

# Liberty

August 2004

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## The Curse of the Progressives

# Ronald Reagan: An Autopsy

*by Murray N. Rothbard, Lance Lamberton, Jeff Riggenbach,  
Stephen Cox, Alan Ebenstein, and Dale Gieringer*

# Dark Horse on the Third Ballot

*by R. W. Bradford*

# Courtiers in the House of Bush

*by Alan W. Bock*

# America the Exceptional

*by Bruce Ramsey*

Also: A presidential candidate tells why he has been arrested so many times, Mark Moller reports the death of the right to remain silent, and Jo Ann Skousen recalls the life of a quiet hero . . . plus other articles, reviews & humor.



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# Letters

## My Orwell Can Beat Up Your Orwell

As a fellow participant in the Socialist Scholars Conference, I enjoyed Richard Kostelanetz's contribution there and in *Liberty* ("Orwell Lives!", May). Yet his is a "partial" Orwell that underplays Orwell's political predilections to reflect, perhaps subconsciously, the Orwell he would like rather than the Orwell the world actually knew.

Orwell himself stated that he became a socialist in 1930, and the *Adelphi*, for which he wrote in the years following, was widely recognized as the house magazine of the intellectual Left within the Independent Labour Party (ILP). He went to Spain in 1936 to fight with the ILP's sister party, the Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista (POUM), against both General Franco initially and the Stalinists of the Spanish Communist Party as they successfully crushed the POUM's revolution within the revolution.

In 1938 he formally joined the ILP and worked with its Bukharinite faction to oppose the coming war with Germany on the grounds that it was an imperialist war. Then, with the Nazi-Soviet pact, he went with the pro-war Labour Party, and ended up as the literary editor of the Labour Left's journal *Tribune*.

You can try to take George Orwell out of politics, but you can't take politics out of George Orwell. But nice try, Richard!

Glyn Ford  
Member of the European  
Parliament  
Newnham, England

## I Don't Like Ike

In "Water under the bridge" (Reflections, June), Wendy McElroy named President John Kennedy as "the Democrat who plunged the nation into Vietnam's quagmire."

Actually, the American who is most responsible for the war in Vietnam is former President Dwight Eisenhower. He made the decision not to sign and not to honor the Geneva Agreement of 1954, which ended the war between France and the Viet Minh. That agreement scheduled elections to be held in 1956 in order to unite Vietnam. In his memoir, *Mandate for Change, 1953-1956*, Eisenhower admitted that his advisors told him Ho Chi Minh would have won 80% of that vote.

By supporting South Vietnamese dictator Ngo Dinh Diem in his refusal to hold the elections in South Vietnam, Eisenhower guaranteed that there would be a war there in the 1960s.

John Engelman  
Wilmington, Del.

## Don't Trust Anyone Under 30

Yes, indeed. I was there. At the time I had the opportunity of a lifetime working on our challenge to beat the Soviet Union in the race to the moon. But my perceptions of that era were entirely different from those of the people Richard Kostelanetz interviewed ("A Special Time," June).

During the '60s I was dismayed by all the long-haired teenagers who seemed to be announcing to the world that "I wear my hair long because my parents support me, I am irresponsible and I don't have to work or even clean up my act." I suppose we WWII vets made the problem ourselves because we had created the boomers and the kids outvoted us.

I was further dismayed when I learned that these children "invented" sex, unisex, dope, uppers, downers, and went off to college to terrify academia. They pretty much took over those institutions because the learned academics didn't have the balls to make them behave in a civilized manner.

The libertine subculture of the '60s spread throughout the Sierra Nevadas,

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trashing its forests and polluting its abundant waters. It gave birth to communes that welcomed fellow runaway children. In this context I consider "children" to be any adults who are not self-supporting.

It was also an age in which all of them, talented or not, learned to play an abominable, atonal instrument called a guitar (my apologies here to Carlos Montoya).

There were some other major events of note as well.

Uppers:

- Kennedy stared down Khrushchev and Castro.

- We beat the Soviets to the moon.

- The Jet Age.

- Ronald Reagan began his political career.

- Black Pride.

- Teamsters boss Jimmy Hoffa convicted of racketeering and sent to prison.

- Israel creamed the Arab Coalition in six days.

Downers:

- Black Panthers and Angela Davis.

- John and Robert Kennedy were assassinated.

- Johnson embroiled us deeper into Kennedy's war in Vietnam.

- Goldwater lost the election because he was painted as a war-monger.

- We gave children the right to vote.

- Israel deliberately attacked the U.S.S. Liberty in international waters and killed 34.

Skip Premo

Camp Nelson, Calif.

### Just the Facts, Please

Andrew W. Jones writes that in the 20th century Jews were driven "out of Europe entirely" ("Powerful Outsiders," May). This would be news to the approximately two and a half million Jews who presently live in Europe.

Henry E. Heatherly  
Lafayette, La.

*Jones responds:* In 1880 nearly 90% of the world's Jews lived in Europe; now about 14% do, mostly in the old Soviet Union. In 1939 there were 3.3 million Polish Jews, now there are 8,000. If I exaggerated, it was not by much.

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## From the Editor . . .

Alert readers may notice that this issue of *Liberty* is eight pages longer than customary. The reason is that two major stories developed in the past month, and we didn't want to shortchange either.

The passing of Ronald Reagan from this vale of tears occasioned a huge outpouring of sentimental political balderdash. Reagan was the most important president of the past half century, and we think his passing merits something better. That's why we offer a variety of intelligent analyses of his career — virtually all of them the sort of analysis you won't find anywhere else — ranging from Jeff Rigenbach's explanation of why he hopes the former president will rot in Hell to Alan Ebenstein's suggestion that Reagan should be honored on the ten-dollar bill.

This year's Libertarian Party convention was like no other. Before it began, major media talked about how the LP might have a major impact on this fall's presidential election. Delegates at the LP convention responded by managing somehow to nominate a candidate without knowing his controversial views (e.g., blow up the United Nations) or his brushes with the law. We detail the strange concatenation of events that led to this result.

Of course, it takes more to sate an intelligent reader's appetite than history and politics, so we didn't scrimp. The result, dear reader, you hold in your hands. Enjoy!

*R. W. Bradford*



# Reflections

## *The demand curve brakes for no wonk*

— A recent headline suggested that high gas prices are forcing travelers to fly more. This is news? As the price of anything rises, people always find a way to use less of it. Some economic effects are as predictable as the tides. A more honest headline might read: "American people capable of comparing prices without any government assistance or advice from the media. Critics mystified." — Tim Slagle

## *Brother Ray's hard candy* — Ray Charles Robinson had Georgia on his mind beginning Sept. 23, 1930

and he hit the road, Jack, in California on June 10, 2004. He led a long and interesting life. According to National Public Radio, in 1965 Charles "was arrested for heroin possession and left music for a year to kick his habit. . . . He came back strong, beginning a touring regimen that had him on the road for much of the year." Charles had been "addicted" to heroin for nearly 20 years. Sherrill Fulghum, writing for *Soulshine*, had this to say about how Charles quit using heroin: "Charles said that he did it himself — it was not society." And Elizabeth Chorney-Booth, writing for the *Canadian Chartattack*, maintains that Charles "managed to live the last four decades of his life drug-free. . . . After being convicted and handed a suspended sentence if he remained clean, he quit cold turkey."

Once again we see that using and quitting heroin is a choice. When it was important enough for the "soul man" to quit heroin, he did. Treatment, harm reduction, public health, medicine, and disease had nothing to do with it.

— Jeffrey A. Schaler

*Speechless, for once* — To show you what a nasty little man Jimmy Carter is, on June 8, he was gushing over the great event of his lifetime, having a Navy ship named after him, with a lot of old Democratic hacks, like Schlesinger, speaking in his honor. Then the news of

Reagan's death came out, and everybody, including Kerry and Clinton, made nice remarks about Reagan; even Clinton was remarkably effective and seemingly sincere.

This is what I read about Carter later in the day: "No statement was immediately available from Jimmy Carter."

— Stephen Cox

*How to spot a traitor* — After finishing Ann Coulter's *Treason*, which recalls that some officials in the FDR and Truman administrations were advocating Soviet interests, I speculated in these pages that there might be comparable subversives in the current Bush administration.

Their urging could explain the invasion of Iraq, which inspires young Arabs to participate in anti-American terrorism. The Iraq war was so obviously counter-productive in the struggle against terrorism that someone must have conned the Bush administration into starting it.

One of the main sources of the "intelligence" that led Bush to war was a curious Iraqi named Ahmad Chalabi, who has since been arrested for giving information to Iran. Subversives of the sort

Coulter and I wrote about are easy to identify. They must be the officials who were so confident in the "intelligence" fed to the U.S. by the treacherous Chalabi, who promised that Iraq would fall amicably to a small number of American troops.

— Richard Kostelanetz

*Globalizing the eschaton* — I just finished a college course on globalization, a unit-filler I had enrolled in only after the last spot in Appreciation of Curves was given away by the Photography Department. It was typical. The *who's the latest to pull a groin in the race to the bottom* slant of the course would not have been so bad, were it not for the vaguely annoying, nondescript accent of my professor — which can only be characterized by his pronunciation of every O-sound as if it were a spiritual experience.

Anyway, on the last day of lectures he said something that struck me. He was talking about the egalitarian



American class structure that was produced by the manufacturing capitalism of the 1950s, and explaining that the unequalizing information economy of recent decades has allegedly "thrown a monkey wrench into that whole scenario."

I pictured myself throwing a monkey wrench into a scenario — a vast prairie with mountains in the background — and watching it land on the ground. — Alec Mouhibian

### ***The taxman cometh and cometh and cometh***

— If American involvement in the war in Iraq makes you afraid for our future, consider this from the latest Social Security Trustees Report put out by the National Center for Policy Analysis:

This year for the first time in recent history, the federal government will have to use general revenue to pay Social Security and Medicare benefits — about \$45 billion, or 3.6% of federal income taxes.

The general revenue requirement as a share of income taxes will double in less than five years; and five years beyond that, it will double again.

In ten years, one out of every seven income tax dollars will be needed; in 15 years, we will need one in every four.

By 2030, about the mid-point of the baby-boom retirement years, we will need more than half of federal income tax revenues to pay promised benefits.

By 2040, we will need two of every three income tax dollars; by 2050, three of every four.

By 2070, the unfunded deficits in Social Security and Medicare will require 100% of federal income taxes.

Get out your pocketbooks, friends. — Mark Skousen

***Inarticulate this!*** — A very popular tactic of the Democrats for making President Bush look stupid is to recite his verbal mistakes. Although I often find myself laughing at such blunders, I would advise the Democrats against relying

on this as a campaign tactic. At this point, making fun of Bush's command of English is as tired as a Lewinsky joke. I saw Al Franken read a list of Bush blunders on *Late Night with Conan O'Brien* way back in 2000. Rush Limbaugh makes fun of these "Bushisms" regularly, and sometimes even creates his own. My mom, a big supporter of the president, said she heard Bush himself read a few of them at a speaking engagement, and it was hilarious.

Democrats seem to think that the general public is unaware of how clumsily the president sometimes speaks, and if they can get the word out, people will flee from him in droves. The truth is that everybody knows he stumbles from time to time, and that only makes him more endearing. If Bush spoke in the same overly rehearsed, monotone cadence that Kerry uses, he might never slip, but he would lose the popular perception that he is talking from the heart and is just a regular guy. — Tim Slagle

***Iraq and anticipatory aggression*** — I was in high school when Mussolini's forces attacked Ethiopia. Our history teacher expressed the hope that the League of Nations would intervene, but concluded that it probably would not. She was right, of course; the League expressed great indignation but did nothing. People didn't want another war so soon after the world had blundered into the first one, and the fate of Ethiopia didn't mean very much to them — not enough, at any rate, to cause them to combine their forces and attack Italy. But our teacher voiced great regret about this; if Mussolini were not stopped, she said, there would probably be another war, in which the United States, including some of the members of that history class, would be involved. When Chamberlain met with Hitler in Munich, I strongly suspected that Hitler would win the day.

Living as we did in a small town in Iowa, seemingly remote from the world and without any sense of being threatened by it, these students in my history class didn't take the teacher very seriously; many of them probably forgot all about her prediction. But within a decade several of them were killed at Omaha Beach and Tarawa.

A small number of troops would have taken care of Hitler in the 1930s, when he was operating largely on bluff; but half a million Americans would pay the ultimate price in the 1940s, as well as many millions of non-Americans. I absorbed one lesson from this: that giving in to aggressors merely postpones the day of reckoning, and that pandering to dictators provides only the illusion of victory.

As the years passed, I learned to read ominous signs. When Saddam Hussein gassed to death citizens of his own country, and used increasingly refined methods of torture to intimidate his own people, it seemed to me obvious that here was a genuine danger: this man had not only the desire to use any method to defeat those who opposed him, but also the ability to act on his desires. By appeasing him they would only encourage him to aggress again. The person who starts fires in a neighborhood cannot be appealed to; he has to be forcibly stopped. The problem with Saddam was, as with Hitler in 1938, who would forcibly stop him?

