative" president who launched the greatest expansion of the welfare state since LBJ, I find it hard to take seriously the notion that libertarians need to line up behind another Republican in order to save the country from looming socialism. Particularly when that Republican is a bellicose TR-worshiper and the dream candidate for the National Greatness Conservatives who've done so much damage to the country over the last seven years. . . . Obama's public positions on war and executive power — even after the recent flip-flop on wiretapping — are preferable to McCain's from a libertarian perspective. But Bush's positions on spending and nation building were better than Gore's in 2000, so who can predict?

Perhaps the best argument for Obama is found in the snarky bumper sticker currently offered for sale at CafePress.com: "Obama '08: Get Disappointed by Someone New."

Here is my take on it. I argued in Liberty ("Our Allies, the Conservatives," December 2006), that libertarians will never fit on the Left. Since then, the "Ron Paul Revolution"

Do you really imagine that we are living in the kind of social democracy in which nothing happens unless it appears on the ballot? Of course you don't.

happened on the Right, and made more of a splash than I thought was possible. But libertarians are not strong enough, which is why Paul lost.

In any coalition, if the weaker party is to have influence, it has to be willing to leave. Most of the time it will not do

that; it will support people it doesn't totally agree with, in exchange for their support on some things, and the hope of greater influence in the long run. But it always has to be willing to walk out. If it won't, then it is nothing more than the majority's poodle.

In the presidential race, 2004 was a time to walk out. I could not vote Republican. Four years later, I still can't.

Why? Because in 2004 the Republicans won. Had they lost, they might have changed. But they won. Their war was validated. The neocon ascendancy in the Republican Party was affirmed.

If libertarians are to have any influence on the Right, the neocon-led coalition (and not all Bush voters are neocons) has to be defeated. This already started to happen in the midterm elections of 2006, when the Republicans lost the Senate and the House. But the party hasn't gotten the message that war is an election-loser. The party still has the White House, and it has nominated a neocon-backed military man to keep it. If McCain wins, the neocons win and the "War on Terror" continues under a leader who promises victory at all costs. On foreign policy, Republicans need to rethink what they think. And for that to happen, the Republican nominee has to lose.

And *that* means, as surely as Aardvark comes before Zoology, that Barack Obama has to win.

And that is the case for Obama. □

The Case for McCain

by Stephen Cox

My message is simple: Vote Republican, because whatever you may say against McCain (and it will probably be true), Obama is much worse.

I'm not going to list all the debits and credits of either McCain or Obama — or Barr, the Libertarian Party nominee. Readers of Liberty have covered this territory already. My major purpose is to examine the fallacies that lead good people either to vote only for candidates who express their highest moral aspirations or to refuse to vote at all.

Let's consider the second matter first. To many people, the argument for not voting appears invincible. A single vote almost never decides an election; therefore, why vote? This logic evidently appeals to a large proportion of the populace, the proportion that doesn't turn up at the polls.

But the issue isn't as easy as it looks. Think about all the things you do, and believe in doing, despite the fact that they have little or no practical effect. When strangers on a plane interrupt you with inane small talk, you treat them civilly, even though you'll never see them again. When you have the chance to jump the queue at the checkout stand, you resist the temptation, even when there's no significant chance that anyone will retaliate against you if you don't. When you're paying a one-time visit to Nome, you still tip the waiter.

Why do we do things like that? Because we're voting, in effect, for a world where everybody does things like that, a world in which life is somewhat better instead of somewhat worse. We don't imagine that other people will necessarily follow our example. We hope they will, but we probably won't know whether they do or not. But if we and people like us didn't do what we do, the world would be a pretty

miserable place. The ignorant, uncaring, and uncivil would simply take over.

Now, to come a little closer to actual politics: Have you ever entered an argument that you knew you'd lose, in the sense that you knew you wouldn't convince the other parties? I'll bet you have. It's part of being human; it's part of being who you are, and showing it. And do you ever take a few minutes to participate in telephone polls? I'll bet you do that, too. Admittedly, it makes little or no practical difference that when somebody calls me up I take a few minutes to state my view, thus raising the percentage of Americans who want smaller government by a decimal point or less; but that just means that I wish more libertarians were willing to take part in those surveys. If they were, politicians would take us a lot more seriously. But if none of us responded, they would be sure to write us off completely.

Yet actual voting, you may say, is different. It isn't just a statement of views; it's part of the process by which officials are installed and policies are imposed. If you insist on taking part in this process, don't you have a responsibility to vote for the candidate who is closest to your own views — to vote for the Libertarian Party candidate, not the Republican or the Democrat? How can you spend all your waking life denouncing the actions of the two major parties, then haul off and cast your vote for one of them?

Those are good questions. They bring us back to the first fallacious idea I mentioned, the notion that you have a duty not to vote for anyone with whom you have a principled disagreement. Many libertarians take this position, refusing to give their "moral sanction" to anyone except a candidate of the Libertarian Party (should one of these candidates be found sufficiently pure). They assume that to vote for a Republican or a Democrat is to make oneself responsible for every rotten thing that person may do in office.

This, I believe, is nonsense — well-intended nonsense, but nonsense nonetheless.

Do you seriously believe that the function of voting in a presidential election is to decide every act and policy of the U.S. government? Do you really imagine that we are living in the kind of social democracy in which nothing happens unless it appears on the ballot? Of course you don't. Then what do you think the function of voting is?

Clearly, it's to select a single winner out of a long list of candidates. If I thought the Libertarian candidate had a decent chance to win, I would vote Libertarian. But I still wouldn't consider myself morally responsible for anything, anything at all, that Bob Barr did as president.

It's fair to say that to most libertarians, this will look like a sad attempt to relieve myself of guilt. Why shouldn't you feel responsible? they'll ask. You *voted* for him!

But no, I reply, I am not responsible. In strict terms, I didn't even vote for him. I voted against his opponents. Isabel Paterson was right when she argued, in "The God of the Machine," that the proper function of voting is to say No, I *don't* want So and So. It's impossible to vote *for* all the things that a candidate may do in office, with any reasonable expectation that this is what he will do. What's clear is that one can vote *against* the candidates from whom one expects still worse things. When they lose, they no longer have the ability to do any of those things.

And this, by the way, is what political moralists urge you to do when they say you should vote Libertarian, or not vote at all. They want you to say No to the Republicans and the Democrats. The problem is that, except if they get very lucky, these moralists don't actually manage to exclude the worst of

With no more intellectual or experiential qualifications than those sufficient to become a corrupt Chicago alderman, he considers himself a great moral and spiritual leader.

the great-party candidates. They just identify themselves as members of the great company of people whose views can be written off.

This year, it's conceivable that Obama may gain a state, and thus win the election, if there's an outpouring of antiwar conservative and libertarian votes for Barr. I doubt that will happen, because my humble opinion is that most voters agree with me and vote for one of the major-party candidates, trying to exclude the worse one from the presidency. But now we've returned to the only real political issue: Would you rather exclude Obama or McCain? That's what the presidential election will decide. To say "I'd rather exclude them both" is like answering a survey question, "Would you rather (A) have lower taxes; or (B) have higher taxes," by saying, "Not applicable: I'd rather have no taxes." Of course you would. So would I. But that isn't the question. The question in the 2008 election is simply: Which candidate will be excluded, Obama or McCain?

I say, exclude Obama.

Of course, there are plenty of reasons for excluding McCain. Unlike Obama, he's a (qualified) supporter of our strange adventure in Iraq. And he's a desperate lunatic about "campaign finance reform," having learned nothing from the failure of the McCain-Feingold Act. Like Bush, he's a jerk and an obscurantist about illegal immigration. And he's a crabby old guy. I don't like him. Actually, I detest him.

But now let's talk about what Obama is. The worst thing is that he has "charisma," which is something you get when The New York Times says you have it. With no more intellectual or experiential qualifications than those sufficient to become a corrupt Chicago alderman, he considers himself a great moral and spiritual leader, and he has been accepted as such by millions of deluded followers. There is nothing more dangerous than the cult of the Messiah, and that's what the Obama movement is. This alone is sufficient reason to vote against Obama, by voting for McCain.

And the list of reasons goes on and on: Obama's glad embrace of black nationalist "liberation" (i.e., neocommunist) theology, until the nature of his church was miraculously revealed; his willingness to lie about his background and associations, many of which can be justified by his followers only on the basis of his cynical willingness to cadge support from nuts and demagogues; his life (and the life of his

influential spouse), spent in the service of racial preferences; his slanderous description of people who vote against him as bitter folk who cling like mollusks to their guns and their religion and their "antipathy to people who aren't like them"; his amorphous political positions, each one dedicated to the proposition that he must be president, for whatever reasons he wants to dream up (if he's an antiwar candidate, God help the cause of pacifism); and finally, and most egregiously, the pompous condescension that he manifests in every moment of his public being.

It's remarkable that Hillary Clinton, who was filled higher with hubris than any other person on the political scene, lost a great deal of it when she found herself slipping beneath Obama's tires. Contrary to all expectations, she learned from her experience. She acknowledged (some) mistakes. She talked without condescension to people who weren't her followers — to people who actually disagreed with her. But when Obama was in danger of losing, during the Reverend Wright affair, what did he learn? He learned to blame one revered friend after another for his mistake of associating with them. He went so far as to suggest that his grandmother was a racist. He cultivated his habit of finding coyly disingenuous ways of putting the verbal knife into other people. And soon he was Himself again, radiating his rightness in every possible respect.

It was an amazing performance, and it did not bode well for the republic, should this star-struck nonentity be elected president. You thought Bill Clinton was bad? He at least had a sense of humor. Often he knew that he was gaming the people. But Obama doesn't have a clue about himself.

Yet the greatest problem about voting Democratic, even when the Democratic candidate isn't a little Napoleon, is always that Democratic presidencies bring to Washington tens of thousands of counselors, bureaucrats, judges, and social action profiteers, an invading force that is always even farther to the big-government left than their boss, who at least had to be elected by the nation as a whole. The greatest problem with voting Republican is that Republican presidencies bring to Washington tens of thousands of stumblebums who haven't a clue about how to reduce the size of government, or even to govern intelligently. Is there a clearer political choice? The worst you can say about the Republicans — and this is very bad indeed — is that they behave like Democrats. The best you can say — and it's not very good, but it is important — is that they are not Democrats. Occasionally they nominate a Justice Thomas. Occasionally they lower taxes. Occasionally

they raise speed limits, abolish conscription, or defend the 2nd Amendment. And they never nominate a Messiah.

It's very unfortunate, but in one way or another we all end up voting for either the Republican or the Democrat. If you refuse to vote for the lesser of the two evils, you'll do nothing to exclude the greater of the two evils. Is that really what you want to do? □

None of the Above

by Doug Casey

Once again we find ourselves in the midst of the quadrennial American circus, when shameless powermongers come out to blather moronic and vacuous platitudes in hopes of getting *Boobus Americanus* to "get out and vote," granting them the power of life and death for the next four years. Regrettably, they won't be disappointed.

But one can hope they will be. I think back to the '60s, when the wistful saying "Suppose they gave a war, and nobody came" was current. It was a noble sentiment. In that vein, I also like "Suppose they gave a tax, and nobody paid," around April 15. And "Suppose they gave an election, and nobody voted," now.

You've heard all the reasons why you should vote. Most of them are humbug at best, and some — such as "It doesn't matter how you vote. Just vote" — are simply idiotic. Voting today has nothing to do with the "civic duties" you learned about in grade school. Your fellow citizens aren't Jimmy Stewart and Gary Cooper lookalikes earnestly trying to do the right thing. Well over 50% of U.S. citizens are now net tax recipients, and they've trundled down to the polls in their tank tops and shower slippers only to help ensure that they stay on the gravy train.

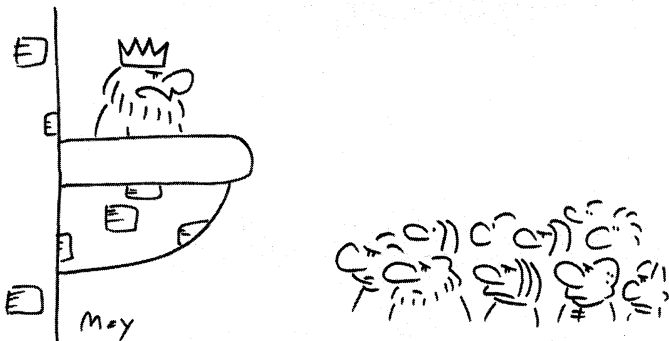
It's sickening to hear thoughtful nonvoters, who can sense in their gut that something is terminally wrong with the process, make lame excuses because they feel guilty for not participating. I would, therefore, like to give you five reasons why you shouldn't vote.

1. Voting in a political election is unethical. The political process is one of institutionalized coercion and force; if you disapprove of these things, then you shouldn't participate in them, even indirectly. As Mao, a leading expert on the subject, famously said: The power of government grows out of the barrel of a gun."

Sure, if government limited itself to defending its subjects from domestic and foreign aggression and adjudicating disputes, you could argue that there was nothing unethical in voting for who plays the night watchman. But the fact is that elections have long been, as Mencken observed, nothing but advance auctions on stolen goods.

If you want something, vote with the dollars you've earned, in the marketplace.

2. Voting compromises your privacy. It just gets your name in another government computer bank, one they can use to call you up for jury duty and other forms of involuntary servitude. The less the government knows about you, even in small ways, the better off you are.



"I'm beginning to think that you're willfully apathetic."

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Warfare, Workfare, and Nation Building

by Peter Allen

The U.S. Army plays several different and sometimes conflicting roles in American society. It's a military force, a workfare program, and a nation-building venture. That's too much.

Ask most Americans about the track record of their army and they will tell you proudly that it has never lost a war. Despite the result in Vietnam — where, many people will tell you, we did not lose; we just stopped playing after losing interest — Americans see their army as an invincible force, feared and respected all over the world.

Yet, as we continue to fight in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is clear that the force that won the world wars of the 20th Century needs a makeover, and soon. The U.S. Army has grown haphazardly out of control and is so far removed from its original mission that chaos is the only possible result.

The Army is proud of its roots, and rightly so. It is older than the nation itself, tracing its roots to June 14, 1775, a full year before the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Whenever there has been a crisis, throughout the nation's history, the Army has been there to help out — for better or for worse. Whether it was fighting off the British a second time in 1812, or subjugating the native population on the frontier, the Army was there. Afterwards, the Army, which had anticolonialism at its roots, was often a force of liberation for foreign peoples.

But a funny thing happened on the way to self-congratulation. After defeating the Axis powers in WWII and facing the threat of the Soviet Union, the Army had to deal with a new world of urban fighting and microscopic inspection of casu-

alties. A bevy of international organizations such as the UN, IMF, World Bank, and Amnesty International, just to name a few, now hold any military operation to an unprecedented human rights standard. While in the past the U.S. Army was respected for the military results it produced, now one civilian death can be enough to jeopardize an operation that, in theory, might free millions of people from oppression.

Once, dictators could commit any number of atrocities and be fairly sure that word would be so late in reaching potential opponents that the deed would already be done and accountability would be impossible. Hitler is said to have asked his commanders when they expressed concern over what the consequences would be of his order to exterminate all Poles who stood in his way, "Who remembers the Armenians?" History had taught him to be heedless of the outrage of the world community.

Today, fortunately, the fate of the Armenians could not go unnoticed. The rich nations of the world have not yet proven

able to stop genocide from happening; but the international spotlight has made it nearly impossible to hide this or other atrocities. Everyone knew what was going on in Kosovo and Rwanda while it was going on, and the outrage over Darfur would not be possible without our modern technology and watchdog agencies.

Couple these facts of the contemporary world with the unquestioned strength of the U.S. military and its invincibility in any conventional war and you begin to understand the current controversies.

Today, the Army has to balance a bewildering array of tasks that range from its traditional mission of protecting the nation from international threats, to rebuilding shattered nations, to providing health care, education, and recreation to the families of its members.

To understand what has happened, it is important to realize that the Army now is as much a workfare program as it is anything else. I refer not to the average income of those who join its ranks but rather to the Army's provision of a social safety net for people who are not sure what to do with their lives, or who have goals — other than protecting the country — that Army enlistment can help them attain.

If you are feeling unsure about your future, dislike your job, have a pregnant girlfriend, desire U.S. citizenship, or despise school so much that you will do *anything* to get your parents to stop asking you about college, then you can join the Army. After doing so you will have a taxpayer-funded job, the credibility imparted by an organization with a storied history, and the ego boost of hearing millions of people thanking you for your "selfless sacrifice for our country." It doesn't matter that you may not have any idea what it truly means to serve in the Army. You are now part of something larger than yourself, and that's enough.

Because the Army has set itself up as a workfare program, and because those at the top of the organization have a vested interest in keeping their budget large, in the neighborhood of \$420 billion at latest count, there is no incentive to make

To understand what has happened, it is important to realize that the Army now is as much workfare program as it is anything else.

real cuts or shift the mission. The inevitable truth about government agencies remains unchallenged — they can only get bigger. Our military accounts for 43% of the entire world's military spending, and eats up over 20% of our own budget.

This prompts a number of questions. Just what is a bigger Army doing? Is it doing those things well? Could someone else do them better?

To answer the first question, let's look at the tasks now being undertaken by the U.S. Army in Iraq and Afghanistan. Despite campaign pledges to the contrary, the Bush administration is now fully involved in nation building. It became clear long ago (and by long ago I mean in the 19th Century,

with the experiences of the European colonial powers, not within the last couple of years in Iraq) that combat operations are not going to bring peace and stability to the third world. Prosperity will come to these nations only when locals reach the point where they can provide their own security.

A change in foreign policy that recognizes this fact was necessary. To that end we started using our soldiers like Peace Corps volunteers. Handing out flyers, giving candy to children, spreading goodwill, and teaching the locals how to provide basic medical and veterinary care are now part of the job. Never mind that at Fort Benning's Sand Hill you were taught the basics of the wedge formation, how to conduct a hasty ambush, and other more properly military skills. Now you will be handed a card with extremely restrictive Rules of Engagement, and told not to look at the women in the village while your commander attends a shura in which the local leaders complain about how their generator no longer works. Soon after this meeting, however, you will be called to the site of an IED where you will be required to shoot at someone who may well be a member of the family to whom, at the shura, you swore you meant no harm. Your unit will also be supplemented with "civil-military operations" units that will pass out money for building projects, and "psychological operations" units that will make colorful flyers depicting smiling locals receiving a free prayer rug for agreeing to stop shooting at coalition forces.

During the 15 months in which your unit is deployed, pending a phone call that increases that duration, a contingent of uniformed soldiers will remain at your home station. Some are injured and cannot deploy; others just got selected to remain behind. These soldiers will look after the garrison and provide needed support to the deployed unit, but inevitably they will also answer questions from lonely family members about who is going to mow their lawns, now that the husband is gone.

This additional force is, nowadays, just as important as the force actually deployed; assisting families is the next closest thing to combat duty.

All of this started benignly enough. Families have always come together to cope with the stresses of war and wartime. Now, however, managing this stress has become a central military function, performed by uniformed soldiers.

Is the military performing its nonmilitary functions well? Could someone else do them better? The answers are "No" and "Yes."

First and foremost, the military is a fighting organization. Soldiers are recruited and trained to fight wars. This is the Army's most important obligation and the one dictated by the Constitution. The Army is supposed to be an institution that provides physical security. The U.S. has always maintained that the military is a tool of the government and does not make policy or political decisions, but the truth on the ground is quite different.

In her book "The Punishment of Virtue," Sarah Chayes, former NPR correspondent turned resident of Kandahar, talks about her dealings with the U.S. representation in Afghanistan. For every State Department representative she meets, there are thousands of military personnel. The military rank and

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Restoring the House of Mencken

by Bruce Ramsey

H.L. Mencken's house is a monument to a great writer, and a great libertarian. Can it be saved?

"I have lived in one house for 40 years," wrote H.L. Mencken in 1925 in the *Baltimore Evening Sun*. "It is as much a part of me as my two hands. If I had to leave it, I'd be as certainly crippled as if I lost both legs."

Mencken's house at 1524 Hollins Street in southwest Baltimore is one of America's most famous literary addresses, and the most famous of any writer thought of as libertarian. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Owned by the city government, it is now closed and somewhat run down, though a serious effort is underway to save it.

I visited the Mencken House in July 2008.

It is 5 p.m. on a weekday. The neighborhood is quiet and tired, and I have no problem finding a place to park. Across Hollins Street is Union Square, which has leafy trees and a few old men on benches taking in the afternoon sun. In the center of the square is a round black fountain gone dry. Along its edges are plaques for Mencken's prominent books: "Prejudices," "Happy Days," "In Defense of Women," "The Mencken Chrestomathy."

The men, I think, probably have never heard of H.L. Mencken. The desk people at my downtown hotel had not.

Mencken's house is three stories of red brick squeezed between others like a book on a shelf. In Greenwich Village such a house would be worth more than a million dollars, but

here and in this condition maybe a quarter of that.

My host is Oleg Panczenko, a middle-aged software guy who wrote code for point-of-sale terminals until his employer went out of business. He arrives in a beat-up car. He says he has been "a big fan of Mencken's since high school," when he encountered the "Chrestomathy." He is now secretary and archivist of The Society to Preserve H.L. Mencken's Legacy Inc. He has worked with the nonprofit group since 2001, when, he says, it seemed that saving the house might take two or three years.

Mencken's home has stone steps, white double doors, and a white cornice. The property is 18 feet by 150 — the same shape as two sticks of Juicy Fruit laid end to end. To fit inside it, the main-floor rooms are strung in a line like meat on a skewer: parlor, sitting room, dining room, kitchen. Behind is the long, narrow garden, with a brick wall on one side doing quiet battle with the ivy. Mencken built much of that wall, inserting colored tiles here and there. He mounted Ludwig van Beethoven's death mask over a block carved with the

opening notes of the Fifth Symphony. Another block is carved with the engineering equations of Mencken's brother August. At one end of the wall is a tile that says, "1905 Tessie 1921"; Tessie was a dog. At the other end is a gate onto the alley, but it is locked and we do not go out.

Panczenko scrapes the leaves off two small tiles on the ground behind the kitchen. I look at the tiles dumbly: a design of thick black lines in a kind of decorated X. He says a

Mencken's prose is the antidote to timidity and political correctness. He is the antigrovel. He is liberty.

reporter for the Baltimore Sun once claimed it was a swastika and therefore had political meaning — and then, yes, I can see it: erase the forked parts and flip it over. A *disguised* swastika. Such imaginations people have.

The inside of the house used to require a good deal less imagination. Wrote Christopher Corbett in the New York Times: "Mencken's home seems as if he might return at any moment . . . The dining room at the rear of the first floor is replete with a sideboard groaning under the weight of various bottles of Mencken's favorite drinks, including a flask of

bathtub gin and a pint of an ominous looking elixir labeled 90 proof corn whiskey." The writer's second-floor study, which faces Union Square, "has also been restored, including paste pots and a battered Underwood typewriter, along with a spike."

That was 20 years ago. From 1983 to 1996 the house was a museum, and it had Mencken's things in it. No more. The non-profit organization that ran it — Baltimore City Life Museums Inc. — closed in 1997. "The furniture went to the Maryland Historical Society's warehouse," says Panczenko. Mencken's books are at the Pratt Library, downtown. The house is empty of his furniture save for a piano and a few chairs.

I notice the floors first. They are hardwood, narrow floorboards, and in a herringbone pattern in the dining room. They creak, and some of the floorboards are loose. Water has damaged the floor in a few places, and in Mencken's small third-floor bedroom — the room where he died — someone has scarred the floor with a hot iron. In the doorway between the kitchen and dining room, the floor sags. Termites infested it, Panczenko says, and in 2002 the Society asked city officials for permission to call an exterminator, his fee to be paid by the Baltimore Sun. Permission came in nine months, during which time the insects multiplied. They are gone now, but the structure is not repaired.

Here and there on the walls is water damage. The big damage, however, was done by the central air conditioner installed after Mencken's death. The city people left it on, the drainage pan overflowed, and the water wrecked the ceiling below. That was fixed.

A Room of His Own

A mile or so from Mencken's house is the Mencken Room at the downtown branch of Enoch Pratt Free Library. No deterioration here: the room is burglar-alarmed, climate-controlled, and wood-paneled. It is clearly a prized asset of Baltimore's public library.

Mencken's biographers — Fred Hobson, Terry Teachout, Marion Elizabeth Rodgers, and others — have come here. The Sage of Baltimore wrote 10–15 million words — that's 27 to 41 years' worth, at 1,000 words a day — and virtually all of them can be viewed here. His personal library is here. Watching over it is a painting of Mencken as a young man, relishing the vigor of words.

The money for such a room came from Mencken himself. A room was set up at his death in 1956. The present room was set up in 2003. Except on the Saturday closest to September 12, when fans gather to celebrate his birthday, it is open by appointment only.

On my visit here, I meet Davis Donovan, who is researching the Saturday Night Club, a group of prominent German-Americans, including Mencken, who made music and drank beer together for 46 years. In going through the files of the music they played, Donovan discovered several original compositions, including an entire symphony by one of the club musicians. Donovan is planning to make recordings available on compact disc.

The curator is Vince Fitzpatrick, 58, who has worked in the Mencken collection for 28 years and has been a Mencken enthusiast since college. Fitzpatrick's 1979 Ph.D. thesis at SUNY Stonybrook was "The Beast in the Parlor: the Dreiser-Mencken Relationship." He, too, has written a biography,

"H.L. Mencken" (1989), which analyzes Mencken as a writer.

Fitzpatrick says that a crucial thing about Mencken is that he learned the craft of writing while he was on the job at newspapers and, to a great extent, while he was at home by himself. "Mencken's schooling ended at 15 years and 9 months," Dr. Fitzpatrick says. "He did all this with a high school education." Perhaps he was able to develop such a distinctive style because his prose was not homogenized by schooling.

Mencken's politics sound and feel libertarian, though he was so dismissive of ideology that many have denied that he was a libertarian. Fitzpatrick says he was: "Mencken was an old-time Jeffersonian liberal who believe that the best government governs least. . . . I think from the libertarian perspective Mencken definitely fits because of his support of First Amendment rights, his fiscal conservatism, and his belief in the right to be left alone."

Fitzpatrick started his biography assuming that the 1920s would be the most interesting period, because it was the time of Mencken's greatest influence. Instead, he says, the most fascinating period was the 1930s, when Mencken's hammering at Franklin Roosevelt put him out of fashion.

Mencken never made peace with the New Deal, but in 1936, Fitzpatrick says, "he reinvented himself" by writing the first of the stories that went into his three autobiographical books, "Happy Days," "Newspaper Days" and "Heathen Days." "So many people when they reach that age — 56 — can't reinvent themselves," Fitzpatrick says. "Mencken did."