I was afraid that one nation after another would simply let things slide, until it was too late or until the price of freedom would increase astronomically. However, when Bush picked Cheney as his vice president, I began to see a ray of

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light: a former senator from Wyoming wouldn't land him many electoral votes, and I saw some glimmerings of principle, rather than expediency, at work. Then when Bush picked Rumsfeld, I started to feel that something exciting was in the wind, and that perhaps this time politicians would face reality. Meanwhile hordes of fanatics demonstrated against Bush, and most European nations passed the buck and provided no help at all in the project of resisting aggression, in spite of the tyranny on their doorsteps. What was standing in the way of victory for increasing hordes of terrorists who wanted the rest of us dead, and were trained or conditioned to bring this about? Primarily the U.S. military. And who would determine the course of the military? Just two political parties.

The Democratic Party was in shambles for some time, riven with internal confusion and dissension, but now it is united in a trend toward the far Left. There is no program, only the determination to defeat the Republicans, no matter what the consequences. Even if the war in Iraq were lost and that nation were reduced to chaos and civil war, perhaps in the hands of another Saddam, the Democrats would claim it as a victory. Even if bands of terrorists, newly armed with nuclear bombs, used them to destroy a dozen American cities a few years from now, the Democrats would probably say that we brought it all on ourselves by interfering in the affairs of other nations.

"But we should never act with force unless the other person or nation has done so first." When Egyptian forces were massed at Israel's borders in 1967, Israel responded to the threat with a preemptive strike. Should Israel have waited until it was destroyed by the combined Arab forces? Nations have not only the right to respond to force with force, but also the duty not to commit national suicide. Sticking inflexibly to the rule "Wait till they have hit you first" could mean national suicide in our era of instant attacks and instant responses.

— John Hospers

**Lies and the lying liars who link to them** — I don't often find cause to come to the defense of Al Gore, but there's a first time for everything. In late May, he made a speech before members of the liberal group, MoveOn.org, that drew substantial notice. Take away his overheated "how dare you" declamations, the speech was

largely an unremarkable catalog of the Bush administration's failures in Iraq and a call for accountability. Gore made a special point of placing blame for the scandal at the Abu Ghraib prison at the top. Having no middle ground between automaton and raving maniac, he delivered the speech with a frightening level of rage.

Naturally, the Vast Right Wing Conspiracy did not take his remarks lying down. The *Boston Herald*, for example, weighed in with an editorial on May 28. It aped Gore's lingo, asking, "How dare a former vice president of the United States go beyond disagreeing with the current president's policies — a right of anyone in this free country — and

denounce Bush as 'incompetent.'" As if pointing out the obvious is some sort of a crime. It continued, "How dare Gore say that Americans have an 'innate vulnerability to temptation . . . to use power to abuse others.' And that our own 'internal system of checks and balances cannot be relied upon' to curb such abuse."

That passage did not ring true to me, since I had read Gore's remarks the day before. So I looked it up and here is the relevant passage from the speech:

Our founders were insightful students of human nature. They feared the abuse of power because they understood that every human being has not only 'better angels' in

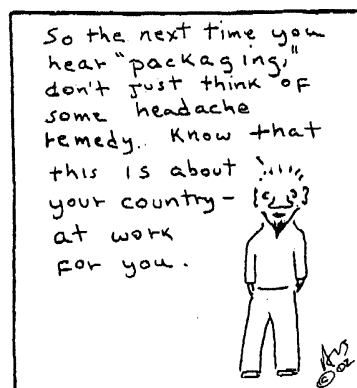
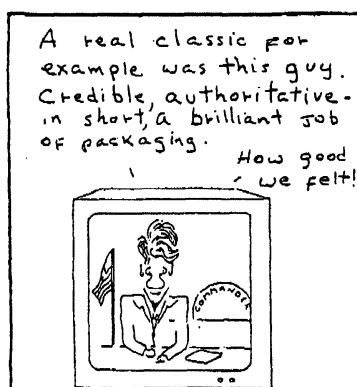
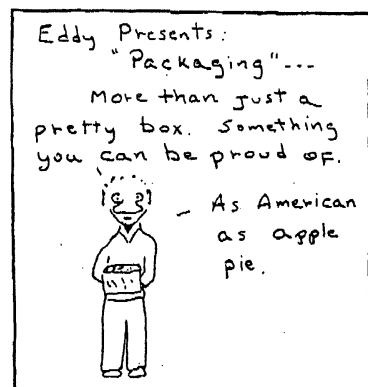
his nature, but also an innate vulnerability to temptation — especially the temptation to abuse power over others.

Our founders understood full well that a system of checks and balances is needed in our constitution because every human being lives with an internal system of checks and balances that cannot be relied upon to produce virtue if they are allowed to attain an unhealthy degree of power over their fellow citizens. (emphasis added to the portions that the *Herald* omitted)

Note that Gore referred to the views of the Founders, which the *Herald* neglected to point out; and that he said "every human being," not just "Americans" have the temptation to abuse power over others. It is clear that either the editors who composed this editorial are so subliterary that they can barely read English, or they intentionally misrepresented Gore's words. But who cares about the *Boston Herald*? It isn't exactly an A-list newspaper.

I only saw the editorial because two of the brightest stars in the blogosphere amplified it. Jonah Goldberg (of *National*

## EDDY IN AMERICA



Review Online's "The Corner") and Glenn Reynolds (of Instapundit.com) both linked to the *Herald's* editorial approvingly. Goldberg stated in his inimitable eighth-grade fashion that the *Herald* opened a can of "whup-ass" on Gore. While Reynolds did not include the mangled quotation in his excerpt, as Goldberg did, he gave the editorial his imprimatur.

Right-wing and warbot libertarian bloggers spend about 80% of their time patting themselves on the back for their superiority to big media outlets such as the *New York Times* and CNN. Bloggers, it seems, are always scooping them and pointing out the errors of the big media. So I decided to give Reynolds and Goldberg a chance to call the *Herald* on its dishonesty and make amends for helping to spread its lies. I wanted to experience the blogosphere's self-corrective function in action. I assembled the links, and pasted the relevant quotations in emails to Reynolds and Goldberg. This gave the two bloggers a chance to see how the *Herald* twisted Gore's words then demonstrate that they are willing to criticize a right-wing source when it smears a Democrat. Neither of them noted or corrected the *Herald's* lie.

I then brought the *Herald* editorial, and Goldberg's and Reynolds' blog entries in support of it, to *Reason* managing editor Jesse Walker, an old friend and former *Liberty* editor. He posted a comment on *Reason's* blog, "Hit & Run." I figured that Goldberg and Reynolds might take more note of the criticism if it was featured on another prominent blog. I emailed the link to that post to Goldberg and Reynolds. Still, nothing.

Actions, or in this case, omissions speak louder than words. Both Goldberg and Reynolds may complain about the accuracy or fairness of the media when their side is the victim. However, they both have made it clear that it is okay for a right-wing source to smear its political enemies.

— Clark Stooksbury

**Brain washing** — A recent study found a link between excessive hair washing and low intelligence. Apparently a lack of oil on the hair can cause neurological damage and ultimately a lower IQ. I wonder: are college professors using junk science to account for their appearance?

— Tim Slagle

**The secret Jewish code** — In his review of David Bernstein's book *You Can't Say That!* (January), Bruce Ramsey noted that Bernstein relates an anecdote about my brother, who ran afoul of a housing law by advertising a house that was "walking distance to a synagogue," thereby appealing to whites, since most Jews are white. That's not quite accurate, and the real story makes Bernstein's point even stronger. Let me elaborate.

In the early 1990s, my brother Brad managed an apartment building in Philadelphia that was home to many orthodox Russian Jews. When an apartment became vacant, Brad advertised its availability in the *Jewish Exponent*, Philadelphia's major Jewish newspaper. Among the amenities he listed was the apartment's proximity to a synagogue; it was virtually around the corner. His intention was to let prospective orthodox Jewish renters know that they could walk to a synagogue on Sabbath. Orthodox Jews do not ride on that day, so this was important information. Not including it in

the ad could have cost him a good tenant.

The ad was brought to the attention of the authorities by a man who apparently picks up extra cash by searching for housing notices with "code words" that violate the Fair Housing Act. In other words, he was a shakedown artist. (Government regulations spawn their own form of entrepreneurship.) Although he had no interest in the apartment himself, the man called the Philadelphia Human Relations Commission to complain. (The HRC handles such complaints in Philadelphia for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.) After making his complaint, the man told the HRC representative that he would drop the matter if Brad compensated him for his time. The representative then contacted my brother to tell him the ad violated the law. The representative said that while the commission did not condone shakedown artistry, it had to pursue the matter now that it had come to its attention. (As I recall, the newspaper also called my brother to say that, after hearing from the HRC, it would no longer permit the offending phrase in the ad.)

Although most Jews are indeed white, the issue was not race. The authorities told Brad that by pointing out the apartment's proximity to a synagogue he had illegally used code words to express his preference for a tenant of a particular religion. (I'm surprised he wasn't chastised for advertising only in the *Jewish Exponent*.)

In the end my brother chose to sign a consent decree rather than fight. The alternative was to submit to a hearing. An adverse decision would have paved the way for a suit by the shakedown artist and invited close scrutiny by the government. That's how justice works these days.

— Sheldon Richman

**The sanctity of human life, or not** — The other day, buried in FOXNews.com's "Latest Headlines" were two that together gave me pause: a report on a California federal judge's ruling that the ban on partial-birth abortion is unconstitutional and a story about Melissa Ann Rowland, the woman who had been charged with the murder of her baby when she refused a life-saving caesarean section.

The connection between the two is obvious. One person is charged with the murder of an unborn child, while a federal judge rules that the killing of unborn but viable infants is legal. Rowland, who was accused of "depraved indifference to human life," could have been sentenced to life imprisonment. If she had simply asked a willing doctor to kill her child, she would apparently have been in the clear.

How are such glaring inconsistencies possible? In this context, I don't care about jurisdictions, federalism, or the legislative process. Any explanations that incorporate such abstractions only aggravate my queasiness. The question that gnaws at me is what can be said about a society whose moral certitude is so degraded that the meaning of life itself is subject to the inconstancy of the democratic process.

The sanctity of life, if it is to exist at all, does not change with state borders, and is not affected by theories of checks and balances or the separation of powers, nor does it fluctuate with vacillating voter sentiment. If one is charged with murder for killing people who in another situation or under another "administration" are legally killed, a grave injustice



is being done, one way or the other. I am not advocating a legal remedy, or calling for some kind of "constitutional amendment." That many readers may jump to that conclusion underscores my point — means are confused with ends: all things have become political. — Andrew W. Jones

**Egalitarianism vs. ill-disguised contempt** — There has always been a huge disconnect between leftist candidates and leftist intelligentsia. While the candidates always talk about elevating the common man, the "intellectuals" talk about the collective ignorance of the general populace. As a comedian who has spent a good portion of his career thinking he was too hip for the room, I can tell you that attitude might bring personal satisfaction, but it doesn't engender popularity. Gore lost partially because he was incapable of hiding his disdain for the average Joe

("NASCAR dads" is the new term), and I think Kerry's attitude will sink him as well. What the Democrats really need is a good old-fashioned Woody Guthrie liberal. — Tim Slagle

**All we are saying is give fantasy a chance** — Harry Browne was the final speaker at the recent FreedomFest conference. After making an impassioned case for anarchical utopia, repeating his mantra, "Government doesn't work," he anticipated criticism from conservative skeptics in the audience by saying, "I don't know how to do it, but that doesn't matter. I don't care how we get there. I just know that it's right." I hear this response a lot when libertarians are asked by well-intentioned neophytes, "How do we get there from here?" "I don't know," they say. "I just know that it's right." While I understand their point, I don't think that it's enough. To me, and to

#### News You May Have Missed

## Bush Cans Veep, Aide; Names Deity, Dead Guy

WASHINGTON — At a hastily assembled White House press briefing yesterday, President Bush announced that he had "reluctantly" accepted the resignations of Vice President Dick Cheney, who is, the president said, "leaving to pursue other priorities," and political advisor Karl Rove, who is "leaving to pursue Jenna Jameson," the well-known porn star. The announcement of the two men's voluntary departure raised eyebrows, since they were seen being carried out of the White House kicking and screaming a few minutes before the briefing, but the president quieted speculation by immediately naming their replacements. The new vice president is to be God, described as a "close friend and confidant" of the president, and the new director of administration political strategy will be Leo the Isaurian, the 8th-century Byzantine emperor who embraced the Iconoclast movement, banning images throughout his realm.

The president, who was told about the implacable Greek-speaking monarch by CIA Director George Tenet, who is of Greek ancestry, was sufficiently impressed to order the CIA and FBI to "find this guy and get him on board real quick." The president has already had a policy of suppressing images of soldiers' coffins returning from Iraq and is said to

favor a similar approach to the photographs of American guards torturing Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib, but he has also been troubled by the ready availability of the images of himself in a flight suit standing in front of a "Mission Accomplished" banner, images of Iraqi civilian casualties, images of 9/11 families protesting administration secrecy, images of Janet Jackson's bared Super Bowl breast, and so many other images that he concluded that a simple, across-the-board, easy-to-understand policy of banning all images would be more acceptable to the public than an arbitrary, haphazard policy of banning a few images here and there.