— Bruce Ramsey

The parlor has a chandelier that wasn't Mencken's, and the dining room has a red tiled fireplace that was. Upstairs is another fireplace, with inlaid wood done by August Mencken. It needs repairs to the inlay work. Other fixtures in the house are not worth saving. From 1967, when August died, to 1983, it was used to house University of Maryland students in sociology — a group that no doubt had little reverence for H.L. Mencken. Probably it was during this time that the main floor kitchen was redone in Apartment Cheap, and a small kitchen was built next to August's bedroom on the third floor. In the narrow, dirty basement, where H.L. Mencken once stashed his liquor, are a Whirlpool washer and dryer. In the bathrooms are toilets such as you might find in any abandoned house.

The Society to Preserve H.L. Mencken's Legacy aims to restore the house. It has some impressive members, money, and a business plan. What it did not have at press time was an agreement on the house, though the group's president, Henry Lord, said the ball is finally rolling and he and the city were "85-90% there, on matters of substance" for a lease-purchase.

Lord is a retired trial lawyer, partner emeritus at the firm of D.L.A. Piper, a trustee of Preservation Maryland, a former regent of the University System of Maryland, and a man with "a strong libertarian streak." He has been a fan of Mencken since reading one of the "Prejudices" books about 1957. He says he can still remember the thrill of first reading Mencken's acidic obituary of William Jennings Bryan.

The group's first vice-president is Marion Elizabeth Rodgers, who wrote "Mencken: The American Iconoclast" (2005). The group has support from cultural celebrities: William Styron, Gore Vidal, Susan Sarandon, Garrison Keillor, David McCullough, and Tom Lehrer.

The Society's business plan of June 2007 estimates that restoring the house will take \$486,025, which includes \$33,519 in city permits and fees. The Society received a surprise bequest of \$2.5 million from retired Navy Commander Max Edwin Hency, but the money is for operations only. Lord is negotiating to lease the house from the city for a nominal sum in exchange for restoring it and operating it as a museum.

My guide is not so optimistic. The city has been slow, Panczenko says. "We meet with the city bureaucrats, they smile and are very sympathetic, and it seems that the moment we leave everything is forgotten . . . We're not politically

important. In fact, Mencken might be a bit of a liability."

With some people, he is. David Thaler, vice president of the Maryland Historical Society, told the *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Sept. 24, 2006), "There are no schools named for him. There are no statues."

Mindful that Baltimore is now a majority-black city, the Society makes much of the history of Mencken's help for African Americans. He published the poetry of Countee Cullen in 1924, and an article by W.E.B. DuBois in 1922. At the *American Mercury*, Mencken promoted black editorialist George Schuyler, a writer I remember from the 1960s. Schuyler was a conservative, though others weren't.

Richard Wright wrote in his autobiography, "Black Boy" (1945) that Mencken opened his eyes to the fighting power of words. And the last thing Mencken published before his stroke in 1948 was an attack on the racial segregation of tennis courts in a Baltimore park.

Still, he used words like "blackamoor" and "Ethiop" (along with names for other ethnic groups) in ways that nobody would do today. His fans sometimes wince, but they delight in his general method. Mencken was a Zorro of the polemical style. His prose is the antidote to timidity and political correctness. He is the anti-grovel. He is liberty.

Marion Elizabeth Rodgers recalls how, as a museum, his house was once an inspiration to college students. "I have led tours of freshman and sophomore students through the House. Their interest is palpable," she writes. "They are able to look out the very same windows that he looked out of, see his garden, the very rooms

where he met with so many other famous writers, the office where he wrote. He becomes a tangible figure, not a fossil."

The Society's business plan includes a Writer in Residence program, patterned after the program at the Thurber House in Columbus, Ohio; programs for schools and scholars; writers' workshops; evenings with authors; a Mencken gala; and Mencken Prizes.

Before that will come a drive to raise the \$500,000 to restore the house, plus more to add to the endowment. It is a fine vision. Meanwhile the Mencken house sits, empty — a red-brick row house three windows wide facing a square with a dead fountain.

Panczenko rips away a line of ivy bearding the face of Beethoven. "We make sure the garden is weeded," he says. That, at least, requires no new permission. □



Photograph by A. Aubrey Bodine • Copyright © Jennifer B. Bodine
• Courtesy of www.aaubreybodine.com

The Intelligent Person's Guide to Presidential Politics, *from page 30*

3. Voting is a degrading experience. Voting (as well as registering) involves spending possibly considerable time standing in line, hanging around government offices, filling out forms, and dealing with petty bureaucrats. Most people can find more enjoyable or productive things to do with their time.

4. Voting just encourages them. I'm convinced that most people don't actually vote for a candidate; they vote against the other candidate. But that's not how the guy who gets the vote sees it; he thinks it's a mandate for him to rule. It's ridiculous to justify voting by endorsing the lesser of two evils.

Incidentally, I got as far as this point in 1980 when, as luck would have it, I did an hour alone on the Phil Donahue Show on the very day before the election. The audience had been very much on my side up to the point at which Phil accused me of voting for Mr. Reagan, and I had to explain why I wasn't. Unfortunately, telling them they shouldn't vote was just more than they could handle. The prospect of their stoning me precluded my explaining the fifth and possibly most practical point.

5. Your vote doesn't count. Politicians and political hacks like to say that every vote counts because it gets everybody into busybody mode. But statistically, one vote in scores of millions makes no more difference than a single grain of sand

on the beach. That's completely apart from the fact that, as voters in Chicago in 1960 and Florida in 2000 can tell you, when it actually is close, things can be rigged. And anyway, officials manifestly do what they want — not what you want — once they're in office.

The only way your vote counts is to make you complicit in the crimes that will inevitably be committed by its recipient.

My sentiments on the topic have little, incidentally, to do with the fact that both candidates in this presidential election are certifiable liars, lifelong ne'er-do-wells, and borderline sociopaths. But when has that not been the case? It's rare that someone of quality goes in for politics. My arguments are based on principle. How much principle is involved in a popularity contest between a slick, highly socialistic young black man and a tired, mildly demented old white man?

There are certainly romantics among you who, despite your better judgment, will go out and vote anyway, perhaps for the Libertarian Party candidate, despite the fact that there are few indications that Barr is a libertarian. But, I suppose, since there's zero chance he'll be elected, it's a good way to register a protest vote, for what that's worth.

Of course if you really want to treat the elections with the respect they deserve, and insist on voting, you might consider a write-in for, say, "Donald Duck." □

Reflections, *from page 24*

the growing popularity of residential-size windmills. Fads are common among the Chattering Class, and many have the wealth to pursue the latest status symbol. The article notes that there is little chance that anyone would ever recover an investment from electricity cost savings; still, as one person said, "I don't care how much it costs, it makes me feel better!" And the article goes on to explain why: some neighbors complain about noise, or interference with their sight lines, but the major response is *envy*. That envy factor probably explains much of the popularity of small cars, wind turbines, and CFL (compact fluorescent lighting) among the insecure but passionate residents of our coastal communities. — Fred Smith

A bright line? — As a persistent political issue — or distraction — abortion needs to be further clarified. Three questions seem to dominate the discussion:

(1) When does human life begin? (2) Does the fetus have rights that may override the rights of the woman carrying it? (3) Is abortion murder? These questions are more about words than substance. A human being does not exist before conception but does exist at birth; indeed, he or she quite arguably exists when ready for birth, that is, when labor could be accidentally or deliberately delayed or hastened for a few days without harm to the baby. It is a red herring to expect science and its latest supposed findings to pin down just when, between conception and birth, human life does emerge. Calling the fetus a mere potential rather than an actual human being does not change the realities at all.

Development of the embryo and then fetus into a live baby is a gradual process, well understood. Even the ability to survive outside the womb develops gradually rather than suddenly. Science identifies no sharp break in the nine-month

process. The issue of when "human life begins" is an issue of when to apply those words, not one to be settled by science. A controversialist typically applies the words to the point before which, if ever, he or she considers terminating a pregnancy acceptable.

Question (2) involves talk of rights. In typical contexts, a right is best understood as an entitlement to treatment by other persons that entails a duty binding on those other persons with a high degree of moral and perhaps legal force. A party to a valid contract has a right to the agreed performance by the other party. By usual standards of morality, a parent has a duty to care for his infant children, who have the corresponding right. To say that an unborn child has a right to life even contrary to his mother's wishes is simply to say that he must not be aborted. To say that a woman has a right to determine the use of her own body, even contrary to any right of the fetus, is to say that other persons must not interfere with an abortion. In either case, the word "right" may allude to an argument that might be made to the intended effect, but it itself is no argument and not even a substitute for one. Without such an argument, the word "right" merely adds emphasis to a bare assertion.

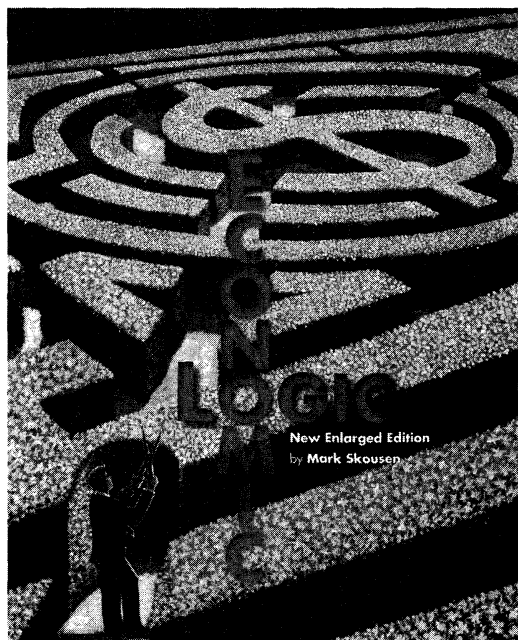
Question (3) concerns applying the legal term "murder." Not all killing, even though regrettable or reprehensible, counts as murder — for example, killing in self-defense or through gross negligence. To say that abortion in specified circumstances is or is not murder is simply to say that it should not or should be legally tolerated. Without a supporting argument, the word "murder" in controversy over abortion, like the word "right," merely adds rhetorical flourish to a bare assertion.

continued on page 38

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Reflections, from page 36

Substantive argument over abortion, as opposed to mere verbal maneuvering, must consider likely consequences in various circumstances. How are the prospective parents and siblings affected, psychologically and otherwise? Does a developing baby suffer from being aborted or from otherwise never being born? How is respect for human life reinforced or impaired? How are attitudes toward and the prevalence of promiscuousness affected? How are interpersonal respect and cooperation and the general tone of society affected, with consequences for human happiness? To what extent can restrictions on abortion in specified circumstances be enforced, and with what possible adverse side effects? (The War on Drugs comes to mind, as well as the general point that not everything morally wrong should be illegal.) And genuine argument should take account of still other kinds of consequence. To recognize all this is not to preach moral relativism or situation ethics.

Still, by its very nature, abortion is not the sort of issue that admits of a black or white, all-purpose answer. How did the pregnancy come about — by rape, by incest? Will carrying the fetus to term or to miscarriage threaten the life of the woman? Is abortion less reprehensible early in pregnancy rather than later? (I could give reasons, though not necessarily conclusive reasons, for a “yes” answer.)

Particularly challenging is the case of a fetus that would be born badly deformed and with prospects of a miserable

life. To assert the deformed baby’s right to nondiscrimination would put the interest of the self-righteous moralizer, who might get a cheap feeling of nobleness, ahead of the interest of the child, who would have a painful existence thrust upon him. There is no way to leave the decision to the unborn child himself. The prospective parents, duly counseled, cannot shed moral responsibility for the decision. To the believer who objects that making the decision would mean playing God, the answer is that God may effect his will through inspiring the decision of the parents.

The question of abortion involves medicine, psychology, social science, and broad philosophy; it needs calm consideration in scholarly and similar contexts. It cannot get proper consideration in political campaigns, when anything beyond a soundbite is likely to tax voters’ patience. Because abortion policy must be carried out by governments, however, there is no way to keep the issue from contaminating any political discourse. It would help, though, to recognize that abortion policy constitutionally belongs to state governments, not the national government.

People should realize that mere words about when life begins, about rights, and about murder cannot settle the question.

As a political issue, it is diversionary and should be deemphasized. It should bring discredit on candidates who misuse it.

— Leland B. Yeager

Warfare, Workfare, and Nation Building, from page 32

file are the ones the locals see and deal with most. The U.S. military is the de facto foreign policymaker in the area. It is the effects of its decisions that the people most feel; it is military uniforms that the people most often see. By creating a military that is simultaneously an armed force, a workfare program, and a diplomatic enterprise, we have handed the reigns of our foreign policy over to the leaders of the military.

The Department of Defense and the Department of State have been at odds for so long that their strife is taken for granted.

One of the latest tussles, between former Defense Secretary Rumsfeld and Secretaries of State Powell and Rice, is just the most recent spasm. But as the military fails yet again to set up stable governments in third world countries, meanwhile cracking under the stress of constant deployments, it is time to reassess exactly what we are asking it to do.

I suggest a reversion to the actual mission of the Army. Take away the civil-military affairs units — and take the Psychological Operations units along with them. If the government wants to nation-build, employ people who are trained in economics and engineering, rather than people trained in the wedge formation and the hasty ambush. If you want to do information operations, hire a contractor with knowledge of marketing and the effective use of radio and television, and let the soldiers be soldiers. Let them provide security for the experts in other fields.

In a recent symposium in Harper’s (“Undoing Bush,” June 2007), Edward Luttwak suggests using the military to destroy terrorist infrastructures, training camps, supply depots, etc., in

raids that would not entail the nation-building of the current campaigns. The State Department could issue warnings, branding reports from the CIA, about the bad actors at work in the area; then the military raids would happen as a last resort, an instrument of foreign policy, not another movement by a permanent force embedded in the landscape and conducting what amounts to a unilateral foreign policy. Once a foreign government sees, through the exercise of military strength, how serious the U.S. intentions are, its own nation-building can begin. Our military’s only job would be to provide the baseline amount of security necessary for our advisers on the ground.

Other areas will require extensive reform as well. In the same symposium, James Bamford points out the need for intelligence services to be independent of the military. While the military will have to play a major role in intelligence gathering, the department calling the shots should be the CIA, not the Pentagon.

This would cut down on some of the turf wars that facilitated the intelligence failures leading up to 9/11, and make it harder for the Pentagon to sell a war without solid proof of the weapons that are the justification for intervention.

The military has many other MOS’s (Military Occupational Specialties, or “jobs” in civilian parlance) that can be eliminated once it stops being a workfare program.

Great cuts can be made in health care, finance, and supply that would free the U.S. Army to become again what it had been since 1775, the greatest fighting organization in the history of the world. □

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War From Six Sides

Bettina Bien Greaves

Most histories of war are written by the victors — generals, statesmen, or historians. And most deal with strategy, diplomacy, heroics, and victories. Few are written from the viewpoint of the victims, most of whom leave behind no written record of their experiences.

The books discussed here are all works about World War II. They are based on notes, letters, or diaries written at the time, by people who suffered behind the lines or were killed at the front. They reflect an immediacy that few books researched and written later can possess. These are all, however, recent books. They were published long after the battles ended, because (as in the case of "The Diary of Anne Frank") the written materials were discovered much later. It took time to organize

them, translate them, edit them, and turn them into proper books. Proper — and of immense human interest.

A Woman in Berlin

It is 1945. The Germans have given up trying to defend Berlin before the Russians arrive. The only soldiers to be seen are the dirty, tired, retreating German conscripts — old men and boys too young to shave — straggling in from the eastern front. Berlin is a dead city. It has been mercilessly bombed. The streets are littered with rubble. There are no trams, buses, phones, electricity, or running water. All shops are closed. Most Berliners are starving.

"A Woman in Berlin" vividly describes their struggle for survival. Many whose homes had been destroyed were camping out with friends, in basements, vacated apartments, and air raid shelters. After the Russians arrived, their

soldiers took over the streets, looted liquor stores, and were soon drunk and looking for women. The anonymous author of this diary, a journalist, knew a little Russian. She intervened to stop two drunken soldiers from attacking the baker's wife, only to have the two men turn on her, grab her, rip her clothes, and rape her on the stairs to her apartment. Another woman — a teenage girl — was more fortunate. She was saved by her parents, who concealed her in the crawl space above their apartment's drop ceiling.

During the Russian occupation, our diarist wrote by the light of candles or kerosene lanterns at odd times and in odd places — to keep her mind off her stomach, she says — in notebooks and on miscellaneous sheets of paper. An edited version of her diaries was published in English in 1954, then in 1959 in Germany, where it was criticized

for "besmirching the honor of German women." Finally, now that the author has died, as well as all persons mentioned in her manuscript, it has been published in full.

Flory

On May 10, 1940, the Nazis occupied Holland. The Dutch could offer little opposition. Germany's announced goal was to rid Holland of all Jews.

The real terror began in September 1940. All Jews had to be registered and wear the yellow Star of David. Their entry to parks, theaters, schools, and many restaurants was forbidden. Their radios were confiscated, their books, papers, documents, bank accounts, and other valuables seized. Jewish businesses were taken over. Jewish professionals were no longer allowed to work. A 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. curfew was imposed. And deportations of Jews to Germany began.

One afternoon, 16-year-old Flory biked to the grocer's for food. A man on a bicycle spoke to her. He told her to take that "damned star" off and follow him. He was Piet Brandsen, a member of the resistance. He arranged for her and her boyfriend, Felix, to go into hiding in his home — although, as a Catholic, he insisted that they be married. Hiding Jews was dangerous business. Flory and Felix helped the Brandsens with the housework. They helped the Brandsen girls with their Catholic catechism and the resistance by typing the names of those who needed food and counterfeit food coupons. Felix began a diary.

Two years passed. Then the Gestapo raided. They didn't find Flory and Felix, but they arrested Piet. Flory and Felix were then placed with another resistance family. Piet was released four months later. And the war continued. Food became scarcer. Members of the resistance continued to hide Jews. They helped 19 U.S. paratroopers escape to England. They stole grain out from under Nazi noses by digging a tunnel into a warehouse and dragging the grain through the tunnel in cloth sacks.

When the end of the war was near, the neighborhood of the family that was hiding Felix and Flory became a battlefield. There was no way to escape on foot or bicycles, but they located an old circus wagon and a horse that was stabled nearby. Everyone piled in, and

the old horse dragged the wagon slowly across town to the home of another Resistance family. Finally, on May 9, 1945, the Germans surrendered. Peace at last!

A few old Jewish friends and relatives turned up, but most had died at the hand of the Nazis. Of pre-war Holland's 140,000 Jews, only 6,000 survived. Two brothers of Felix in New York had served in the U.S. army, and they helped Felix and Flory obtain U.S. visas. In April 1948, they left Holland and settled in California. In 1984, Flory started organizing the papers and documents that she had buried in the backyards of the three homes where they had lived during the war, and with Felix's war diary she wrote this tale of their "miraculous" survival.

Sala's Gift

Life for Jews in Poland became difficult soon after Hitler's forces invaded on Sept. 3, 1939. The Germans began conscripting able young men and women. Eighteen-year-old Raizel, shy, frail, extremely devout, was ordered to report to a German labor camp for six weeks. Her sister, 16-year-old Sala, tomboyish, daring, and eager for adventure, volunteered to go in Raizel's stead; after all, she said, it was for only six weeks. But the six weeks became five years of harsh labor at seven different camps.

To maintain the pretense that service at the camps was voluntary, correspondence was permitted. Sala, lonely and isolated from her family, treasured every letter she received, hiding them under her bunk, entrusting them to friends, or taking them with her

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surreptitiously whenever she moved. The letters dwindled in number and frequency after Aug. 12, 1942, when all Jews in Sala's home town were summoned to the sports stadium, registered, and separated into groups according to their ability to work. Hundreds were ordered to German labor camps; an estimated 8,000 were sent directly to the crematoria of Auschwitz. In the confusion at the stadium, 20-year old Blima managed to pull her sister Raizel, destined for Auschwitz, into her group of able-bodied workers.

As the years went by, Sala and the other labor camp women heard little or nothing about how the war was going. But finally one day at Sala's seventh camp, when she and her fellow women inmates were digging trenches to protect German soldiers, white papers came fluttering down from the sky — Allied leaflets written in three languages, telling them that the war was over. The SS guards disappeared immediately; Russian tanks appeared with food; the town baker arrived with bread. The girls began making plans to go home.

Sala and a friend set out. Having no money, they were not allowed on trains or buses. So they hitchhiked and walked to Sala's home town in Poland. Sala found her old apartment occupied by strangers who welcomed no Jews. She learned that the British had liberated Bergen-Belsen and that her sisters, Raizel and Blima, had been there, but they were very ill and had been sent to Sweden for care. Sala and her friend continued wandering, finally arriving in the American zone, which had become a refuge for many Jewish survivors. Sala's friend went to Bergen-Belsen to look for her sister, but Sala stayed in Ansbach. On Sept. 7, 1945, she came to the old synagogue for the New Year services. There she was spotted by a young American soldier, Corporal Sidney Kirschner, who arranged a meeting. Their acquaintance became friendship; their friendship ripened into love. It took time to work out the marriage arrangements; then he had to return home. A couple of months later she followed, bringing with her the box of precious letters.

Sala never spoke of her five years in the Nazi camps and brushed aside all questions about that time. Finally, when Sala was 67 and heading to the

hospital for triple bypass surgery, she fetched her box of letters, thrust it into the hands of her daughter Ann, and said, "This is yours, now." Then she began talking. At Ann's prodding, she gradually told the story of her years spent in the labor camps, her "gift" to her sister.

The Forger

Life was not hard for Cioma, an 18-year-old German youth, in the fall of 1941. He had two weeks leave from the "voluntary" Jewish work camp and was studying art at the Jewish art college. And he was learning about girls. As long as the Germans were winning in the east, Hitler left the Jews more or less alone. But when the Russians started winning and the United States entered the war, Hitler began clamping down. In June 1942, the Schönhaus family was deported. Young Cioma was exempt because he had a job in armaments. Yet when he said goodbye to his parents, it was forever; he never saw either of them again. Alone in Berlin, Cioma stayed for a time in his family's bombed-out home. But soon he started using his skill as an artist full-time, forging passes and ration cards. Then he went illegal, staying with friends in the underground.

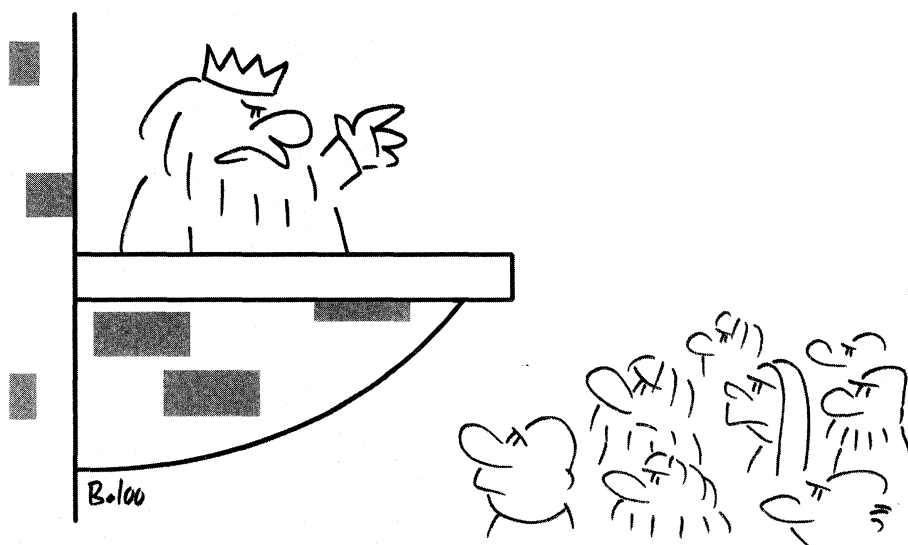
In 1943, he lost his wallet; it was picked up by the police, his photo appeared on "wanted" posters all over Berlin, and he had to escape. It was June. He bought maps of southern Germany, a bicycle on the black mar-

ket, and with forged documents set off for Switzerland. At the border, he heard shots, thought he was being followed, and abandoned his bike. He dashed across the stream and pond that marked the border, arriving in Switzerland soaking wet. Cioma Schönhaus wrote these memoirs and at 84 years was working on a TV film based on the book.

A Stranger to Myself

Willy Peter Reese fought in the German army against the Russians. He called himself a "wicked warrior." But he suffered deeply from the war; he was a true victim. He was 20 years old when he was conscripted. He had delighted in music, the arts, nature. His ambition had been to write. His mother sent him pencils and paper after he was consigned to the Russian front. And Willy wrote — under dreadful conditions. Recording his experiences and thoughts, he said, helped him retain his sanity, despite his "baptism of fire":

"For the first time we heard the whistling of mortars, the whipping of machine-gun bursts, the wild shrilling and bright brutal crash of shells. And it wasn't a game. . . . [W]e saw men fall, saw blood and wounds. . . . We spent endless hours in the ice and snow, with no protection against the biting wind. . . . We soon lost all feeling in our feet. Some suffered frozen toes, ears, and hands if they were carrying munitions chests, and failed to notice the blood stopping in their hands, or were forced to lie motionless in the snow for hours while



"Of course the war is expensive! — you have to spend money to make money!"

enemy fire shrilled over their heads. We were bitter and irritable and then dull and indifferent."

He and his fellow soldiers "were all sick and irritable. Outbursts of rage and hate, envy, fistfights, sarcasm and mockery stood in for whatever might

She intervened, only to have the men turn on her, grab her, rip her clothes, and rape her on the stairs.

have remained of comradeship. . . . We didn't attend to our dead and didn't bury them either, just put on their coats and gloves. Things and values changed. . . . Death, the blind strangler, had failed to find me, but a human being had died in Russia, and I didn't know who it was." They were all simply "soldiers, dulled beings, vegetating in trenches and bunkers, wasting our time without hope, bragging, swearing, worrying, enduring, obeying; dehumanized caricatures." Their "totems," he says, "self, tobacco, food, sleep, and the whores of France."

Apparently, however, Willy was not completely dehumanized. He was wounded and sent home on leave several times, and he spent each of those few weeks of leave feverishly typing up his copious notes. Amid "pondering and self-scrutiny," which "revolved unceasingly around the war," he "found some hope again . . . Life went on." And then, unexpectedly, he volunteered for the front.

"Once more the vast expanse of Russia lay outside the windows. Gray skies, meadows, scattered trees, rarely a building. It was raining. Hay and grain were rotting away. I slept and drank . . . I was happy. In the middle of Russia, I at last felt at home. This was where I belonged; nowhere other than in this world with its horrors and sparse joys was it good to be. Only here did my soul find its strange element. . . ."

"I lay in my hurriedly dug rifle pit and, in spite of the proximity of the crashing shells, soon fell asleep. I was

awoken by an intensification of the firing and a hail of splinters. . . . We went over into counterattack. . . . Most of our little platoon had fallen. We got back to our gun and seconds later, began firing. The last of the Russians fled past us. The battle was over . . . The Russian soil was quick to accept corpses of any description — those of sons, as much as those of others. But I was alive. . . . I had seen and experienced death. Perhaps I would be marked by it as long as I lived."

Willy probably met his end on a June day, in or near Vitebsk. His mother held on to his papers until she died. A 70-year-old cousin inherited them, considered them valuable, and sought a publisher. Finally they reached a journalist with the newsweekly *Stern* who arranged their publication as "A Stranger to Myself," a 2003 bestseller in Germany.