The fact that Leo the Isaurian is no longer alive is considered a minor blemish in an otherwise dazzling résumé, administration sources said, including the defeat of a large Arab Islamic army at the gates of Constantinople. "We don't want to discriminate against members of the deceased community," Bush said, "especially when they come up with fresh ideas like my good friend Leo has done."

Leo III, as he is also known, was of humble Syrian peasant stock but grew up in Thrace, in what is now northern Greece. God is also of obscure Middle Eastern origins, but his résumé is equally impressive,

sources say, even if it does tend to blur some significant details, such as where he went to college and whether he exists. He will be leaving his present position as creator of the universe and supreme judge of humanity, which has reportedly left him "considerably discouraged," to take the vice presidency, and he is expected to feel right at home in the Bush administration, many members of which already feel they have divine attributes, including omnipotence, omniscience, perfect goodness, and the ability to wax wroth on short notice.

As vice president, God will be expected to take over all of former Vice President Cheney's assignments, including answering the prayers of Halliburton executives and rearranging the world to conform more closely to the president's ignorance of it. As chief political strategist, one of Leo the Isaurian's first tasks will be to work with new Attorney General Vlad the Impaler to decide whether it is feasible to implement a ban on newspapers as well as images, since both the president and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld have said that they don't read them, and there is growing evidence that nobody in the administration does, raising the question of why anyone else should be allowed to. — Eric Kenning

# Word Watch

by Stephen Cox

As a longtime resident of the great state of Southern California, I have had thousands of occasions to hear the dire words emanating from my radio: "There's a Sigalert for the San Diego freeway, just before the Santa Monica off-ramp." "Sigalert" is the second most common word in Southern California (the most common being "dude"). Every so often I used to ask someone, "What exactly does 'Sigalert' mean?"

"Means there's trouble on the freeway."

"I know, I know. But what does it mean? Where does the word come from?"

The usual answer, once we'd reached that point, was "Dunno, dude. 'Signal alert?'" Nobody really knew what the expression meant, and nobody on the news would ever tell.

So it came as a great relief to everyone when, on June 2, as a consequence of the death of the broadcaster who invented Sigalerts in 1955, the explanation finally hit the press: Lloyd C. Sigmon had given his own name to the traffic alerts emanating from his radio station.

Now, I have nothing against Mr. Sigmon or the memory thereof, but that explanation made both the word and the thing it represents even less cherished to me than they had been before. Every time I hear a Sigalert, the idea of that obscure little man comes into my head. It's like finding out that hurricanes were named for Max Hurricano, who used to broadcast the fishing news from Miami. I can cope with an act of God, but calling it by some nobody's last name is just a little hard to take.

Not everyone, obviously, sees the meaning of words in terms of their associations, but many people do. That's why there are more towns named "Springfield" than "Mudd" or "Frick," even though there were a lot more pioneers named Mudd and Frick than there were named Springfield, and "Springfield" takes a lot longer to write on an envelope. And that's why no town named Hicksville could ever become important, even if it happened to be situated directly between the Hudson and the East River.

The "appendix" that you sometimes see at the end of books and those useless things that we carry in our guts have no association with each other but a common Latin root, yet even that association makes me squirm a little when I see "Appendix" listed in a table of contents. There appears to be no way to avoid the bibliographical use of the word, but one can certainly humor the squeamish by keeping it out of sentences like, "As an appendix to her political program, Sen. Fishkill offered a revision of the Safe Playgrounds Act of 1987." Actually, the imaginary Sen. Fishkill should consider changing her name. The "kill" in that word means "creek," not "slaughter," but few people understand that.

Some people do understand that "nit pick" literally means "look for louse eggs in your crotch," so please make sure to avoid that expression. Even "lousy" is not a completely dead

metaphor. When you say, "Kerry's speech was lousy," the purists in your audience will inevitably picture 30 pieces of paper crawling with bugs, so if that's not precisely the image you want to create, just say that the speech was "bad." Granted, purists often let their imaginations go too far, but there's no point in writing to the standard of people who have no imagination to begin with.

In politics, of course, the associations of words are nearly everything. It was President Reagan's misfortune that his enemies immediately associated his missile defense program with a popular movie, so that nobody can ever think of it as anything else but "Star Wars." The 20th-century change from War Department to Defense Department worked equally well, in the other direction. And think of all the mileage that Democrats have gotten out of the association between free-market economics and the sound of water "trickling down" a wall. An expression like that has a wonderful way of preempting the field. A pacifist can sneer, "By 'defense' you really mean 'war,'" and make his political point; but the defender of capitalism cannot expect success from talking about "trickle up" economics.

But leave purism and politics aside. A strange poetry can be found by returning words to their original meanings, by picturing them in their ancient associations. "Transpire," as the purists insist, does not mean "happen"; it means "be revealed." Thus, "What happened in the teacher's lounge has never transpired." This is a shibboleth of the purists, and they're right to cherish it. But how lovely it is to associate the word with its original significance: "transpire = to emit or breathe through the surface." Plants transpire. Picture the teacher's lounge as a plant breathing its own kind of "news."

I like to think of those "icons" on my computer screen as the paintings that decorate the altar screen in Eastern Orthodox churches. After all, we worship our computers, and the icons or "pictures" guide our worship. Speaking of religion, a fairly common word in our language is the Judeo-Christian term "atone": "Will Hillary ever atone for her sins as first lady?" But do you know where that word comes from? Take "atonement" apart, and you will find the source: "at + one + ment." To atone is to make two or more things come together, to be "at one." So when Hillary "atones" for her sins, if she ever does, you can picture her putting back together something that she broke.

Or have you ever thought of how odd it is that we do not "direct" our cars; we "drive" them, as people once drove horses? "Shoo, car — faster!" A pleasant fantasy, especially when you're stuck in one of those alerts that answer to Lloyd Sigmon's name. A wise man once told me that "there's no such thing as a synonym." I would add that, thank God, there's no such thing as a dead metaphor, either.

many in the audience, this non-answer is a cop-out. It's like finding a bomb in Central Park and saying, "I don't care which wires we cut, I just know that a bomb has no right to be in Central Park." No one will argue with you about the merits of eliminating the bomb, but they aren't going to trust you to do the job.

If we don't convince others that true freedom is not only desirable but possible, we will never garner enough support to make it work. One of the reasons Great Britain was able to privatize its public utilities successfully is because Madsen Pirie of the Adam Smith Institute provided Margaret Thatcher with a plan that could work, without throwing hundreds of thousands of people out of their jobs. Beginning with British Telecom, the British government essentially sold its utilities companies to its employees. When government employees became private stockholders, every worker had an incentive to work hard, become efficient, and turn a profit. The transition worked smoothly because Margaret Thatcher had a convincing plan.

John Mackey, CEO of Whole Foods and the kick-off speaker for FreedomFest, presented the argument that libertarians need to "change their brand" and become known as more than the party that supports drugs, prostitutes, and pornography. To be successful in dismantling our bloated government, we need to demonstrate that our philosophy of freedom and accountability can make life richer and more satisfying for all. Mackey maintains that libertarians have the appropriate path for fixing the problems we face; we just need to focus on goals that are more universally appealing, and let the others fall naturally into place once people understand and accept the underlying philosophy.

It matters very much "how we get there." If a libertarian had a tumor growing inside his brain, would he simply say, "Tumors don't work" and "This tumor has no right to be there"? Would he allow a respected libertarian philosopher to cut out the tumor, simply because he agrees it doesn't belong there? Or would he investigate various paths, examine the potential outcomes, and then choose the treatment with the most convincing plan for success? When choosing an oncologist, most patients head in one of two directions: either they choose the person with the greatest reputation, or they choose the doctor who explains the treatment most clearly. Right now the federal government has the greatest PR department (public schools), so we need to be known as the group that explains the treatment (not just the problem) most clearly.

We need to respect the American public enough to provide them with a workable plan for dismantling the government. We have a winning philosophy: every person has the right to choose his own actions, as long as he accepts responsibility for the consequences of his actions, and as long as his actions do not limit the freedom of others to choose. Now we need to demonstrate how that philosophy can be applied successfully in every

situation. "I don't know" simply isn't going to cut it.

— Jo Ann Skousen

**The Y2K of the 2004 election** — How will the much-ballyhooed Nader affect the November elections? Perhaps not at all. So many people are abandoning him that there is now a Repentant Nader Voter site. As an on-site photo indicates, the group's bumper sticker consists of an old "Unrepentant Nader Voter" one with a piece of duct tape over the "Un." I mean, how unpopular among anti-Republicans does a candidate who openly hates Bush have to be for the Congressional Black Caucus to publicly turn against him? Pretty darned unpopular. Even the former Nader Raiders are asking him to step down.

Nader can't catch a break. People are expressing disappointment in his chosen vice presidential candidate, Peter Camejo, a former Socialist Workers Party candidate for president. Camejo has a solid record of political activism of the right kind but he isn't a woman — he has been candid about that — unlike Nader's VP choice for the last election.

— Wendy McElroy

**A well-regulated militia?** — I just heard an Iraq war veteran say on Rush Limbaugh's radio show that Iraqi citizens are allowed one AK-47 per household. It is my understanding that this policy was in place all during the Hussein years. That a tyrant remained in power during all those bleak years, and that the U.S. Army was able to roll through the country with minimal resistance, should demonstrate to hard-core militia advocates that the Second Amendment right to bear arms is not a sufficient deterrent to tyranny.

— Tim Slagle

**Napoleon breaks through** — Last winter I discovered a great secret: the best time to go skiing at Park City, Utah is the week of the Sundance Film Festival, when all the hotels are filled with moviegoers and no one is on the slopes. The mountains are a private little slice of heaven then. But when your son has films competing in the festival, you join the lines of filmgoers. The slopes can wait for another visit.

This was my experience in January when *Napoleon Dynamite* premiered at Sundance. Made by a group of filmmakers who have been working together for about five years, *Napoleon* is the quirky story of a high school geek living in rural Idaho who manages (okay, *predictably*) to come



out on top. But how he gets there is so unpredictable that it is laugh-out-loud funny from start to finish. As one reviewer commented, "Humor is in the details, and the details make this film" — details like Napoleon's uncle, an Al Bundy-like former football jock, constantly stealing glances at his own biceps. Some who have seen the film (including an agent from the William Morris Agency, according to *Newsweek*) have already adopted catch phrases from the dialog of the two main characters. Judging by the growing lines of fans who have attended multiple sneak previews this month, it's a film that has lasting power.

But don't just take my word for it; here are some comments from legitimate reviewers who saw the movie at Sundance:

"Far and away the best film of the festival!"

"The most hilarious movie this week — and one of the funniest to play here in years."

"Gloriously quirky, hysterically funny ode to rural dullness . . . probably the fairest, most accurate representation that Preston, Idaho, will ever get."

More recently, *Newsweek* called *Napoleon Dynamite* "our pick to be the season's sleeper," and RottenTomatoes.com, an online film-rating service, gives it an 83% "freshness" rating. It was nominated for the Grand Jury Prize at Sundance, and won first place at the U.S. Comedy Arts Festival.

My son Tim was first assistant director on the film, which means that he was in charge of coordinating the background details: lighting, sound, cinematography, set arrangement, extras, and featured extras, so that everything could be performed as efficiently as possible. Think of the director as the architect and the first assistant director as the general contractor, and you get the idea. So I was understandably proud when "Tim's movie" received roars of laughter throughout the screening I attended at Sundance, and spontaneous applause before the film even ended. Halfway through the first screening, scouting agents began dialing their cell phones, summoning studio bigwigs, and by the movie's end (greeted by a standing ovation) agents filled the back row, anxious to hear the buzz for themselves and meet the director and producer. Within days, the film was sold to Fox Searchlight for \$3 million, more than eight times its production cost, with a 1,200-screen guarantee. Yes, this was even better than schussing down an empty, powder-clad mountain.

That 1,200-screen guarantee represents an important vote of confidence in the film, because each print will cost about \$2,000, or \$2.5 million altogether. Add to that a few million in promotion, and Fox will have made a significant investment in this little film. By contrast, most independent films have "rolling distribution," which means that the distributors will only print a few copies and then send them from city to city, usually showing in the small art-house theaters that I like to attend. This means that these films often come and go before word-of-mouth has a chance to spread, and they often head straight to the video stores. *Napoleon's* 1,200-screen guarantee gives it a better chance of opening to a big weekend with good reviews.

But director Jared Hess had a different plan in mind. Occasionally one of these independent films — for example, *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* — makes it big, and sticks around

for several months as interest spreads. However, Hess knows his audience, and *Napoleon* is the kind of film that plays better to people who like to discover their own hits via friends and websites. Indeed, when I attended a sneak preview of the film in New York in early June, hundreds of people were lined up, circling the block, many of them sporting curly red 'dos, nerdy glasses, and "Vote for Pedro" T-shirts. Many of them were seeing it for the third, fourth, and even fifth time, even though the film did not officially open until June 11. Over 600 people were turned away that night — including me!