So Sad to Fall in Battle

The battle for the Japanese island of Iwo Jima is the stuff of which legends are made. Author Kumiko Kakahashi has done remarkable research; he studied all General Kuribayashi's letters and interviewed all his surviving friends and relatives. Kakahashi wonders why Kuribayashi was sent to Iwo Jima in the first place. "Initially the Imperial General Headquarters had regarded Iwo Jima as important"; 20,000 Japanese soldiers were sent to defend it; "but as the Americans' invasion got nearer, the island was suddenly labeled worthless and cut off. The Japanese forces on Iwo Jima ended up having to fight with almost no support from the air force or the navy." Kakahashi believes that one reason Kuribayashi was sent to Iwo Jima was because he was a brilliant general. But another reason was undoubtedly his antiestablishment position about Japan's war with the United States. He opposed it. By sending him to Iwo Jima, headquarters got rid of him, and he became a victim.

The island had strategic importance for the United States, then anticipating an invasion of Japan, because its airfields could be used to launch a bombardment of the home islands. Kuribayashi was assigned the task of defending Iwo Jima, keeping the airfields out of U.S. control, and thus protecting the Japanese mainland. He was

given to understand that he and his men must fight to the death to keep the island out of U.S. hands. This book tells how he planned and conducted the island's defense against overwhelming odds, maintained the morale of his men under grueling conditions, and inspired them to fight and kill with ferocious tenacity.

On Feb. 23, 1945, six Marines hoisted the U.S. flag on the summit of Iwo's highest point, Mt. Suribachi. The flag-raising photo became an icon of the U.S. victory over Japan; it was reproduced on U.S. postage stamps and a huge bronze statue of it was erected in Arlington National Cemetery. The flag-raising, however, did not mark the end of the struggle; the battle for Iwo Jima had only begun. General Kuribayashi had made his plans.

He arrived on June 8, 1944, and walked around the entire island. Except for Suribachi, it was mostly flat, with little surface soil or vegetation, no fresh-water spring or brook — only whatever rainwater could be caught to drink. Contrary to the recommended practice of the Japanese top command, Kuribayashi decided that he would not attack the Americans upon landing but wait until got further inland. Also he decided that the island's defenses must be underground. He set his 20,000 men digging with picks, axes, and an occasional stick of dynamite. They encountered sulphur vapor and temperatures of 140 degrees Fahrenheit and could

They stole grain from under Nazi noses by digging a tunnel into a warehouse and dragging the grain out.

work in ten-minute shifts only. There was no entertainment on the island, and no liquor or "comfort women."

But Kuribayashi was a remarkable leader, always thoughtful of his men. He led by example, sharing their living conditions and their meager rations of food and water (one canteen per man per day). He encouraged them to write

letters home. He awarded military commendations and reported them to the emperor, so their families would learn of their exploits. He succeeded in maintaining their morale under gruesome conditions, all the while explaining not only that they must fight to their deaths but also that each of them should try to kill at least ten of the enemy.

On Dec. 7, 1944, the anniversary of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the Americans began bombing. On that single day, 192 fighters and bombers dropped more than 800 tons of bombs on Iwo, and cruisers and destroyers fired a naval barrage of 6,800 shells. This carpet bombing destroyed every tree, even every blade of grass on the island. But the underground world was untouched. At night the Japanese would climb out of their bunkers, repair their defenses, and retreat underground again. For 74 days, the Americans kept bombing. But Japanese ships continued to reach Iwo Jima with supplies, ammunition, and mail — until Feb. 11, 1945. Eight days later, the Americans landed.

They expected it would take five days to conquer the island; it took 36 days of vicious fighting. The place became a “hell on earth” for both sides. “Kuribayashi,” we are told, “had instructed his men to live a life more agonizing than death; ordered them to wring the very last drop out of their lives. But in a battle where neither victory nor a safe return home could be hoped for, he also would not allow his men to die heroic deaths.” The Japanese “conducted surprise attacks on the American camps at night . . . well planned operations. . . . In time the Americans devised countermeasures, and few of the attackers made it back alive. The underground bunkers echoed with the groans of the wounded and were suffused with the smell of sulfur and the stench of death. The Japanese had no way of burying the men who died in the bunkers and were forced to share their living space with their dead comrades.”

Finally, on the early morning of March 26, 1945, about 400 remaining Japanese soldiers, under the 50-year-old General Kuribayashi — formerly hale and hearty, but by then emaciated and frail from stress and starvation — attacked an American encampment.

The Americans by then did not believe that the Japanese could offer any organized resistance, and they panicked. “After a furious fight at close quarters lasting for around three hours, the Japanese had inflicted 170 casualties on the Americans. The surviving Japanese soldiers then made a charge on the airfields, where the majority of them were killed.” Iwo Jima was finally captured by the United States after 74

days of ruthless bombing and 36 days of vicious fighting. The Americans suffered 6,821 killed, 21,865 wounded; the Japanese lost 20,129 men, including General Kuribayashi. His body was not located, but his experience of war endures — in literary form. Like the experience of the other people whose lives have been recounted here, it survives as a witness to the horrors of the 20th century. □

“Breaking Dawn,” Book Four of the Twilight Series, by Stephenie Meyer. Little, Brown, 2008, 754 pages.

Vamps & Tramps

Jo Ann Skousen

If you walked into any bookstore or airport this summer, or Target or Kmart, for that matter, you saw the ubiquitous black book with a white chess queen protecting a red pawn. Barnes & Noble even commissioned a special-label chocolate bar from Godiva displaying the cover design. Looks interesting, right? Sort of reminiscent of Ursula LeGuin’s fine “Left Hand of Darkness.” Several Liberty readers have asked me what I know about the “Twilight” series by Stephenie Meyer that culminates in “Breaking Dawn,” and whether they should be reading this “runaway bestseller.”

My answer is yes and no. Yes, I have read all four books of the series, about a teenage girl who moves to the Pacific Northwest and falls in love with her lab partner, who turns out to be a vampire. And no, if you are just finding out about the series, you shouldn’t bother climbing on board. The destination simply is not worth the journey.

I began reading “Twilight” last summer, shortly after Book Two of the series, “New Moon,” knocked the final episode of Harry Potter out of first place on the New York Times list after just two weeks. What could be so good that it supplanted one of the most successful fantasy series in such short order?

Frankly, it was the luck of a publication date and the lack of originality of the author. By the time Book Seven of Harry Potter came out, everyone who planned on reading it was waiting with the intensity of a five-year-old watching for Christmas morning. If you were going to buy it, you bought it within the first week. So, of course, it skyrocketed to number one, and then plummeted just as quickly. Meanwhile, fans of “Twilight” were anxiously awaiting their own Book Two, and they scurried to the bookstores when it was released two weeks later. Since both books are populated by teenage members of the world of magic and the occult, reviewers began calling “Twilight” “the new Harry Potter,” and readers like me succumbed to the hype.

What I found was a pair of reasonably well written, reasonably interesting books with a target audience of teenage girls. The heroine, Bella Swan, is an average girl with average looks and average grades, clumsy and a bit accident prone, with no hobbies, interests, or particular skills. Not much of a role model. Nevertheless, she apparently is the soulmate of a devastatingly handsome, permanently 17, "vegetarian vampire" from the Edwardian age. ("Vegetarian" is Meyer's way of describing vampires who survive on animal instead of human blood.) They fall deeply in love, but because Bella is human, she will continue to age. The only way they can be happy together for eternity is for her to be "changed" as quickly as possible — that is, Edward needs to drink her blood and turn her into the undead so they can always be the same age.

The story introduces some fairly interesting metaphoric conflicts about the nature of marriage and growing up. Marriage does indeed change a girl into a different person. She does have to give up the multitude of choices available in childhood and choose one permanent path. She does incur physical changes that can be painful and unpleasant at first. So even though Book One wasn't a great book, I was able to bring to the reading my own set of values to contemplate.

Book Two, "New Moon," brings in a new teenage character, Jacob, who turns out to be a werewolf whose job is to protect the community from vampires. When vampire Edward runs away to protect Bella from himself, she turns to Jacob for friendship. With Jacob she goes to movies, works on cars, rides motorcycles, hikes, swims, and in short, has a life. Again, this book introduces a topic worth contemplating, especially for its target audience. Should you choose the guy who turns your heart to mush but never takes you anywhere or does anything besides look longingly into your eyes, or should you choose the guy who is your best friend, the one who warms your heart as well as your body? (As a vampire, Edward is cold and hard like marble.)

Book Three, "Eclipse," continues in this vein, with Edward returning but trying to convince Bella that human life is too wonderful to throw away. If

he changes her into a vampire she will experience agonizing pain and insatiable desire for human blood. To protect her family from her new personality, she will have to leave and never see them again — somewhat reminiscent of the biblical injunction to "leave father and mother and cleave only to" one's spouse. With Jacob, on the other hand, she could enjoy normal physical experiences, college, hobbies, career, and eventually motherhood. But all Bella wants is to stare into Edward's gorgeous eyes and touch his gorgeous body, yada yada ad infinitum. Surely Meyer's target audience will see that friendship is preferable to lust! Surely that's where she is leading . . . isn't she? Just wait for Book Four.

Besides the romantic issue of how to choose the right guy, each book contains exciting showdowns with dangerous non-vegetarian vampires who want to kill Bella, and Edward and Jacob both risking everything to protect her. What teenage reader wouldn't love that? The books aren't great, and as a role model for today's young woman, Bella is probably the worst. But they're entertaining enough for a long airplane ride or car trip (and, as a teacher, I like to stay up to date with pop culture.)

Meanwhile, I have avoided the Twilight website, fan sites, and especially anything Stephenie Meyer writes or says about herself or her books. She is the worst kind of narcissistic, self-adulating author. She seems to think she is the first person to have written a successful novel, and her postings are little more than fanatic self-indulgences, full of uninteresting details about how she writes and what she thinks about. Spare me.

So I shouldn't have been surprised to discover that the final book in the series is 754 pages of self-indulgent drivel. Instead of continuing the love triangle and resolving it with an appropriate sense of loss for the one who isn't chosen, or even demonstrating the conflict of having to give up human activities in order to be with Edward, Meyer marries Bella off to Edward in the first scene and then sends them off on a mortal-immortal, headboard breaking, pillow thrashing honeymoon, during which Bella becomes pregnant — she didn't have to give up any of those human experiences after all.

When Bella's half-vampire spawn literally kicks her to death in utero, Edward quickly injects Bella with venom to change her into a vampire — injects, as in "hypodermic needle." Here is a man whose lust for blood has been kept in check for more than a century, waiting for the perfect moment with his perfect soul mate to ingest the blood he so carefully avoids. Talk about saving yourself for marriage! The premise calls for a scene at least as erotic as those in the original "Dracula," by Bram Stoker. But Meyer gives Bella a hypo to the heart.

So now Bella must begin her agonizing initiation into vampiredom, right? Not quite. Seems that Bella is immune to the usual lust for human blood. So she doesn't have to give up her association with human friends and family after all. Then there's the other leg of the romantic triangle — Jacob, whose heart ought to be breaking. At least then the fans would have something to swoon over and continue to discuss. But guess what? Werewolves "imprint" when they meet their soulmates, and Jacob imprints with Bella's baby (talk about taking the "wolf" metaphor to new heights — or lows). So no unrequited love, no eternal longing, no reason for fans even to continue the Edward-Jacob debate. Edward gets Bella, and Jacob gets Bella's baby. Everyone is happy. Yuck!

After 550 pages of this goo, a standoff with the nonvegetarian vampire emperor finally looms, with the promise of a good battle for the baby (seems they have a rule against infant vampires). At last, some action! But despite the foreshadowing of a detailed escape plan that might at least have led to some excitement, the potential battle is resolved with a few choice words, and everyone shakes hands and goes home.

This is just too much "happily ever after" for anyone to take. Nothing happens. Nothing. In 754 pages.irate fans are calling Meyer's final book mere "fanfiction" of the worst caliber, and I agree. This book should signal the end of the Stephenie Meyer Fan Club, and not a moment too soon. Meyer needs to be put out of her misery as an author. She is her own number one fan and worst enemy. Kathy Bates, where are you? □

"Tell No One," directed by Guillaume Canet. Eurocorp/Music Box USA, 2007, 125 minutes.

In a Dark Wood

Jo Ann Skousen

This is the time of year when movies that were featured at Sundance and the spring film festivals begin trickling in to local art houses. While these movies seldom enjoy wide release or big box office receipts, they often are the most

interesting and well-made films of the year. In this issue I review four award-winning independent films that caught my attention this month.

"Vertigo" meets "The Big Sleep" in this French thriller, and the result is movie magic. Even if you didn't hear the dialogue you would know this

was a French film, beginning as it does with the camera panning a large outdoor dinner party populated by happy, boisterous folks eating enthusiastically, drinking wine, gossiping, and arguing politics congenially. So French!

At the center of the party are pediatrician Alexandre Beck (François Cluzet) and his beautiful wife, Margot (Marie Josée Croze). On the way home from the party the two stop at their favorite lake for a midnight swim. As she runs playfully (and nakedly) through the woods, Margot suddenly screams. When Alexandre dashes frantically to find her (equally naked — hence the decision of the distributors to run the film without a rating) his head is bashed, and the screen goes black.

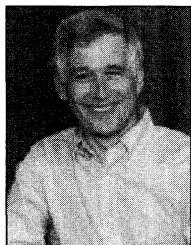
Now it is eight years later, and Alexandre is still grieving the loss of his wife when he receives a stunning email that appears to be from her, setting up an internet appointment and warning him, "Tell no one." When he opens the link at the appointed hour, he sees a video in real time of Margot entering a subway station. From that moment the film becomes a Hitchcockian thriller,

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full of hairpin plot twists, gargoylean characters, and limitless suspects. Characters come out of nowhere to help or to thwart our hero as he desperately tries to find out whether his wife is alive, while simultaneously having to prove yet again that he did not kill her.

Hollywood doesn't make films like this anymore, but thank goodness the

French do. Like classic film noir, "Tell No One" takes us into the often seedy world of the elegant upper class, with a story that works, start to finish. The plot is complex, sexy, and deliberately, deliciously confusing; it never makes a misstep. Tense, tender, and even funny at times, it's one of the best films I've seen this year. □

"Frozen River," directed by Courtney Hunt. Cohen Media Group, 2008, 97 minutes.

Over the River and in the Trunk

Jo Ann Skousen

This film is about an unlikely pair of women smuggling immigrants from Canada to the United States, but I promise you it is not a message film and it has no political agenda. It doesn't make a case for or against immigration; it doesn't even make a case for better welfare benefits for poor families. In fact, the final scene seems to argue that the government ought to butt out and let every community govern itself. "Frozen River" is a film about families, and what some people will do to provide for them.

As the film opens, a disheartened Ray Eddy (Melissa Leo) realizes that her husband has run off to Atlantic City with their savings. Nothing much is said about the missing husband, but an "Easy Does It" sticker pasted on the bumper of his car gives us a clue.

All Ray wants is a doublewide trailer with good insulation for the winter. It's almost Christmas, and she finally had the money to have it delivered; but now it's gone, and she's going to lose her \$1,500 deposit as well if she can't come up with the balance within a week.

While trying to track down her husband at the local Bingo parlor, Ray catches Lila (Misty Upham), stealing his car. A tough, single mother who lives on the Mohawk reservation, Lila knows a man who needs a car with a button-operated trunk. What she doesn't tell Ray is that she needs the car to make extra money smuggling immigrants across a frozen expanse of river that marks the border between Canada and the United States.

Promising to take her to a man who will buy the car for \$2,000, Lila tricks Ray into making a smuggling run with her. At first Ray is aghast, but after her initial fears subside, she chooses in desperation to continue smuggling until she has enough money to pay for the trailer. The two women experience several harrowing moments during the drops leading up to their ominous and inevitable One Last Run.

What makes this film remarkable is how well it takes the viewer into a world we often see but don't acknowledge. Everything about it is naturalistic, from the mismatched wardrobe to the unadorned sets to the unselfconscious acting. We are drawn in by the strength

and determination of women whom we might describe as weak and inconsequential if we met them on the street.

Melissa Leo's Ray is worn out but determined. Her wiry figure and weathered face, now etched with worry and weariness, belie a beauty of long ago. She has a part-time job at the Dollar Store, but the full-time position she was promised has been given to a younger and cuter sales clerk. She's a conscientious mother, determined to keep her boys in school and out of trouble. She doesn't want much — just a trailer with insulation — and she doesn't ask for handouts: her kids don't even seem to take advantage of the free lunch program at school. (She searches the couch cushions for lunch money every morning.) We see people like her every day, but do we bother to know them?

Meanwhile, Ray's teenage son T.J. (Charlie McDermott) is experiencing desperation of his own. With his father gone on a gambling junket, he has to step up and be the man of the house. He wants enough money to stop eating popcorn and Tang for dinner, and he wants to buy his little brother Hot Wheels for Christmas. Is that so much to ask? His mother won't let him get a job to supplement the family income, so he turns to a job outside the legal sector — stealing a credit card number and selling it to a classmate. The juxtaposition

She doesn't ask for handouts: her kids don't even seem to take advantage of the free lunch program at school.

of mother and son as they reluctantly enter a life of crime while tenderly caring for the younger son is touching and heartbreaking.

Lila, too, is motivated by good intentions. Her baby has been taken away from her by his paternal grandmother, and she needs to earn enough money to provide a decent home in order to get him back. She is caught between two generations, an adult because she is a mother, but still a kid like T.J. by

age, with a tribal community trying to keep her out of trouble. Upham plays her perfectly, capturing the bravado of youth and the despair of lost opportunity — a girl forced by circumstances to act like a grownup. She pretends she doesn't care and isn't afraid, but we can see past the facade.

None of these characters wants to take advantage of others or break the law. Each is willing to work, and work

hard. But there isn't enough money at the Dollar Store, or the bingo parlor, or shoveling snow after school, to provide even the basic standard of living that you and I take for granted. "Frozen River" captures the bleakness of a landscape in which no matter how hard you try, you can't get ahead. Still, you can't stop trying. It's the indefatigable spirit of the three main characters that makes this a powerful film. □

"Man on Wire," directed by James Marsh. Discovery Films/BBC, 2008, 102 minutes.

One Small Step

Jo Ann Skousen

Standing taller than any other edifice for many years, the World Trade Center presented a manmade Mt. Everest, virtually begging to be conquered. And conquered it was, near its birth (1974), in its heyday (1993), and at its death (2001). "Man on Wire" is the story of the first assault on the Twin Towers, shortly after it was dedicated, made by an unlikely Edmund Hillary and his motley band of Tenzing Norgays.

In 1993, Islamic terrorists attacked the towers, with only limited success. But in 1970, when only one tower was open and the other was still under construction, an assault was already underway. Philippe Petit, a boyish street entertainer and high wire walker, happened to see an architect's sketch of the Towers in a magazine he found in his dentist's waiting room, and his dream was born: to walk on a wire strung between the two buildings, 200 yards apart and 1,350 feet above the ground.

Walking on air was nothing new

for Petit. As a street performer, he was always looking for new challenges for his high-wire act. While planning his walk between the towers of the WTC, he walked on a wire cable strung between the towers of Notre Dame and on another strung between the pylons of the bridge in Australia's Sydney Harbor. This was quite illegal, of course, but as Petit's partner in artistic crime, Jean François, explained, "It was against the law, but not wicked or mean." Finally, on Aug. 7, 1974, when construction crews were still finishing the top floors, Petit was ready to tackle the towers.

Being outside the law was part of the allure; walking on air was the other. Director James Marsh called it "the artistic heist of the century." Indeed, the film opens more like a spy thriller than a documentary, with television shots of Richard Nixon intercut with reenacted footage of the perpetrators planning their assault. Marsh's intent, I think, is to provide an historic reference point: this happened in 1974. But it

makes Petit's plottings seem almost like an assassination attempt, and sets the tone early for the documentary: these men were artists, but also rebels who enjoyed flirting with the other side of the law.

Petit seems to have been a showman with a sense of history even in his youth. As he planned his walk, he apparently surrounded himself with a production team and camera man, making this a documentary literally "40 years in the making." "Man on Wire" comprises a combination of media, including recent interviews with those who planned and executed the walk, original footage and photographs taken 35–40 years ago, and reenactments filmed in grainy black-and-white to fill in the gaps. The original footage is the most compelling. It was taken by a gifted but uncredited cinematographer who captured Petit's buoyant, persuasive personality, and almost Manson-like control over his long-time followers, most of whom were older than he. The cameraman moves in for intimate closeups and pans out for humorous frolics with a talent far beyond that of the average friend with a movie camera.

The film drags occasionally, especially during the interviews, but watching how they did it, and how they were nearly caught and prevented, makes the accomplishment that much more amazing. Unfortunately, the cinematographer seems not to have been present during the walk, or for some reason was not able to film it successfully; perhaps no one realized just how far away 1,350 feet would be. But the still photographs taken by his cohorts on the roof are breathtaking, especially when backed by the airy strains of Erik Satie's "Gymnopédie."

Eyewitnesses say he cavorted on the wire for 45 minutes, dancing and bouncing on the cable as he became increasingly confident. Even 35 years later, the perpetrators tear up as they speak of the wonder of that moment, watching a man cross the wire eight times before he finally returned to the safety of a steel structure and accepted his honors — not a medal around his neck, but bracelets around his wrists.

What makes this documentary so fascinating is its obvious allusion to the later assault that would destroy the Towers. Petit's footage of the crew

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breaking ground to begin the building is eerily similar to the rubble of Ground Zero after its demise. Petit filmed the ironworks that formed the skeleton of the Towers whose twisted remains would become iconic. Like the devout Muslims who destroyed the buildings, Petit's accomplices were fanatically devoted to a dream. They plotted the entrance and execution of their assault with the same stealth as a gang of bank robbers — or terrorists. We see footage of Petit carefully practicing his high-wire walk, just as the later terrorists would carefully train to fly a jet. In one photograph of Petit's amazing walk, an airplane is seen in full view, seeming to head right for the Tower, grimly foreshadowing 9/11. After the walk, Petit, now a media hero, took full advantage of the opportunity for wanton sex with women who threw themselves at him — not exactly 72 virgins, but close.

The terrorists who destroyed the Towers were, like Petit, driven by a zealous sense of mission. Did they also see it as an artistic endeavor? Did they plot their assault with the same youthful exuberance? Did they too find an "inside man" to help them accomplish their goal, as conspiracy theorists suggest? Did they face death with the same

tear-filled elation? Marsh never overtly makes the connection, and he doesn't show film from the 2001 destruction. But he seems to imply, through the visual impact of his documentary, that the Towers were built to be conquered.

Marsh even seems to imply that art is art, and that one assault is equal to the other in its artistry. But Petit's assault was harmless, "against the law, but not wicked or mean," as Jean François asserted. He risked his own life, but no one else's. As Petit began his walk, he dropped his cloak, and for several seconds, perhaps even minutes, as it floated down, his friends on the ground thought it was his body, and that he had fallen. One cannot watch this part of the documentary without thinking, angrily, about the victims who plummeted to earth 30 years later. That was no joke, and it wasn't art: it was wicked and it was mean.

But this jarring juxtaposition is Marsh's, not Petit's. Philippe was just a man totally absorbed in the dream of walking between buildings higher than any others in the world, on the thinnest of cables. What he accomplished was breathtaking and exhilarating, a masterpiece of performance art never to be equaled. □

"Hamlet 2," directed by Andrew Fleming. Fox Searchlight, 2008, 92 minutes.

Those Who Can't, Teach

Jo Ann Skousen

How could there be a sequel to *Hamlet*? They all die in the end, right?

That's part of the joke in "*Hamlet 2*," an irreverent, profane, laugh-out-loud parody of the Earnest Inspirational Teacher film genre. Dana Marschz (Steve Coogan) is the epitome of the adage, "Those who can, do; those who

can't, teach." Not even good enough to be a has-been, he's a never-was actor with deep unresolved father issues and a handful of lousy television commercials to his credit. Now he teaches high school drama, roller skates to school because he can't afford a car, wears caf-tans and no underwear to improve his sperm count, takes in a boarder (David Arquette) to help pay the rent, yet mod-

els himself as a teacher on a par with those in "*Dead Poets Society*," and "*Goodbye, Mr. Chips*."

While he is nothing like any of the teachers in these iconic films, Marschz does manage to inspire, in a goofy, pre-tentious way. That's largely because Coogan will stop at nothing to demonstrate the shame and degradation of his character. Coogan rises above parody because he plays Marschz with such complete and utter lack of dignity.

When budget cuts require the school to cancel the shop classes, Marschz's class of two earnest young white actors (one girl, one gay) is invaded by 20 Latinos who otherwise would be in shop. Yes, the stereotypes are broad and irreverent, but because the film revels in its political incorrectness, it isn't offensive. When further budget cuts threaten to end the drama program as well, Marschz realizes that he has one chance left to prove himself and save the program. He decides to write and produce a musical called "*Hamlet 2*." He writes feverishly, and when it is finished exults to his wife (Catherine Keener), "This is the hardest 47 billion hours of my life!"

While telling Mr. Marschz about the invasion of new students, his fresh-faced young wannabe actress (Phoebe Stolle) confesses, "In prayer circle I pray for racial understanding, but I still get anxious around ethnics. I can't help it — I'm afraid of ethnics!" Of course, the ethnics save the day and the play, meanwhile smashing the stereotypes, but not before providing hilarious moments in the movie.

One of the funniest continuing gags is the presence of actress Elisabeth Shue ("*Leaving Las Vegas*,") playing herself as an actress who is now a nurse because acting was just too hard on the ego. What does she miss most about acting? Kissing, she tells the drama class. "You don't get to make out with your patients when you're a nurse."

This is a film to see when you're in the mood for a silly, over-the-top, profane romp with friends who are ready for the same. I hate to compare anything to "*Napoleon Dynamite*"; it has become so trite to do so — but with Marschz's pageboy hair, buck teeth, roller skates, and deadpan sincerity, I couldn't help thinking that he is what Napoleon would be when he grew up. □

"Tropic Thunder," directed by Ben Stiller. Dreamworks, 2008, 106 minutes.

Hollywood Against Itself

Todd Skousen

The first few minutes of "Tropic Thunder" are like nothing you've ever seen. You're snacking on your popcorn, watching the previews, waiting for the movie to begin, when a crazy commercial for Alpa Chino's "Booty Sweat" sports drink flashes across the screen, followed by "previews" of sequels to movies you've never seen. By the time you see Robert Downey, Jr. and Tobey Maguire as two priests staring longingly into each other's eyes during the preview of "Satan's Alley," the audience is rumbling with confused excitement, and friends begin asking "Are we really seeing this?"

It won't be the only time that question will be asked during this wacky comedy about the best "fake true war hero story ever made." "Tropic Thunder" is a comic gem that is part "Blazing Saddles," with its lampooning of Hollywood and the process of filmmaking, part Vietnam parody a la "Hot Shots," and mostly an illustration of what happens when some talented actors make a movie they actually enjoy.