What does all of this mean to the moviemakers themselves? First, and most importantly, it means more money to make more movies. Success breeds success in this industry, and this success will attract investors. The independent film industry is a great example of the free market at work. The team will plow most of its profits right back into its business. The team members are already at work deciding which of their scripts will be made next. They'll probably stay with a

### *The end of "the right to remain silent"* —

"Any lawyer worth his salt will tell [a] suspect in no uncertain terms to make no statement to police under any circumstances." So said Supreme Court Justice Robert Jackson fifty years ago. Strong words from a man who had served as the Attorney General of the United States and as the Chief Prosecutor at Nuremberg. Commonsense words, too: every kid who has watched re-run TV cop shows knows that "you have the right to remain silent" when the police come knocking.

Except that, now, you don't. In *Hiibel v. Sixth Judicial District of Nevada*, the Supreme Court, in one stroke, turned Justice Jackson's advice on its head, and turned generations of TV cop shows into so much false advertising. Silence, said the Court, is not only not privileged: it can get you thrown in jail.

*Hiibel* arose out of a set of facts typical of thousands of run-of-the-mill police investigations. Responding to reports of domestic battery, police encountered a suspect, Dudley Hiibel. The investigating officer, after approaching, demanded that Hiibel identify himself. Hiibel declined. "I feel quite strongly I have a right to remain silent," Hiibel later explained.

Dudley Hiibel paid a steep price for his stand on principle: the police arrested Hiibel on the spot, and threw him in jail. The charge? Not domestic battery, a crime for which the police had no evidence to arrest. (Hiibel later proved to be innocent). Instead, Nevada justified the arrest based on a state statute that makes refusal to provide identification when stopped by the police a jail-able crime.

The unconstitutionality of the Nevada statute should have been a no-brainer for the Court. Over the last three decades, the Court has repeatedly held that the "right to remain silent" is an unconditional constitutional guarantee under the Fourth and Fifth Amendments. In *Davis v. Mississippi*, for example, the Court emphasized that it is



comedy, since that's the "supply" that their current customers will "demand." The core crew were happy to receive digital cameras and iPods as bonuses from the movie's appreciative producers, and they enjoyed the celebrity perks at Sundance. But most of them will continue to live in their small apartments and condos, wearing last year's clothes (okay, last decade's clothes) and eating at Taco Bell, at least for now. Most of all, they are happy with the sweet assurance of being together for another project in this business where every success is held in a tenuous grasp.

— Jo Ann Skousen

**Bob Kephart and Liberty** — Bob Kephart played a critical role, always in a quiet way, in the success of *Liberty* magazine. It was typical of Bob that he was a lot more interested in helping advance the cause of liberty than he was in getting credit or fame.

Back in 1987, when Steve Cox, Tim Virkkala, Kathy Bradford and I were trying to launch *Liberty*, we needed all

the help we could get. We had a pretty good idea of what we wanted the magazine to be, and had prepared a pretty good first issue. We knew, however, that all the good writing and editorial vision in the world wouldn't ensure *Liberty's* success. We knew we had to find people to buy the magazine, and that this meant creating an effective direct mail package.

So I drafted a sales letter, and Steve, Kathy, and Tim all worked on it to make it better. Then I got up my courage and called Bob, whom I'd never met, and asked him for advice. He sent me several books on magazine publishing and direct marketing, and suggested I learn what I could from them, revise the direct mail letter, and send it to him for advice.

I took his advice and sent him the letter. He returned it with notations in the margins that were the harshest criticism I've ever seen of a piece of writing. But he also sent an invitation to call him on the phone to discuss the letter. I called, and he explained in detail just how abysmal our attempt had been, making specific suggestions about how to come up with a letter that would pull. As a result, our first

a "settled principle" that "the police have . . . no right to compel [citizens] to answer" police questions. In *Terry v. Ohio*, the case that upheld the power of police to briefly stop and question "suspicious" persons on the street, Justice Byron White added that "[a person detained] is not obliged to answer, answers may not be compelled, and refusal to answer furnishes no basis for an arrest."

As New York University law professor Stephen Schulhofer has noted, the "right to remain silent" reflects a core constitutional principle: namely, that lawful police investigation should rely on "persuasion and the suspect's overconfidence," rather than "pressure and fear." The privilege of silence guarantees that wiles and smarts, not intimidation, should define lawful police practice.

*Hiibel*, however, holds just the opposite. Far from "scrupulously respecting" the right to remain silent (as the Court's past decisions require), *Hiibel* authorizes the police to "sanction" those with the temerity to exercise their right to silence — by hauling unresponsive citizens to jail. Indeed, the Court appears to affirmatively condone police use of "threat[s]" and "criminal sanction" as helpful tools of good police investigation. In *Hiibel*, "pressure and fear" gain a new purchase on the law of criminal procedure.

The Court justifies expanded use of police "threats" based on two grounds: (1) the supposed need to "protect" police officers, and (2) the notion that compelled disclosure of a name is not "coercive" within the scope of the Constitution, because a name is not "incriminating." Neither carry water.

The "safety" concern would be more credible if the Court, in *Terry v. Ohio*, had not already authorized police officers to physically search suspects for weapons — and if dangerous criminals could be trusted to passively tell police the truth about their identity on demand.

The second argument is handily disposed by Justice John Paul Stevens, writing in dissent. If "disclosure of a petitioner's name would [not] . . . incriminate him," queried Stevens, then "why else would an officer ask for it? And why would the Nevada Legislature require . . . disclosure [of a name] only when circumstances 'reasonably indicate that the person has committed, is committing or is about to commit a crime?' . . . The very existence of the statute demonstrates the value of the information it demands."

*Hiibel* has one bright spot: the decision could have been worse. The Court mercifully avoided upholding compelled disclosure of information beyond a suspect's name. Accordingly, there is hope the Court may yet strike down the 20 state statutes that demand suspects give not only names to police, but also an "explanation" of themselves on demand. The Court also emphasized that the decision doesn't require a hand over of "driver's license[s] or any other document." *Hiibel* accordingly does not green-light the push for a national identification card.

But these caveats hardly save the opinion. To the contrary, they are symptoms of the Court's growing fecklessness. For this Court, recognition of firm protections for civil rights is always on the horizon, to be protected tomorrow, in the next case. That promise is wearing thin. Five years ago, Justice Kennedy — often described as a "bellwether" Justice — warned that the Court stood at risk of forgetting that "liberty comes . . . from the Constitution by right," and not from "officials by grace." Flash forward to today: Justice Kennedy is the author of the opinion in *Hiibel*. Perhaps he has changed his mind.

*Hiibel* underscores, once again, that when it comes to upholding constitutional restraints on the state's criminal apparatus, there is only one sure bet in the modern Court: all bets are off.

— Mark Moller

direct mail effort was a success. *Liberty* was viable.

I got to know Bob a little better over the years, mostly from socializing with him at the Eris Society meeting in Colorado. He eventually told me that when he first heard from me back in 1987 and looked over our business plan and attempt at direct mail, he thought we were, well, idiots who didn't have a chance of success. It is a measure of the man and his generosity that he didn't let his low opinion of our prospects stand in the way of helping us. When Bob told me he considered *Liberty* and Laissez Faire Books the most important institutions in the libertarian movement, I considered it great praise indeed.

Over the years, Bob continued to offer help from time to time and to provide assistance when I asked him. His advice didn't always work, but it usually did. As recently as three years ago, when he was already afflicted with the cancer that would take his life, he sent me a criticism of our direct mail package, one we'd been using with considerable success for many years, and suggested an entirely new one.

He provided details about what he thought would work. They were so extensive that I simply turned his suggestions over to a new employee with no experience or particular skill at copy writing and instructed him to follow them as closely as he could. We test-marketed the young staffer's draft and discovered that it outperformed our old package by a small margin, and small margins make a big difference in direct mail. The staffer had drafted the letter, and I had done extensive edits. But it was Bob's work.

Bob's powerful intellect, his entrepreneurial skills, his deeply held libertarian convictions, his generosity of spirit, his focus on getting things done, his modest refusal to dramatize his own accomplishments — these qualities made him a great man. More importantly, they made him a good man.

— R.W. Bradford

**Robert Kephart, RIP** — Publisher and philanthropist Robert D. Kephart died on June 8, 2004, at his home in Belleair Shore, Fla., surrounded by his wife and business-partner Janet, his son Patrick, his daughter Lara, and his best friend Jack Pugsley. He treated the cancer that invaded his body as he treated government encroachment on our liberty: with an intensely researched, heroic, all-out battle.

Born Sept. 9, 1934, in Albuquerque, N. Mex. and raised in Colorado, Bob was a self-educated man who started out as a bookkeeper for a railroad and ended up as a publisher and direct-market innovator who had a passion for liberty and moral rectitude.

Bob was a great American who spent his life and his money promoting individual liberty through publications, contributions to freedom-oriented organizations, and support for individual writers. He was a publisher of *Human Events* and an early supporter of Laissez Faire Books. He founded *Libertarian Review* magazine and *Books for Libertarians* in the 1970s, influencing thousands of young people who became advocates of a free society. He was dedicated to the cause of liberty.

In the early 1970s, Bob concluded that he no longer accepted the political process as a road to social progress and became a hard-core libertarian. At that point he parted ways with the conservative publication *Human Events* and founded Kephart Communications, a financial publishing firm focused

on promoting free-market economics and hard-money investing. He published *Inflation Survival Letter* (later *Personal Finance*), which highlighted unorthodox investments that have become mainstream today.

Many of the big names in libertarian circles got their start writing for *Inflation Survival Letter*, including Doug Casey, Adrian Day, Richard Band, Gary Alexander, Jim McKeever, and Mark Skousen, who was managing editor of ISL from 1975–1980. After ISL published a review of Jack Pugsley's book, *Common Sense Economics*, Bob and Jack became acquainted and subsequently close friends. Bob supported numerous other writers and philosophers as well, but always quietly, from deep behind the scenes. A private, modest person, Bob shunned the limelight, and would probably be unhappy to read this obituary about himself! His focus was on helping others to shine. Even as he was battling cancer, he was enthusiastically involved in helping Jack Pugsley to establish his new project, the Bio-Rational Institute.

Intensely supportive of those who were "anxiously engaged in a good cause," Bob offered both support and guidance to countless diverse causes, including Families Against Mandatory Minimums, Forfeiture Endangers American Rights, Human Rights Watch, the Institute for Justice, National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, Post-Conviction Relief, the American Civil Liberties Union, the Foundation for Economic Education, the Cato Institute, Future of Freedom Foundation, R.A. Childs Fund for Independent Scholars, and Separation of School and State Alliance. In 1998 he won the eighth annual Thomas S. Szasz Award for Outstanding Contributions to the Cause of Civil Liberties.

Bob's interests went far beyond public policy and promoting individual liberty. He was a writer, an artist, a one-time truck driver(!), a baseball player who tried out for the Chicago Cubs, a consummate host, a dedicated family man, a loyal friend. His paintings of children and beach scenes grace the walls of his home and the Christmas cards that he designed himself. His eclectic interests led him to support Doug Casey's creation, The Eris Society, an organization of mostly libertarians who meet in Aspen every summer to discuss topics related to philosophy, history, science, arts, health, and education. As usual, his efforts remained behind the scenes, often in the form of providing financial support for speakers.

Many of us who have known Bob for decades knew his feisty side as well as his philanthropic side. Fiercely loyal to his friends, he could be fiercely critical as well when one of his friends disappointed him. You knew you were "on his list" again when you found a page from a yellow legal pad folded up, stapled, and left on your desk. These letters usually began, "I thought you were my friend," and would continue in great detail as he outlined the offense. With the advent of the Internet the yellow legal pad gave way to email, but the intent was the same: Bob never pulled his punches when he thought someone was slipping philosophically or morally. But his anger never lasted long, and the friendship always returned, stronger than ever. How I would love to receive one of those letters again! "I thought you were my friend," it would begin, and before he could finish I would respond heartily, "I am, Bob, I am." — Jo Ann Skousen

# Ronald Reagan: A Political Obituary

by Murray N. Rothbard

*Ronald Reagan was the most important American president of the past half century. He came into office promising to reduce government and to increase individual freedom. He was a conservative, but one who famously said that "the very heart and soul of conservatism is libertarianism."*

*Yet government spending grew rapidly during his presidency, and individual liberty suffered as police powers grew and the War on Drugs escalated.*

*So it should come as no surprise that he remains a controversial figure among those who love liberty. Here, six such people look at the mixed legacy of Ronald Reagan.*

*Shortly after Ronald Reagan left the White House, I concluded that his political life was over, and asked Senior Editor Murray Rothbard to write his political obituary. I encouraged Rothbard to muster all the bombast for which he was famous, and Rothbard wrote this article, which appeared in the March 1989 issue of Liberty. As it happened, Rothbard passed on in 1996, eight years before Reagan left this mortal realm, so Rothbard never had another opportunity to pen an obituary of the American politician whom, I think it is safe to say, he most loathed.*

— R. W. Bradford

Eight years, eight dreary, miserable, mind-numbing years, the years of the Age of Reagan, are at long last coming to an end. These years have surely left an ominous legacy for the future: we shall undoubtedly suffer from the aftershocks of Reaganism for years to come. But at least Himself will not be there, and without the man Reagan, without what has been called his "charisma," Reaganism cannot nearly be the same. Reagan's heirs and assigns are a pale shadow of the Master, as we can see from the performance of George Bush. He might try to imitate the notes of Reagan, but the music just ain't there. Only this provides a glimmer of hope for America: that Reaganism might not survive much beyond Reagan.

## Reagan the Man

Many recent memoirs have filled out the details of what some of us have long suspected: that Reagan is basically a cretin who, as a long-time actor, is skilled in reading his assigned lines and performing his assigned tasks. Donald Regan and others have commented on Ronald Reagan's strange passivity, his never asking questions or offering any ideas of his own, his willingness to wait until others place matters before him. Regan has also remarked that Reagan is happiest when following the set schedule that others have placed before him. The actor, having achieved at last the stardom that had eluded him in Hollywood, reads the lines and performs the actions that others — his scriptwriters, his directors — have told him to follow.

Sometimes, Reagan's retentive memory — important for an actor — gave his handlers trouble. Evidently lacking the capacity for reasoned thought, Reagan's mind is filled with anecdotes, most of them dead wrong, that he has soaked up over the years in the course of reading *Reader's Digest* or at idle conversation.

Once an anecdote enters Reagan's noodle, it is set in concrete and impossible to correct or dislodge. (Consider, for example, the famous story about the "Chicago welfare queen": all wrong, but Reagan carried on regardless.)

In the early years of Reagan rule, the press busily checked out Reagan's beloved anecdotes, and found that almost every one of them was full of holes. But Reagan never veered from his course. Why? God knows there are plenty of correct stories about welfare cheats that he could have clasped to his bosom; why stick to false ones? Evidently, the reason is that

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*It is surely frightening to think that the most powerful position in the world was held for eight years by a man who cannot tell fact from fancy.*

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Reagan cares little about reality; he lives in his own Hollywood fantasy world, a world of myth, a world in which it is always Morning in America, a world where The Flag is always flying, but where Welfare Cheats mar the contentment of the Land of Oz. So who cares if the *actual* story is wrong? Let it stand, like a Hollywood story, as a surrogate for the welfare cheats whom everyone knows do exist.

It is surely frightening to think that the most powerful position in the world has been held for eight years by a man who cannot tell fact from fancy. Even more frightening is the defection of the media, who early lost heart and played the role of a submissive receptacle for photo opportunities and press-release handouts. One reason for this defection was the discovery of Reagan's Teflon nature. Another likely reason was that journalists who were too feisty and independent would be deprived of their precious access to the presidential plane or to inside scoops or leaks from the White House. And a third reason was probably the desire not to dwell on the vital and hair-raising fact that the president of the United States, the "leader of the free world" and all that jazz, is nothing more than a demented half-wit.

But why the Teflon? Because of the incredible love affair that Ronald Reagan has enjoyed with the American people. In all my years of fascination with American politics (my early childhood memories are couched in terms of who was president or who was mayor of New York City or who won what election), I have never seen anything remotely like it. Anyone else universally beloved? Franklin D. Roosevelt was worshipped, to be sure, by most of the American electorate, but there was always a large and magnificent minority who detested every inch of his guts. Truman? He was almost universally reviled in his time; he has only been made an icon in retrospect by the conservative movement. Jack Kennedy, too, is only a hero now that he has been safely interred; before his assassination he was cordially detested by all conservatives. *Nobody* ever loved Nixon. The closest to universal lovability was Ike, and even he did not inspire the intense devotion accorded to Ronnie Reagan; with Ike it was more of a tranquilized sense of peace and contentment.

But with Reagan, it has been pure love: every nod of the head; every wistful "We-e-ell," every dumb and flawed anecdote,

every snappy salute, sends virtually every American into ecstasy. From all corners of the land came the cry, "I don't like his policies very much, but I lo-o-ve the man." Only a few malcontents, popping up here and there, in a few obscure corners of the land, emerged as dedicated and bitter opponents. As one of this tiny minority I can testify that it was a lonely eight years, *even* within the ranks of the libertarian movement. Sometimes I felt like a lone and unheeded prophet, bringing the plain truth to those who refused to understand. Very often I would be at free-market gatherings, from living rooms to conferences, and I would go on and on about the deficiencies of Reagan's policies and person, and would be met with responses like: "Well, of course, he's not a Ph.D."

Me: "No, no, that's not the point. The man is a blithering idiot. He makes Warren Harding tower like Aristotle."

Responder: "Ronald Reagan has made us feel good about America."

Perhaps that's part of the explanation for the torrent of unconditional love that the American public has poured onto Ronald Reagan. Lost in Hollywood loony-land, Ronnie's sincere optimism struck a responsive chord in the American masses. The ominous fact that he "made us" feel good about the American State and not just about the country is lost even on many libertarians.

But, in that case, why didn't Hubert Humphrey's egregious "politics of joy" evoke the same all-inclusive love? I don't know the answer, but I'm convinced it's not simply because Hubert was captive to the dreaded "L-word" whereas Ronnie is a conservative. It's a lot deeper than that. One of the remarkably Teflon qualities of Reagan is that, even after many years as president, he is still able to act as if he were totally separate from the actions of the government. He can still denounce the government in the same ringing terms he used when he was out of power. And he *gets away with it*, probably because inside his head, he is still Ronnie Reagan, the mouther of anti-government anecdotes as lecturer for General Electric.

In a deep sense, Reagan has *not* been a functioning part of the government for eight years. Off in Cloud-Cuckoo-Land, he is the obedient actor who recites his lines and plays his appointed part. Some commentators have been critical of Reagan for napping in the afternoons, for falling asleep at crucial meetings, for taking long vacations at his beloved

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*The man was a blithering idiot. He made Warren Harding tower like Aristotle.*

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ranch. Well, why not? What else does he have to do? Reagan doesn't actually have to *do* anything; like Peter Sellers in his last film, all he has to do is *be there*, the beloved icon, giving his vital sanction to the governmental process.

Reagan's handlers perceived early on that one threat to Reagan's Teflon rule would be allowing him to mix it up with members of the press. Away from his teleprompter, Ronnie was a real problem. So very soon, any sort of real press conference, including uninhibited questions and answers, was



done away with. The only press “conferences” became shouted questions as Reagan walked quickly to and from the White House helicopter. One of his handlers has written that, despite all efforts, they couldn’t stop Reagan from exercising one peculiar personality trait: his compulsion to answer every question that he hears. But fortunately, not much was risked, since the noise of the helicopter engines would drown out most of the repartee.

The worst moment for the Reagan handlers came, of course, during the first debate with Mondale in 1984. For one glorious moment, during the give and take of the debate, the *real* Reagan emerged: confused, befuddled, out of it. It was a shaky moment, but all the handlers needed to do was to reassure the shocked masses that their beloved president was still sentient, was still *there* to be a totem to his flock. The handlers blamed Reagan’s showing on “over-coaching,” they made sure that he slept a lot just before the second debate, and they fed him a snappy mock self-deprecating one-liner about his age. The old boy could still remember his jokes: he got off his lovable crack, and the American masses, with a sigh of relief, clasped him to their bosoms once again.

### The Reagan Years: Libertarian Rhetoric, Statist Policies

How did Reagan manage to pursue egregiously statist policies in the name of liberty and of “getting government off our backs?” How was he able to follow this course of deception and mendacity?

Don’t try to get Ronnie off the hook by blaming Congress. Like the general public — and all too many libertarians — Congress was merely a passive receptacle for Ronnie’s wishes. Congress passed the Reagan budgets — with a few marginal adjustments here and there — and gave him virtually all the legislation, and ratified all the personnel, he wanted. For one Bork there are thousands who made it. The last eight years have been a Reagan administration, for the Gipper to make or break.

There was no “Reagan Revolution.” Any “revolution” in the direction of liberty (in Ronnie’s words, “to get government off our backs”) would *reduce* the total level of government spending. And that means reduce in *absolute* terms, *not* as proportion of the gross national product, or corrected for inflation, or anything else. There is no divine commandment that the federal government must always be *at least* as great a proportion of the national product as it was in 1980. If the government was a monstrous, swollen leviathan in 1980, as libertarians were surely convinced, as the inchoate American masses were apparently convinced, and as Reagan and his cadre claimed to believe, then cutting government spending was in order. At the very least, federal government spending should have been frozen, in absolute terms, so that the rest of the economy would be allowed to grow in contrast. Instead, Ronald Reagan cut nothing, even in the heady first year, 1981.

At first, the only “cut” was in Carter’s last-minute loony-tunes estimates for the future. But in a few short years, Reagan’s spending surpassed even Carter’s irresponsible estimates. Instead, Reagan not only increased government spending by an enormous amount — so enormous that it

would take a 40% cut to bring us back to Carter’s wild spending totals of 1980 — he even substantially increased government spending as a percentage of GNP. *That’s* a “revolution”?

The much heralded 1981 tax cut was more than offset by two tax increases that year. One was “bracket creep,” by which inflation wafted people into higher tax brackets, so that with the same real income (in terms of purchasing power) people found themselves paying a higher proportion of their income in taxes, even though the official tax rate

schedule went down. The other was the usual whopping increase in Social Security taxes which, however, don’t count, in the perverse semantics of our time, as “taxes”; they are only “insurance premiums.” In the ensuing years the Reagan administration has constantly raised taxes — to punish us for the fake tax cut of 1981 — beginning in 1982 with the largest single tax increase in American history, costing taxpayers \$100 billion.

Creative semantics is the way in which Ronnie was able to keep his pledge never to raise taxes while raising them all the time. Reagan’s

handlers, as we have seen, annoyed by the stubborn old coot’s sticking to “no new taxes,” finessed the old boy by simply calling the phenomenon by a different name. If the Gipper was addled enough to fall for this trick, so too did the American masses — and a large chunk of libertarians and self-proclaimed free-market economists as well! “Let’s close another loophole, Mr. President.” “We-e-ell, OK, then, so long as we’re not raising taxes.” (Definition of “loophole”: Any and all money *the other guy* has earned, and that hasn’t been taxed away yet. *Your* money, of course, has been fairly earned, and shouldn’t be taxed further.)

Income tax rates in the upper brackets *have* come down. But the odious bipartisan “loophole closing” of the Tax Reform Act of 1986 — an act engineered by our Jacobin egalitarian “free-market” economists in the name of “fairness” — *raised* instead of lowered the income tax paid by most upper-income people. Again: what one hand of government giveth, the other taketh away, and then some. Thus, President-elect Bush has just abandoned his worthy plan to cut the capital gains tax in half, because it would violate the beloved tax fairness instituted by the bipartisan Reaganite 1986 “reform.”

The bottom line is that tax revenues have gone up an enormous amount under the eight years of Reagan; the only positive thing we can say for them is that revenues as a per-




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centage of the gross national product are up only slightly since 1980. The result: the monstrous deficit, now apparently permanently fixed somewhere around \$200 billion, and the accompanying tripling of the total federal debt in the eight blessed years of the Reagan Era. Is that what the highly-

touted "Reagan Revolution" amounts to, then? A tripling of the national debt?

We should also say a word about another of Ronnie's great "libertarian" accomplishments. In the late 1970s, it became obvious *even to the man in the street* that the Social Security System was bankrupt, *kaput*. For the first time in 50 years there was an excellent chance to get rid of the biggest single racket in American politics, a racket that acts as a gigantic Ponzi scheme to fleece the American taxpayer. Instead, Reagan brought in the famed "Randian libertarian" Alan Greenspan, who served as head of a bipartisan commission, performing the miracle of "saving Social Security," and the masses have rested content with the system ever since. How did he "save" it? By raising taxes (oops "premiums"), of course; by that route, the government can "save" any program. (Bipartisan: both parties acting in concert to put both of their hands in your pocket.)

The way Reagan-Greenspan saved Social Security is a superb paradigm of Reagan's historical function in all areas of his realm: he acted to bail out statism and to co-opt and defuse any libertarian or quasi-libertarian opposition. The method worked brilliantly, for Social Security and other programs.

How about deregulation? Didn't Ronnie at least deregulate the regulation-ridden economy inherited from the evil Carter? Just the opposite. The outstanding measures of deregulation were all passed by the Carter administration, and, as is typical of that luckless president, the deregulation was phased in to take effect during the early Reagan years, so that the Gipper could claim the credit. Such was the story with oil and gas deregulation (which the Gipper *did* advance from September to January of 1981); airline deregulation and the actual *abolition* of the Civil Aeronautics Board, and deregulation of trucking. That was it.

The Gipper deregulated nothing, abolished nothing. Instead of keeping his pledge to abolish the Departments of Energy and Education, he strengthened them, and even wound up his years in office adding a new Cabinet post, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. Overall, the quantity and degree of government regulation of the economy was greatly increased and intensified during the Reagan years. The hated OSHA, the scourge of small business and at the time the second most-hated agency of the federal government (surely you need not ask which is the first most-hated), was not only not

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*In a few short years, Reagan's spending surpassed even Carter's irresponsible estimates.*

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abolished; it too was strengthened and reinforced. Environmentalist restrictions were greatly accelerated, especially after the heady early years when selling off some public lands was briefly mentioned, and the proponents of actually using and developing locked-up government resources (James Watt, Anne Burford, Rita Lavelle) were disgraced and sent packing as a warning to any future "anti-environmentalists."