This is not just another Hollywood film that studio execs green-lighted because it had the star power, explosive special effects, and cheap one-liners that are needed to make a few bucks at the box office. "Tropic Thunder" is Ben Stiller's creative baby. Having worked on the project for nearly a decade, he refused to allow what he knew was something special to be rushed out

before it was ready. And it clearly was worth the wait.

As the hilariously raunchy fake previews come to a close and the real film begins, we find ourselves immersed in a bloody "Platoon" parody full of overacting and stereotypical war scene characters. There's the tough nut walking around swearing up a storm (Jack Black), the black guy shouting ghetto slang (Robert Downey, Jr.), and the new man (Jay Baruchel), who, of course, dies early on as a bayonet rips out his intestines. Violence and gore abound, culminating in what is supposed to be a very touching scene in which Downey holds what's left of Ben Stiller's blown-off hands, and the two actors attempt to outcry one another. That's when the director has had enough and shouts "Cut," intruding on the audience and reminding us "this is only a movie."

"Director" Damien Cockburn ("Hamlet 2" star Steve Coogan) cannot deal with these pathetic actors anymore. He has to find a way to manage their egos and lack of talent. He decides to take them off the grid and out into "the shit" to see what happens when prima donnas are confronted by the "reality of war" — created by fake explosives, of course. But as they venture into the jungle, the plan goes awry in a shocking way, and the actors must come to grips with their new reality.

The shifting of reality and illusion continues throughout the film. "Tropic Thunder" lampoons the confusion of actors who take their craft and their "tools of human emotion" too seri-

ously. Downey carries the film with his depiction of Kirk Lazarus, an Australian actor (poking fun at Russell Crowe?) who undergoes a pigment-changing operation and becomes the African-American character he plays. Lazarus is the epitome of the method actor taking his craft to ridiculous levels and nearly losing himself in the process: "I'm the dude playing the dude disguised as another dude."

The funniest part of the film is probably the discussion between Lazarus and Tugg Speedman (Stiller) about why Speedman did not win an Academy Award for his role in the fake movie "Simple Jack," where Speedman played a retarded farm boy in the most stereotypical of ways. His stutter, stare, and curious body motions made his performance as offensive as it could possibly be, and therefore very funny. Speedman expected an Oscar, in the tradition of Tom Hanks ("Forrest Gump") and Dustin Hoffman ("Rain Man"); but Lazarus explains, "You went full retard. Sean Penn, 'I am Sam,' full retard: no Oscar. Never go full retard." Fortunately for the audience, "Tropic Thunder" does not follow this mantra. Every performance is full out, no holds barred, no dignity spared. Full funny.

"Tropic Thunder" lambastes everything about Hollywood, including the babied stars, the fawning agent (Matthew McConaughey), and most certainly the callous studio head (Tom Cruise). Ironically, while making fun of actors and their "me-first mentality," Stiller actually displays his considerable talent for directing a large group of big-ego actors. The many talented people in this film come together so well and are given such freedom in their roles that we end up with some great performances.

Nobody benefits from this controlled-chaos directing style more than Cruise, whose unadvertised participation in the film was supposed to be a cameo surprise until shots of him with a bald head, big nose, and fat suit began appearing on the internet. Now he's the character you can't wait to see. Perhaps it's the anonymity of hiding behind the prosthetic makeup, or perhaps it's just the opportunity of being on set with some of the funniest actors in the business, but Cruise seems to forget that he's Tom Cruise "playing the dude

disguised as another dude" and lets himself embrace the role of Les Grossman, studio mogul.

Of course, in Hollywood the guy who controls the money is always the bad guy, but Grossman, a role developed by Cruise (who was originally hired to play the agent), nearly steals the show. His ass-kicking of subordinates (he orders the key grip to punch the director in the face), his disregard for the safety of his actors, and his

sadistic glee in telling his assistant that "a nutless monkey could do your job" are outrageously funny. Cruise may have created his most memorable role.

As a comic director, Stiller has proven himself once again. He encounters a few setbacks in this film, but they are minimal. Jack Black, though funny, is underutilized — or maybe it would be better to say he is outshone by his fellow actors. And the plot, while serviceable, is not all that engaging. Once into

its third act, the movie begins to drag: the drug dealer antagonists are somewhat generic, and their leader, a young boy, is a terrible actor who makes no sense as a character. But these drawbacks detract very little. Stiller couldn't get everything right, but he came close.

Just consider that this movie makes audiences appreciate Tom Cruise again. If you've taken on that challenge and succeeded, I'd say you've made a pretty darn good movie. □

Letters, from page 6

decade, with present temperatures barely above the 30-year average."

Global temperature land-ocean index

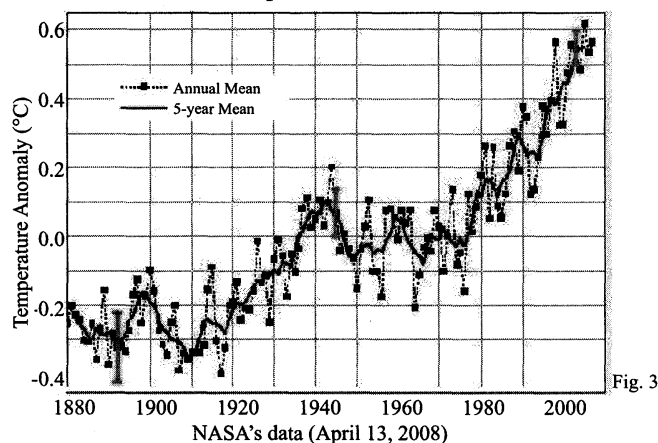


Fig. 3

Annual global temperature

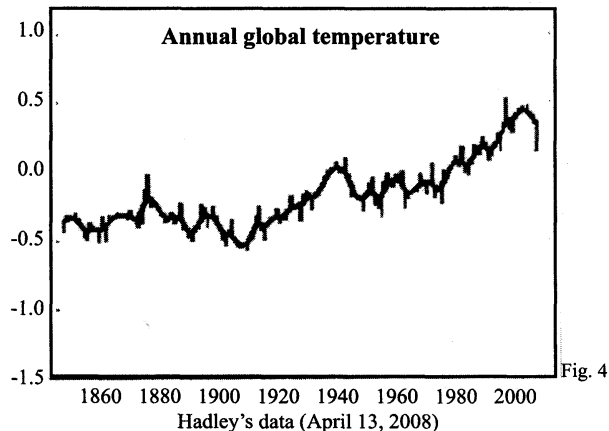


Fig. 4

Finally, Olson asks why not compare 2007 temperatures to other years in the 1990s, rather than to 1998, which was the high point (at least in three of the four data sources). He claims 2007 was warmer than all of these years "and all years from 1997 back in time for at least the last 2,000 years." He cites Wikipedia as the source for this assertion. First of all, Wikipedia is not an authoritative source for anything. Anybody can put information on Wikipedia whether it is true or not. In this case, the Wikipedia address Olson used for temperature comparisons (<http://tinyurl.com/6yp2n8>) lists as references three studies involving Michael Mann, including his "hockey

stick" study. This study, as my article pointed out, has been thoroughly discredited by climatologists, statisticians, and the National Academy of Sciences, which declared it to have a "validation skill not significantly different from zero."

The chart in Figure 5 shows the earth was much warmer 500 and 900 years ago and that there were even warmer times around 500 BC and 1000 BC. All of these times had no factories or automobiles. They also had far smaller human populations, who devoted much less land to agriculture and cut far fewer trees. Note, too, that now we have barely reached the average temperature for the last 3,000 years. The chart also shows the current warming trend began more than 250 years ago, before the Industrial Revolution. It was a natural recovery from the Little Ice Age.

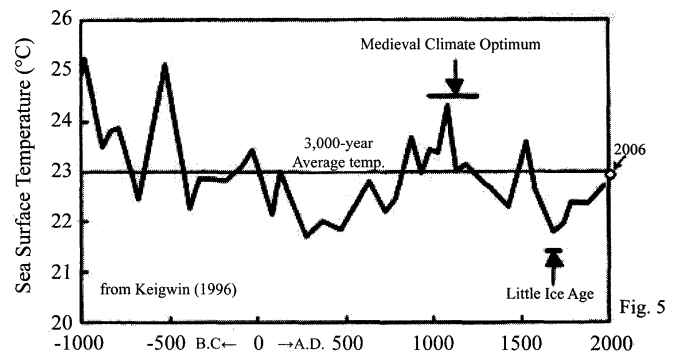


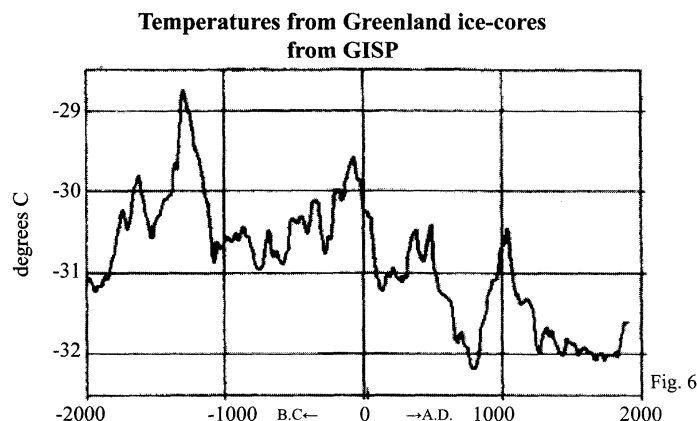
Fig. 5

The widely publicized melting of ice sheets in the Arctic, Antarctic, and Greenland was due to decadal oscillations in ocean and air currents that are unrelated to carbon dioxide or greenhouse warming. On July 17, 2008, the Science & Public Policy Institute stated: "Towards the end of the 20th century, the two most powerful of these oscillations, the Pacific Decadal Oscillation and the Atlantic Multidecadal Oscillation, were both in their warming phases. In 1998, their effect, combined with an exceptional but not unprecedented El Niño Southern Oscillation, caused a very strong upward spike in temperature. . . . [R]esearchers at NASA last year concluded that the reason for the record shrinkage of the Arctic ice-cap was an acceleration of poleward sea and air currents caused by the warming phase of the Atlantic Multidecadal Oscillation." Those oscillations have now reversed.

The disappearance of Arctic ice is by no means anything new. The areas where ice melted in recent years were, in fact, open water a century ago. We know this because Roald Amundsen and other explorers sailed their ships in these waters. This area has been freezing and thawing for millions of years, and at times the Arctic icecap completely disappeared. It always recovered,

and Environment & Climate News recently reported "the 2005–2007 data confirm Greenland's ice melt has returned to normal." Data from weather stations on the southern coast of Greenland show almost all decades between 1915 and 1965 were as warm or warmer than the 1995 to 2005 decade. In the 1920s, when mankind's emissions of carbon dioxide were nine times lower than now, Greenland's temperature increased 2 to 4 degrees C in less than ten years, which is against all the predictions of the climate models. Summer temperatures are the most relevant to Greenland's ice sheet melting rates, and summer temperatures at the summit of the ice sheet have declined 2.2 degrees C per decade since 1987.

The chart below (Figure 6) shows 4,000 years of temperatures from ice cores drilled into the Greenland ice sheet. Note that for most of this time temperatures were well above more recent times, and some periods were markedly warmer and show far larger swings than the latest uptrend.



The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reported that Antarctic ice in 2007 reached its largest extent in recorded history. In April 2008 climatologist Patrick Michaels wrote "the coverage of ice surrounding Antarctica is almost exactly 2 million square miles above where it is historically supposed to be at this time of year. It's farther above normal than it has ever been for any month in climatological records." James Taylor of the Heartland Institute noted that "photographs distributed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration showed penguins and other cold-weather creatures able to stand further north on Southern Hemisphere sea ice than has ever been recorded."

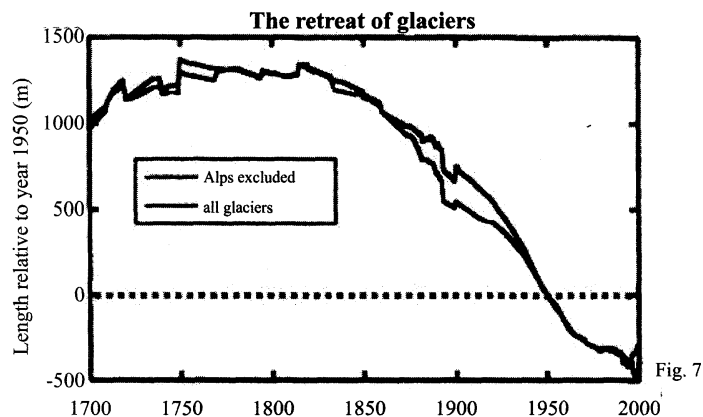
Most of the scare stories about warming in the Antarctic have focused on the peninsula, which has been warming for decades. What those stories don't tell you is that the peninsula comprises only 2% of Antarctica while the other 98% has been cooling, that there are both surface and subsurface volcanoes in the area, and that there is no basis for inferring that what is happening on the peninsula will determine the climate for the rest of the continent. That would be like the tail wagging the dog.