The Reagan administration, supposedly the champion of

free trade, has been the most protectionist in American history, raising tariffs, imposing import quotas, and — as another neat bit of creative semantics — twisting the arms of the Japanese to impose "voluntary" export quotas on automobiles and microchips. It has made the farm program the most abysmal of this century: boosting price supports and produc-

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*Reagan acted to bail out statism and to co-opt and defuse any libertarian or quasi-libertarian opposition.*

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tion quotas, and paying many more billions of taxpayer money to farmers so that they can produce less and raise prices to consumers.

And we should never forget a disastrous and despotic program that has received unanimous support from the media and from the envious American public: the massive witchhunt and reign of terror against the victimless non-crime of "insider trading." In a country where real criminals — muggers, rapists, and "inside" thieves — are allowed to run rampant, massive resources and publicity are directed toward outlawing the use of one's superior knowledge and insight in order to make profits on the market.

In the course of this reign of terror, it is not surprising that freedom of speech was the first thing to go by the boards. Government spies and informers busily report conversations over martinis. ("Hey Joe, I heard that XYZ Corp. is going to merge with ABC.") All this is being done by the cartelizing and fascistic Securities and Exchange Commission, the Department of Justice and its much-hailed Savanarola in New York, Rudolf Giuliani. All this is the work of the beloved Gipper, the "free-market," "libertarian" Reagan administration. And where are the "conservative-libertarians"? Where are the "free-market economists" to point this out and condemn it?

Foreign aid, a vast racket by which American taxpayers are mulcted in order to subsidize American export firms and foreign governments (mostly dictatorships), has been vastly expanded under Reagan. The administration also encouraged the nation's banks to inflate and pour money down Third World ratholes; then bailed out the banks and tinpot socialist dictatorships at the expense of U.S. taxpayers (via tax increases) and consumers (via inflation). Since the discrediting of Friedmanite monetarism by the end of the first Reagan term, the original monetarist policy of allowing the dollar to fluctuate freely has been superseded by Keynesian Secretary of the Treasury James Baker, who has concerted with foreign central banks to try to freeze the dollar within various zones. The interference has been, as usual, futile and counterproductive, but that will not stop the soon-to-be even more powerful Baker from trying to fulfill, or at least move strongly toward, the old Keynesian dream of one world fiat paper currency (or at least fixed exchange rates of the various national currencies) issued by one world Central Bank — in short, economic world government.

But didn't Ronnie "bring down inflation"? Sure, but he did it, not by some miracle, but the old-fashioned way: by the

steepest recession (read: depression) since the 1930s. And now, as a result of his inflationary monetary policies, inflation is back with a roar — which the Teflon president will leave as one of his great legacies to the Bush administration.

And then there is another charming legacy: the reckless inflationary course, encouraged by the Reagan administration, of the nation's savings-and-loan banks. Virtually the entire industry is now bankrupt, and FSLIC — the federal agency supposedly "insuring" S&L depositors — is bankrupt. Instead of allowing the banks and their deluded depositors to pay the price of their profligacy, everyone of both parties, including our "free-market" Reaganites, is prepared to use taxpayer money or the printing press to bail out the entire industry — to the tune of an estimated 50 to 100 billion dollars. (These estimates, by the way, come from government sources, which notoriously underestimate future costs of their programs.)

I have been cleaving to the strictly economic realm because even the staunchest pro-Reagan libertarian will not dare to claim that Ronnie has been a blessing for civil liberties. On the contrary. In addition to his reign of terror on Wall Street (who cares about the civil liberties of stock traders anyway?), Reagan worked to escalate toward infinity the insane "war against drugs." Far from the 1970s movement toward repealing marijuana laws, an ever greater flow of men and resources — countless billions of dollars — are being hysterically poured into combatting a drug "problem" that clearly gets worse in direct proportion to the intensity of the "war."

The outbreak of drug fascism, moreover, is a superb illustration of the interconnectedness of civil liberty and economic freedom. Under cover of combatting drugs, the government has cracked down on our economic and financial privacy, so that carrying cash has become *prima facie* evidence of "laundering" drug money. And so the government steps up its long-cherished campaign to get people to abstain from cash and into using government-controlled banks. The government is already insinuating foreign exchange controls — now the legal obligation to "report" large amounts of cash taken out of the country — into our personal and economic life.

And every day more evil drugs are being found that must be denounced and outlawed: the latest is the dread menace of anabolic steroids. As part of this futile war, we are being urged by the Reaganites to endure compulsory urine testing (supervised, of course, since otherwise the testee might be able to purchase and substitute black-market drug-free urine). In this grotesque proposal, government is not only *not* off our backs, it is now also insisting on joining us in the bathroom.

And in the bedroom, too, if Ronnie has his way. Although abortion is not yet illegal, it is not for lack of effort by the Reagan administration. The relentless Reaganite drive to conservatize the judiciary will likely recriminalize abortion soon, making criminals out of millions of American women each year. George Bush, for less than 24 glorious hours, was moved to take a consistent position: if abortion is murder, then all women who engage in abortion are murderers. But it took only a day for his handlers to pull George back from the abyss of logic, and to advocate only criminalizing the doctors,

the hired hands of the women who get abortions.

Perhaps the Gipper cannot be directly blamed — but certainly he has set the moral climate — for the increasingly savage Puritanism of the 1980s: the virtual outlawry of smoking, the escalating prohibition of pornography, even the partial bringing back of Prohibition (outlawing drunken driving, raising the legal drinking age to 21, making bartenders — or friendly hosts — legally responsible for *someone else's* drunken driving, etc.)

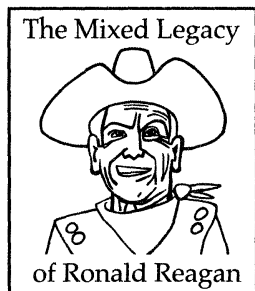
Under Reagan, the civil liberties balance has been retipped in favor of the government and against the people: restricting our freedom to obtain government documents under the Freedom of Information Act and stepping up the penalties on privately printed and disseminated news about activities of the government, on the one hand; more "freedom" for our runaway secret police, the CIA, to restrict the printing of news, and to wiretap private individuals, on the other. And to cap its hypocrisy, as it escalated its war on drugs, the Reagan administration looked

the other way on drug-running by its own CIA.

On foreign policy, the best we can say about Ronnie is that he did *not* launch World War III. Apart from that, his foreign policy was a series of murdering blunders:

- His idiotic know-nothing intervention into the cauldron of Lebanon, resulting in the murder of several hundred U.S. Marines.
- His failed attempt — lauded by Reaganites ever since — to murder Colonel Gaddafi by an air strike — and succeeding instead in slaying his baby daughter, after which our media sneered at Gaddafi for looking haggard, and commented that the baby was "only adopted."
- His stumblebum intervention into the Persian Gulf, safeguarding oil tankers of countries allied to Iraq in the Iraq-Iran war. (Ironically, the U.S. imports practically no oil from the Gulf, unlike Western Europe and Japan, where there was no hysteria and who certainly sent no warships to the Gulf.) In one of the most bizarre events in the history of warfare, the Iraqi sinking of the U.S.S. Stark was dismissed instantly — and without investigation, and in the teeth of considerable evidence to the contrary — as an "accident," followed immediately by blaming *Iran* (!) and using the sinking as an excuse to step up our pro-Iraq intervention in the war. This was followed by a U.S. warship's shooting down of a civilian Iranian airliner, murdering hundreds of civilians, and blaming — you guessed it! — the Iranian government for this catastrophe. More alarming than these actions of the Reagan administration was the supine and pusillanimous behavior of the media, in allowing the Gipper to get away with all this.

As we all know only too well, the height of Reagan's Teflon qualities came with Iran-Contra. At the time, I naively thought that the scandal would finish the bastard off. But no one saw anything wrong with the administration's jailing *private* arms salesmen to Iran, while at the very same time engaging in arms sales to Iran *itself*. In Reagan's America, apparently *anything*, any crookery, any aggression or mass murder, is okay if allegedly performed for noble, patriotic motives. Only personal greed is considered a no-no.



I have not yet mentioned the great foreign-policy triumph of the Reagan administration: the invasion and conquest of tiny Grenada, a pitiful little island-country with no army, air force, or navy. A "rescue" operation was launched to save U.S. medical students who never sought our deliverance. Even though the enemy consisted of a handful of Cuban construction workers, it still took us a week to finish the Grenadians off, during the course of which the three wings of our armed forces tripped over each other and our military distinguished itself by bombing a Grenadan hospital. The operation was as much a botch as the Carter attempt to rescue the American hostages. The only difference was that this time the enemy was helpless.

But we *won*, didn't we? Didn't we redeem the U.S. loss in Vietnam and allow America to "stand tall"? Yes, we did win. We beat up on a teeny country, and even botched *that*! If *that* is supposed to make Americans stand tall, then far better we sit short. Anyway, it's about time we learned that Short is Beautiful.

The U.S. war against the contras, on the other hand, which has been conducted at enormous expense and waged hand-in-hand with Guatemalan, Honduran, and Salvadoran dictators, is going down the drain, despite illegal CIA mining of harbors and injury to neutral shipping. Even the nearly comatose American public is giving up on the idea of supporting bandit guerrillas, so long as they are anti-Communist, despite the best efforts of Ollie and Secord and Singlaub and Abrams and all the rest of the war crowd.

The Reagan administration's continued aid and support to Pol Pot in Cambodia, the most genocidal butcher of our time, is more reprehensible but less visible to most Americans. As a result, Pol Pot's thugs are mobilizing at this very moment on the Thai border to return and take over Cambodia as soon as the Vietnamese pull out, presumably to renew their bizarre mass murders. But you see, *that's* okay with the Reaganites, because the Cambodian Commies are guerrilla fighters against the *Vietnamese* (pro-Soviet) Commies, who by definition are evil. Pol Pot's butchers as "freedom fighters" show us that, in the arsenal of the Reaganite Right, "freedom," like "taxes" and many other crucial words, means, as in the case of Humpty Dumpty, *whatever they choose* it to.

Grenada was the perfect war as far as many conservatives (and apparently much of the American public) were concerned: it was quick and easy to win, with virtually no risk of

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*To cap its hypocrisy, as it escalated its War on Drugs, the Reagan administration looked the other way on drug-running by its own CIA.*

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loss, and allowed ample opportunities to promote the military (and their commander in chief) as heroes while bragging up the victory on television — in short, allowing the U. S. to glory in its status as a bully. (It helped eradicate the awful memory of Vietnam, which was the perfect war for American centrist liberals: virtually impossible to win, horribly expensive in terms of men and property — and best of all, it could

go on forever without resolution, like the War on Poverty, fueling their sense of guilt while providing safe but exciting jobs for members of their techno-bureaucratic class.)

While the American masses do not want war with Russia or even aid to the bandit contras, they do want an ever-expanding military and other aggravated symbols of a

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*In Reagan's America, apparently anything, any crookery, any aggression or mass murder, is okay if allegedly performed for noble, patriotic motives.*

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"strong," "tough" America, an America that will, John Wayne-like, stomp on teeny pests like Commie Grenada, or, perhaps, any very small island that might possess the tone and the ideology of the Ayatollah.

### Setting the Stage: the Anti-Government Rebellion of the 1970s

I am convinced that the historic function of Ronald Reagan was to co-opt, eviscerate, and ultimately destroy the substantial wave of antigovernmental, and quasi-libertarian, sentiment that erupted in the U.S. during the 1970s. Did he perform this task consciously? Surely too difficult a feat for a man barely *compos*. No, Reagan was wheeled into performing this task by his establishment handlers.

The task of co-optation needed to be done because the 1970s, particularly 1973–75, were marked by an unusual and striking conjunction of crises — crises that fed on each other to lead to a sudden and cumulative disillusionment with the federal government. It was this symbiosis of antigovernment reaction that led me to develop my "case for libertarian optimism" during the mid-1970s, in the expectation of a rapid escalation of libertarian influence in America.

1973–74 saw the abject failure of the Nixon wage-price control program, and the development of something Keynesians assumed *could never* happen: the combination of double-digit inflation and a severe recession. High unemployment and high inflation happened again, even more intensely, during the greater recession of 1979–82. Since Keynesianism rests on the idea that government should pump in spending during recessions and take out spending during inflationary booms, *what happens* when both occur at the same time? As Rand would say: Blankout! There *is* no answer. And so, there was disillusionment in the government's handling of the macro-economy, deepening during the accelerating inflation of the 1970s and the beginnings of recession in 1979.

At the same time, people began to be fed up, increasingly and vocally, with high taxes: income taxes, property taxes, sales taxes, you name it. Especially in the West, an organized tax rebel movement developed, with its own periodicals and organizations. However misguided strategically, the spread of the tax rebellion signalled a growing disillusionment with big government. I was privileged to be living in California during the election year of 1978, when Proposition 13 was passed. It was a genuinely inspiring sight. In the face of hysterical opposition and smears from the entire California



Establishment, Democratic and Republican, big business and labor, academics, economists, and all of the press, the groundswell for Prop. 13 burgeoned. Everyone was against it but the people. If the eventual triumph of Ronald Reagan is the best case against "libertarian populism," Prop. 13 was the best case in its favor.

Also exhilarating was the smashing defeat of U.S. imperialism in Vietnam in 1975 — exhilarating because this first loss of a war by the United States, many of us believed, was bound to get Americans to rethink the disastrous warmongering bipartisan foreign policy that had plagued us since the unlamented days of Woodrow Wilson.

On the civil liberties front, the de facto legalization of marijuana was a sign that the nonsense of drug prohibition would soon be swept away. (Ye gods! Was *that* only a decade ago?) Inflationary recession; high taxes; prohibition laws; defeat in foreign war; across the board, the conditions seemed admirable for a growing and triumphant libertarianism.

And to top it off, the Watergate crisis (my particular favorite) destroyed the trust of the American masses in the presidency. For the first time in over a hundred years, the concept of *impeachment* of the president became, first thinkable, and then a living and glorious process. For a while, I feared that Jimmy Carter, with his lovable cardigan sweater, would restore Americans' faith in their president, but soon that fear proved groundless.

Surely, it is no accident that it was precisely in this glorious and sudden antigovernment surge that libertarian ideas and libertarian scholarship began to spread rapidly in the United States. And it was in 1971 that the tiny Libertarian Party emerged, in 1972 that its first, embryonic presidential candidacy was launched, and 1973 when its first important race was run, for mayor of New York City. The Libertarian Party continued to grow rapidly, almost exponentially, during the 1970s, reaching a climax with the Clark campaign for governor of California during the Prop. 13 year of 1978, and with the Clark campaign for the presidency in 1980. The morning my first article on libertarianism appeared in the *New York Times* in 1971, a very bright editor at Macmillan, Tom Mandel, called me and asked me to write a book on the subject (it was to become *For a New Liberty*). Not a libertarian himself, Mandel told me that he believed that libertarianism would become a very important ideology in a few years — and he turned out to be right.

So libertarianism was on a roll in the 1970s. And then Something Happened.

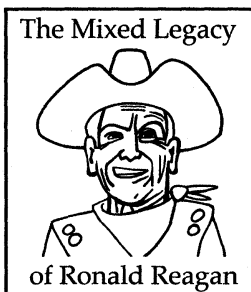
### Enter the Neocons

What happened was Ronald Wilson Blithering Reagan. Obviously Reagan did not suddenly descend out of the clouds in 1980. He had been the cherished candidate of the conservative movement, its chosen route to power, ever since Goldwater's defeat. Goldwater was too blunt and candid, too much an unhandleable Real Person. What was needed was a lovable, manipulable icon. Moreover, Goldwater's principles were too hard-edged: he was way too much a domestic libertarian, and he was too much an eager warmonger. Both his libertarianism and his passion for nuclear confrontation with

the Soviet Union scared the bejesus out of the American masses, as well as the more astute leadership of the conservative movement.

A reconstituted conservative movement would have to drop any libertarian ideology or concrete *policies*, except to provide a woolly and comfortable *mood* for suitably gaseous antigovernment rhetoric and an improved foreign policy that would make sure that many more billions would go into the military-industrial complex, to step up global pressure against Communism, *but* avoiding an actual nuclear war. This last point was important: as much as they enjoy the role of the bully, neither the establishment nor the American people wants to risk nuclear war, which might, after all, blow them up as well. Once again, Ronnie Reagan looked like the answer.

Two important new ingredients entered into, and helped reshape, the conservative movement during the mid 1970s. One was the emergence of a small but vocal and politically powerful group of neo-conservatives (neocons), who were able, in a remarkably short time, to seize control of the think tanks, the opinion-molding institutions, and finally the politics, of the conservative movement. As ex-liberals, the neocons were greeted as important new converts from the enemy. More importantly, as ex-Trotskyites, the neocons were veteran politicians and organizers, schooled in Marxist cadre organizing and in manipulating the levers of power. They were shrewdly eager to place their own people in crucial opinion-molding and money-raising positions, and were good at ousting those not willing to submit to the neocon program. Understanding the importance of financial support, the neocons knew how to sucker Old Right businessmen into giving them the monetary levers at their numerous foundations and think tanks. In contrast to free-market economists, for example, the neocons were eager to manipulate patriotic symbols and ethical doctrines, doing the microequivalent of Reagan and Bush's wrapping themselves in the American flag. Wrapping themselves, also, in such patriotic symbols as the Framers and the Constitution,




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as well as family values, the neocons were easily able to outflank free-market types and keep them narrowly confined to technical economic issues. In short the neocons were easily able to seize the moral and patriotic "high ground."

The only group willing and able to challenge the neocons on their own moralizing or philosophic turf was, of course, the tiny handful of libertarians; and outright moral libertarianism, with its opposition to statism, theocracy, and foreign war, could never hope to get to first base with conservative businessmen, who, even at the best of times during the Old Right era, had never been happy about individual personal

liberty (e.g., allowing prostitution, pornography, homosexuality, or drugs) or with the libertarians' individualism and conspicuous lack of piety toward the Pentagon, or toward the precious symbol of the nation-state, the U.S. flag.

The neocons were (and remain today) New Dealers, as they frankly describe themselves, remarkably without raising any conservative eyebrows. They are what used to be called, in more precise ideological days, "extreme right-wing Social Democrats." In other words, they are still

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*As statist-to-the-core, Reagan's neocon advisers had no problem taking the lead in crusades to restrict individual liberties, whether it be in the name of rooting out "subversives," or of inculcating broadly religious ("Judeo-Christian") or moral values.*

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Roosevelt-Truman-Kennedy-Humphrey Democrats. Their objective, as they moved (partially) into the Republican Party and the conservative movement, was to reshape it to become, with minor changes, a Roosevelt-Truman-etc. movement; that is, a liberal movement shorn of the dread "L" word and of post-McGovern liberalism. To verify this point all we have to do is note how many times Roosevelt, Truman, Kennedy et al., properly reviled by conservatives while they were alive, are now lauded, even canonized, by the current neocon-run movement, from Ronnie Reagan on down. And *no one* calls them on this Orwellian revision of conservative movement history.

As statist-to-the-core the neocons had no problem taking the lead in crusades to restrict individual liberties, whether it be in the name of rooting out "subversives," or of inculcating broadly religious ("Judeo-Christian") or moral values. They were happy to form a cozy alliance with the Moral Majority, the mass of fundamentalists who entered the arena of conservative politics in the mid-1970s. The fundamentalists were finally goaded out of their quietist millenarian dreams (e.g., the imminent approach of Armageddon) and into conservative political action by the cumulation of moral permissivism in American life. The legalization of abortion in *Roe v. Wade* was undoubtedly the trigger, but this decision came on top of a cumulative effect of the sexual revolution, the militant homosexual movement "out of the closet" and into the streets, the spread of pornography, and the visible decay of the public school system. The entry of the Moral Majority transformed American politics, not the least by furnishing the elite cadre of neocons with a mass base to guide and manipulate.

In economic matters, the neocons showed no more love of liberty, though this is obscured by the fact that the neocons wish to trim the welfare state of its post-'60s excrescences, particularly since these were largely designed to aid black people. What the neocons want is a smaller, more "efficient" welfare state, within which bounds they would graciously allow the market to operate. The market is

acceptable as a narrow instrumental device; their view of private property and the free market is essentially identical to Gorbachev's in the Soviet Union.

Why did the Right permit itself to be bamboozled by the neocons? Largely because the conservatives had been inexorably drifting stateward in the same manner. In response to the crushing defeat of Goldwater, the Right had become ever less libertarian and less principled, and ever more attuned to the "responsibilities" and moderations of power. It is a far cry from three decades ago when Bill Buckley used to say that he too is an "anarchist" but that we have to put off all thoughts of liberty until the "international Communist conspiracy" is crushed. Those old Chodorovian libertarian days are long gone, and so is *National Review* as any haven for libertarian ideas. Warmongering, militarism, theocracy, and limited "free" markets — this is really what Buckleyism amounted to by the late 1970s.

The burgeoning neocons were able to confuse and addle the Democratic Party by breaking with the Carter administration, at the same time militantly and successfully pressuring it from within. The neocons formed two noisy front groups, the Coalition for a Democratic Majority and the Committee on the Present Danger. By means of these two interlocking groups and their unusual access to influential media, the neocons were able to pressure the Carter administration into breaking the detente with Russia over the Afghanistan imbroglio and in influencing Carter to get rid of the dove Cyrus Vance as Secretary of State and to put foreign policy power into the hands of the Polish emigre hawk and Rockefeller Trilateralist, Zbigniew Brzezinski. In the meantime, the neocons pushed the hysterically hawkish CIA "B" Team report, wailing about alleged Soviet nuclear superiority, which in turn paved the way for the vast gift of spending handed to the military-industrial complex by the incoming Reagan administration. The Afghanistan and "B" Team hysterias, added to the humiliation by the Ayatollah, managed not only to kill off the bedevilled Carter administration, but also to put the boots to non-intervention and to prepare the nation for a scrapping of the "post-Vietnam syndrome" and a return to the warmongering of the pre-Vietnam Era.

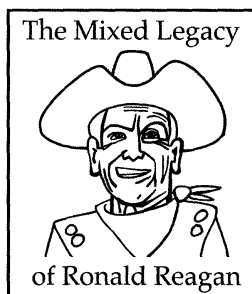
The Reagan candidacy of 1980 was brilliantly designed to weld a coalition providing the public's instinctive anti-government mood with sweeping, but wholly nonspecific, libertarian *rhetoric*, as a convenient cover for the diametrically opposite *policies* designed to satisfy the savvy and politically effective members of that coalition: the neocons, the Buckleyite cons, the Moral Majority, the Rockefellers, the military-industrial complex, and the various establishment special interests always clustering at the political trough.

### Intellectual Corruption

In the face of this stark record, how were the Reaganites able to get away with it? Where did Ronnie get his thick coat of Teflon? Why was he able to follow statist policies and yet convince everyone, including many alleged libertarians, that he was successfully pursuing a "revolution" to get government off our backs?

The essential answer was provided a century ago by Lysander Spooner. Why does the public obey the state, and

go further to endorse statist policies that benefit the power elite at the public's own expense? The answer, wrote Spooner, is that the state is supported by three powerful groups: knaves, who know what is going on and benefit from state rule; dupes, who are fooled into thinking that state rule is in their and everyone else's interest; and cowards, who know the truth but are afraid to proclaim that the emperor has no clothes. I think we can refine Spooner's analysis and merge the knave and coward categories; after all, the renegade sellout confronts the carrot *and* the stick: the carrot of wealth, cushy jobs, and prestige if he goes along with the emperor; and the stick of scorn, exclusion from wealth, prestige, and jobs — and perhaps worse — if he fails to go along. The reason that Reagan got away with it — in addition to his aw-shucks "lovability" — is that various powerful groups were either duped or knave-cowardly corrupted into hailing his alleged triumphs and deep-sixing his evident failures.



First, the powerful opinion-molding media. It is conventional wisdom that media people are biased in favor of liberalism. No doubt. But that is not important, because the media, especially elite media who have the most to lose, are also particularly subject to the knave/coward syndrome. If they pander to Reaganism, they get the approval of the deluded masses, their customers, and they get the much-sought-after *access* to the president and to other bigwigs in government. And access means scoops, carefully planted exclusive leaks, etc. Any sort of effective opposition to the president means, on the other hand, loss of access; the angering of Reagan-deluded masses; and *also* the angering of their bosses, the owners of the press and television, who are far more conservative than their journalist employees.

One of Reagan's most notable achievements was his emasculation of the liberal media because of his personal popularity with the masses. Note, for example, the wimpy media treatment of Iran-Contra as compared to their glorious attack on Watergate. If *this* is liberal media bias, then the liberals need to be saved from their friends.

If the media were willing to go along with Reaganite duplicity and hokum, then so were our quasi-libertarian intellectual leaders. It is true of the libertarian-inclined masses as it has been always true of the conservative masses: they tend to be not too swift in the upper story. During the late 1970s, libertarian intellectuals and free-market economists were growing in number, but they were still very few, and they had not yet established institutions with firm ties to journalistic and mass opinion. Hence, the libertarian *mood*, but not the informed *thought*, of the masses, was ready for co-optation, especially if led by a charismatic, beloved president.

But we must not underweigh the importance of the traitorous role performed by quasi-libertarian intellectuals and free-market economists during the Reagan years. While their institutions were small and relatively weak, the power and consistency of libertarian thought had managed to bring them considerable prestige and political influence by

1980 — *especially* since they offered an attractive and consistent alternative to a statist system that was breaking down on all fronts.