Alarms have also been raised about glaciers disappearing, but the public is usually not told about the glaciers that are advancing. A recent issue of 21st Century Science and Technology states: "Since 1980, there has been an advance of more than 55% of the 625 mountain glaciers under observation by the World Glacier Monitoring group in Zurich. (From 1926 to 1960, some 70–95% of these glaciers were in retreat.)" A CBS program on global warming last year focused on the extensive retreat of the O'Higgins glacier in Patagonia, the fastest-melting glacier in South America. The program did not tell you that the Perito Moreno Glacier —

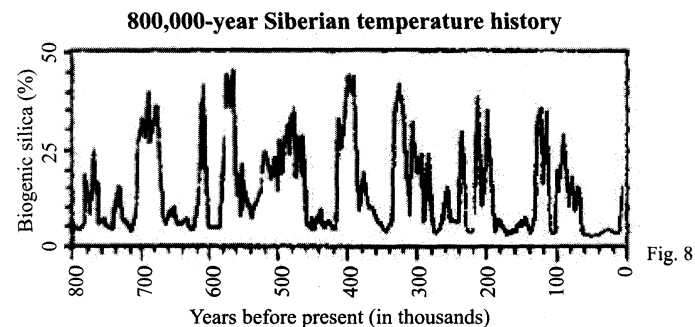
the largest glacier in Patagonia — is advancing at the rate of seven feet per day. Nor did it mention that Chile's Pio XI Glacier, the largest glacier in the southern hemisphere, is also growing.

In Europe many glaciers have not retreated back to their positions in the Medieval Warm Period, when there was no industrial civilization producing greenhouse gases. The Aletsch and Grindelwald glaciers (Switzerland) were much smaller between A.D. 800 and 1000 than now. The latter glacier is still larger than it was in 1588. In Iceland today, the Vatnajökull glacier — the largest in Europe — and also the Drangajökull glacier are far more extensive than in the Middle Ages, and farms remain buried beneath their ice.

Figure 7 is an intriguing chart by J. Oerlemans of 169 glacier records. It shows glaciers have been receding since 1750, with the trend accelerating after about 1820. The electric light bulb hadn't been invented yet (Thomas Edison wasn't even born), and the first commercial electric power plant was not built until 1881–82. Henry Ford began assembly line production in 1913, but by then half of the glacier loss from 1800 to 2000 had already occurred. And 70% of the glacier shortening occurred before 1940.



Siberia's Lake Baikal is the world's deepest lake. It contains more water than all five of North America's Great Lakes combined. Fed by over 300 rivers and far from the moderating effects of any ocean, it offers a pristine, uninterrupted sedimentary record that permits a highly accurate reconstruction of temperatures over a broad area. Environmental researcher Anson Mackay has found increased biogenic silica in sediments correlates with warmer temperatures. Figure 8 is a graph showing temperature changes from the Baikal sedimentary record.



Three things stand out about this graph: (1) as Mackay states, "Warming in the Lake Baikal region commenced before rapid increases in greenhouse gases," (2) the warming trend began from one of the coldest periods in the last 800,000 years, and (3) the latest warming is puny compared to many periods in the past. □

Dallas

The cultural construction of advanced physics, from the City Hall Blog at the *Dallas Morning News*:

In a special meeting about Dallas County traffic tickets, County commissioners were discussing problems with the central collections office that is used to process traffic ticket payments.

Commissioner Kenneth Mayfield, who is white, said it seemed that central collections "has become a black hole" because paperwork reportedly has become lost in the office. Commissioner John Wiley Price, who is black, interrupted him with a loud "Excuse me!" He then corrected his colleague, saying the office has become a "white hole."

That prompted Judge Thomas Jones, who is black, to demand an apology from Mayfield for his racially insensitive analogy.

Mount Isa, Australia

Necessity is the mother of aesthetics, from the *Melbourne Herald-Sun*:

The mayor of an outback mining town has come under fire for urging unattractive women to move in, assuring them they will find a man because there is a shortage of women.

John Moloney, mayor of Mount Isa in northwestern Queensland, said his town was a place for "ugly ducklings to flourish into beautiful swans" and called on the "beauty-disadvantaged" to flock there.

In the face of outrage over his remarks, Moloney stood by his comments, telling national radio that "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Beauty can be a good set of teeth, beauty is nice wavy hair. Beauty can be blue eyes or green eyes."

Beaumont, Texas

All in a day's work, from the *Beaumont Enterprise*:

From the witness stand, officer Keith Breiner gave lurid testimony where the most intimate details of a bungled felony prostitution investigation were revealed.

Breiner is one of two officers suspended indefinitely without pay for engaging in sex acts during the undercover investigation. Breiner stated that Lt. Curtis Breaux told him he would have to have sex with the women to make the case, and argued that because he did what he was asked to do, the punishment violated his constitutional rights.

"I don't agree that he should have had sex. I don't agree that Breaux told him he should have sex," police chief Frank Coffin said.

Assistant City Attorney Joseph Sanders asked Breiner if he enjoyed having sex with the women. "If you are asking if I had an orgasm, yes. It was a job, sir," Breiner said. "I didn't have pleasure doing this. I was paid to do it."

Mountain View, Calif.

A case of mistaken identity, from the police report log in the *Mountain View Voice*:

Police received a report of a newborn infant in a trash can. Upon investigating, officers discovered it was only a burrito.

Seattle

Enhancement of general awareness in Ecotopia, reported by KING5-TV:

"Car-free days" is part of Mayor Greg Nickels' campaign to encourage people to walk, bike, or take mass transit.

One neighborhood is closed off to car traffic during selected weekends this summer. On Sunday it was the area around 14th and Republican on Capitol Hill.

"I think it promotes awareness of whatever we're promoting awareness of," said resident Thomas Hubbard.

Xenia, Ohio

Extraordinary compliance with the requirement that food-service employees wash their hands, reported by the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*:

Some workers at the Burger King on Orange Street in Xenia are in hot water with the health department, after an employee took a bubble bath in a store sink.

"My first thought was 'oh my god,'" said Greene County Health Commissioner Mark McDonnell.

Fort Hays, Kan.

Bad moon on the rise, reported by KCTV:

A professor at a Kansas university who dropped his pants and mooned a room full of students and teachers is under investigation after video of the incident was posted on YouTube, officials said.

"We're sure that there's probably some facts and information that's just not available. I mean, you see a lot on the video, but we need to make sure everything is revealed before we take any action," said Fort Hays provost Larry Gould.

Chicago

One step closer to victory in the War on Drugs, from the *Chicago Sun-Times*:

Tiny plastic bags used to sell small quantities of heroin, crack cocaine, marijuana, and other drugs would be banned in Chicago, under a crackdown advanced by a City Council committee.

Lt. Kevin Navarro, commanding officer of the Chicago Police Department's Narcotics and Gang Unit, said the ordinance will be an "important tool" to go after grocery stores, health food stores and other businesses.

Health Committee Chairman Ed Smith said the ban is part of a desperate effort to stop what he called "the most destructive force" in Chicago neighborhoods. "We need to use every measure that we possibly can to stop it because it is destroying our kids," he said.

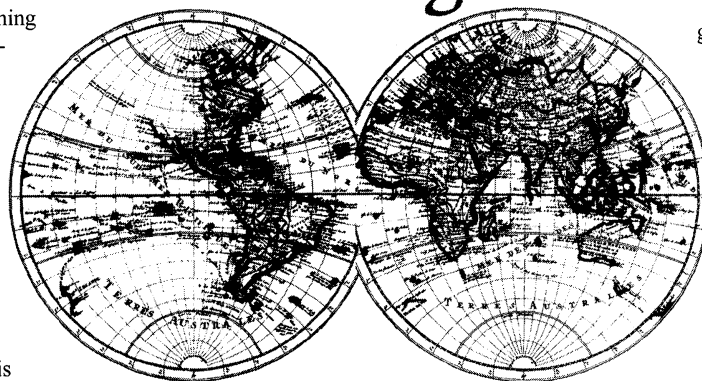
Berne, Switzerland

The perils of great art, as noted by the AFP:

A giant inflatable dog turd created by the American artist Paul McCarthy was blown from its moorings at a Swiss museum, bringing down a power line and breaking a window before landing in the grounds of a children's home.

The exhibit, entitled Complex Shit, is the size of a house. It has a safety system that is supposed to deflate it in bad weather, but it did not work on this occasion.

Terra Incognita

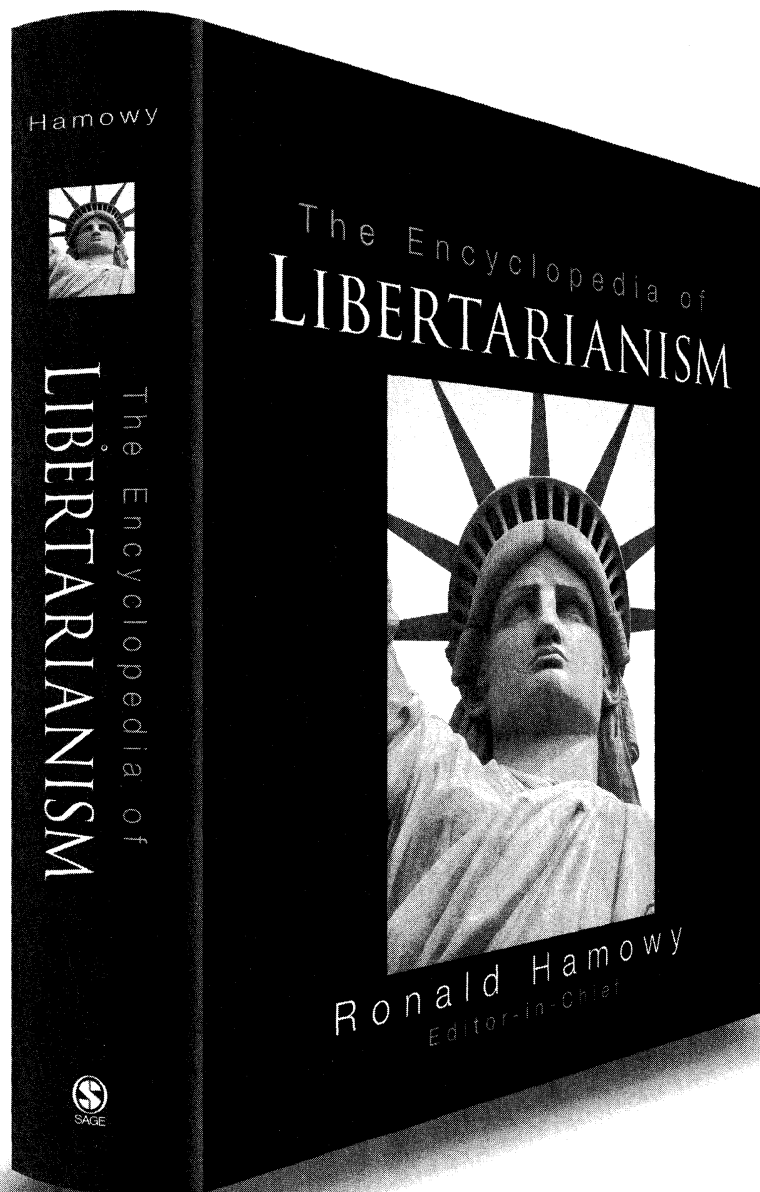


Special thanks to Russell Garrard, Tom Isenberg, and Philip Todd for contributions to Terra Incognita.

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

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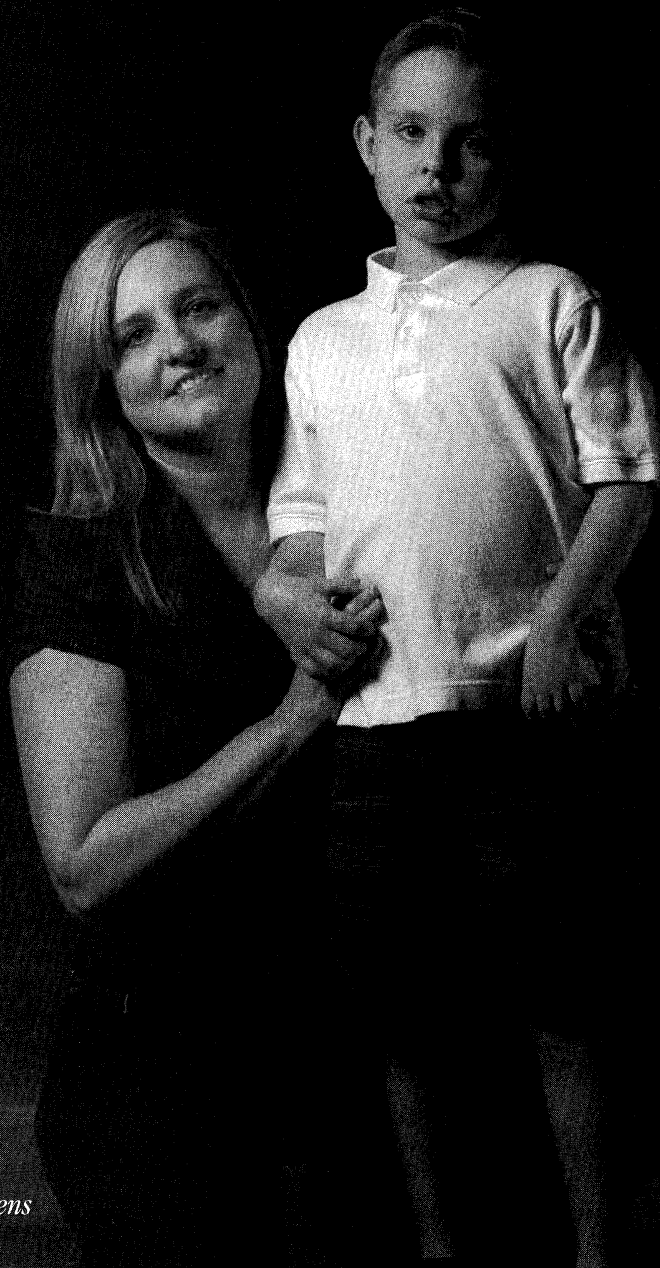
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