But talk about your knaves! In the history of ideological movements, there have always been people willing to sell their souls and their principles. But never in history have so many sold out for so pitifully little. Hordes of libertarian and free-market intellectuals and activists *rushed* to Washington to whore after lousy little jobs, crummy little grants, and sporadic little conferences. It is bad enough to sell out; it is far worse to be a two-bit whore. And worst of all in this sickening spectacle were those who went into the tank without so much as a clear offer: betraying the values and principles of a lifetime in order to *position themselves* in hopes of being propositioned. And so they wriggled around the seats of power in Washington. The intellectual corruption spread rapidly, in proportion to the height and length of jobs in the Reagan administration. Lifelong opponents of budget deficits remarkably began

to weave sophisticated and absurd apologies, now that the great Reagan was piling them up, claiming, very much like the hated left-wing Keynesians of yore, that "deficits don't matter."

Shorn of intellectual support, the half-formed libertarian instincts of the American masses remained content with Reaganite rhetoric, and the actual diametrically opposite policies got lost in the shuffle.

### Reagan's Legacy

Has the Reagan administration done nothing good in its eight ghastly years on earth, you might ask? Yes, it has done *one* good thing: it has repealed the despotic 55-mile-per-hour highway speed limit. And that is *it*.

As the Gipper, at bloody long last, goes riding off into the sunset, he leaves us with a hideous legacy. He has succeeded in destroying the libertarian public mood of the late 1970s, and replaced it with fatuous and menacing patriotic symbols of the nation-state, especially the flag, which he first whooped up in his vacuous reelection campaign of 1984,

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*In response to the crushing defeat of Goldwater, the Right had become ever less libertarian and less principled, and ever more attuned to the "responsibilities" and modulations of power.*

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aided by the unfortunate coincidence of the Olympics being held at Los Angeles. (Who will soon forget the raucous bay-ing of the chauvinist mobs: "USA! USA!" every time some American came in third in some petty event?) He has succeeded in corrupting libertarian and free-market intellectuals and institutions, although in Ronnie's defense it must be noted that the fault lies with the corrupted and not with the

corrupter.

It is generally agreed by political analysts that the ideological mood of the public, after eight years of Reaganism, is in support of *economic* liberalism (that is, an expanded welfare state), and *social* conservatism (that is, the suppression of civil liberties and the theocratic outlawing of immoral behavior). And, on foreign policy, of course, they stand for militaristic chauvinism. After eight years of Ronnie, the mood of the American masses is to expand the goodies of the welfare-warfare state (though not to increase taxes to pay for these goodies), to swagger abroad and be very tough with nations that can't fight back, and to crack down on the liberties of groups they don't like or whose values or culture they disagree with.

It is a decidedly unlovely and unlibertarian wasteland, this picture of America 1989, and who do we have to thank for it? Several groups: the neocons who organized it; the vested interests and the power elite who run it; the libertarians and free marketeers who sold out for it; and above all, the universally beloved Ronald Wilson Reagan, who made it possible.

As he rides off into retirement, glowing with the love of the American public, leaving his odious legacy behind, one wonders what this hallowed dimwit might possibly do in retirement that could be at all worthy of the rest of his political career.

What very last triumph are we supposed to "win for the Gipper"?

He has tipped his hand: I have just read that as soon as he retires, the Gipper will go on a banquet tour on behalf of the repeal of the 22nd ("Anti-Third Term") Amendment — the one decent thing the Republicans have accomplished in the last four decades. The 22nd Amendment was a well-deserved retrospective slap at FDR. It is typical of the depths to which the GOP has fallen that in the last few years that Republicans have been actually muttering about joining the effort to repeal this amendment. If they are successful, then Ronald Reagan might be elected again, and re-elected well into the 21st century.

In our age of high tech, I'm sure that his mere physical death can easily be overcome by his handlers and media mavens. Ronald Reagan will be suitably mummified, trotted out in front of a giant American flag, and some puppetmaster will get him to give his winsome headshake, and some ventriloquist will imitate the golden tones: "We-e-ell . . ." (Why not? After all, the living reality of the last four years has not been a helluva lot different.)

Perhaps, after all, Ronald Reagan and almost all the rest of us will finally get our fondest wish: the election forever and ever of the mummified icon King Ronnie.

Now *there* is a legacy for our descendants! □

# Credit Where Credit Is Due

*by Lance Lamberton*

In the wake of Ronald Reagan's final passing from the American scene, our nation, and indeed the world, is engaged in a process of reflection over what his legacy is. Libertarians, for the most part, have not been kind to Reagan, pointing out, quite correctly, that Reagan was not a libertarian. On that basis he has been assailed as someone whose rhetoric did not match his deeds. True enough. However, some libertarians have been unremittingly hostile to a degree that Reagan's record does not justify.

Even before Reagan assumed the office of president, Sheldon Richman predicted that "inflation under a Republican Administration is likely to be higher — I believe

much higher — than under the Carter Administration." (Gold Newsletter Nov. 1980) In the July–August 1980 issue of *Libertarian Party News* Jule Herbert claimed that Reagan's "current tax package is an embodiment of traditional business-as-usual tax-cutting policies."

Fortunately, history did not bear out Richman's dire prediction. In fact, the exact opposite happened. As for Herbert's position, nothing could have been further from the truth. The traditional approach to tax cuts prior to Reagan was to skew them toward the poor and lower middle class in an effort to redistribute wealth and solidify support from traditional Democratic constituencies. President Reagan eschewed that approach and stayed firm with

across-the-board tax cuts. Animus toward Reagan undermined libertarians' credibility.

A good way to evaluate Reagan's record is to look at the state of the nation under his predecessor. Inflation and interest rates were both in double digits. The Soviet Empire was on the move in Afghanistan. Oil shortages were resulting in long lines at the gas pump, and we were suffering a cruel humiliation at the hands of Iranian militants. Carter was preaching a doctrine of diminished expectations, and it appeared as if our best days were now behind us.

Enter Ronald Reagan, stage right. With his typical ebullient optimism, he preached a doctrine of hope, promise, and great expectations. By the time he left office eight years later, America's faith in itself and its future had been restored. Despite all his shortcomings, this is the greatest gift he gave future generations, and he should be honored and revered for it, as he is by most Americans.

Reagan changed the focus of debate in public policy. Before his presidency, politicians and voters alike acquiesced to the view of government that had given rise to the Great Society: that social and economic problems must be addressed by an ever more proactive and far-reaching federal bureaucracy. Reagan turned that notion on its head in one brilliant rhetorical flourish. In his first address before a joint session of Congress, he declared that "government is too big and costs too much." As the TV cameras panned the audience, a tight-lipped, unsmiling Ted Kennedy was seen standing and applauding. His delivery of that statement was so dramatic and compelling that it brought every member of Congress to a rousing, standing ovation. As I savored that moment, I said to myself, "Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you."

From that point onward, the spending interests and entrenched bureaucracies were on the defensive. In the months that followed, Congress enacted Reagan's significant supply-side-oriented cuts in tax rates and indexed tax rates so that taxpayers, at long last, were spared insidious, unlegislated tax increases known as "bracket creep." Under Reagan's leadership, Congress cut spending by billions of dollars through ferreting out waste, fraud, and abuse in federal entitlement programs.

By the time 1984 rolled around, inflation was down, interest rates were down, unemployment was down, and the economy was way up. No wonder Ronald Reagan won re-election by the greatest electoral landslide in history.

His foreign policy accomplishments were equally as impressive and certainly more far-reaching. Reagan presided over the fall of the Soviet Empire and the end of the Cold War by administering a deft one-two punch. First, he deregulated the price of oil, allowing market forces to do their magic, which eventually led to a dramatic fall in oil prices. As a major oil exporter, the Soviet Union was dependent on oil to prop up its oppressive empire and finance its foreign adventures. With the collapse in oil prices, the entire Soviet economic system became unhinged.

The second punch was Reagan's military build-up. The

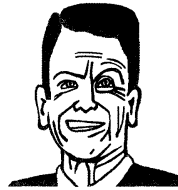
Soviets simply couldn't compete. As Americans, we no longer live under the fear of nuclear holocaust. The millions who once lived under the Soviet boot were given the gift of freedom. Reagan had the courage and fortitude to call the Soviet Union what it was — an Evil Empire — and the will to carry out a program leading to its destruction.

He was a forceful and articulate advocate of a Balanced Budget Amendment. Imagine Bush advocating anything close to that! Reagan was the driving force behind the Grace Commission, which proposed to save billions of dollars by implementing common sense business accounting practices in the operation of government. Reagan implemented many of those practices by executive order.

That's the positive side of Reagan's presidency. The negative side is that he gave up many opportunities to push forward the frontiers of liberty. In the aftermath of the attempted assassination of Reagan and his subsequent address to Congress, the political mood of the country would have allowed Reagan to go a lot further than he did. He had a political mandate that few in public life ever have, and he blew it. At that point, Congress was cowed by Reagan. It would have given him literally anything he asked for. The American people were not interested in the delicate art of political compromise. They were saying, in a massive outpouring of public support: "Give him what he wants."

But Reagan was surrounded by a bevy of seasoned political operatives who didn't much care about his political agenda or philosophy of limited government, and were so immersed in the "politics of the possible" that they couldn't conceive of pushing any agenda that did not include significant compromise. There was a time when we could have gotten bigger tax cuts, bigger spending cuts, and more regulatory relief. However, that window was short, and the opportunity passed. In the following year Reagan was reduced to championing tax *increases* to reduce the debt. He made a deal with the devil (i.e., Congress): to

### The Mixed Legacy



of Ronald Reagan

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*Politicians and voters alike agreed that social and economic problems must be addressed by an ever more proactive and far-reaching federal bureaucracy. Reagan turned that notion on its head in one brilliant rhetorical flourish.*

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reduce spending dollar for dollar for each dollar in increased taxes. Needless to say, the devil did not hold up its end of the bargain, leading the way to record budget deficits.

Another opportunity was lost when he didn't end affirmative action, which he could have done by signing an executive order. Another was his failure to end draft registration, which Carter had reinstituted in 1980. Two more were his failure to implement his campaign promises to



abolish the departments of Energy and Education. And his massive expansion of the War on Drugs will forever serve as a blight on his legacy.

Libertarians wonder how much better Reagan could have advanced liberty if he had been a hard-core libertar-

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*Reagan made a deal with the devil (i.e., Congress): to reduce spending dollar for dollar for each dollar in increased taxes. Needless to say, the devil did not hold up its end of the bargain.*

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ian. But if he had been a hard-core libertarian, and had been honest about it, he never would have been elected president. And even if by some miracle he had been, the political forces that favor spending and big government would have

overwhelmed him.

Look at the failed Gingrich revolution when the Republicans took control of the House in 1994. Their bold attempt to enact modest reductions in the size and scope of government led to a showdown with Clinton, who shut down so-called nonessential government services. By closing national parks and otherwise painting the Republicans as curmudgeons intent on bringing the government to a halt, he forced the Republican House leadership into a full-scale retreat.

The sad fact remains that the overwhelming majority of the American people is hopelessly addicted to big government. As for any addict, the first step in recovery is for America to admit that it has an addiction. Reagan did that for us when he told Congress that government is too big and costs too much. We agreed, at least in principle, to that plain and salient truth. Through that agreement, we managed to gain and hold a beachhead, however tiny, upon which we can advance the cause of liberty. Reagan gave us that, and for that I am grateful. □

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# Ronald Reagan, R.I.H.

*by Jeff Riggenbach*

Ronald Reagan launched his long career as a liar at WHO radio in Des Moines, Iowa in 1933, when he was 22 years old. His job was faking play-by-play coverage of Chicago Cubs and Chicago White Sox baseball games based on wire reports he received over ticker tapes. Nor was baseball the extent of his deception. *Time* magazine's Hugh Sidey notes that

Years later, in the White House, Reagan told how he had laid elaborate plans for live radio coverage at trackside of the Drake Relays quarter-mile run only to be cut off by a commercial. When the studio patched him back online, the race was history. Reagan said he never blinked and, from notes and the sharp whack of his pencil for the starting gun, he recreated the whole race, cinders crunching, muscles etched by strain, colored jerseys blurring, winner hailed in an exultant shout. "Just then it occurred to me there would be no crowd cheers in the background," Reagan related. "So without a pause, I said, 'Ladies and gentlemen, the crowd has been stunned into silence.'"

In 1937, at age 26, Reagan was "discovered" by an agent

from Warner Bros., who knew a man who could pass himself off as something he really wasn't when he saw one. Over the next dozen years, Reagan delivered mediocre performance after mediocre performance in mediocre film after mediocre film (along with a few worse-than-mediocre performances in worse-than-mediocre films). By the early 1950s, even Hollywood, usually a warm friend of mediocrity, had had enough. Reagan found himself washed up, over the hill. In 1952, the same year he married Nancy Davis, a mediocre young actress he had impregnated, he was forced to take a job as a Las Vegas emcee in order to make ends meet. Later that same year, appalled by his new son-in-law's apparent inability to earn a living, Nancy's father, Royal Davis, prevailed upon some of his political friends at General Electric to find some kind of job for Reagan. They complied, coming up with a position that required the former actor to travel the country giving speeches in defense of "free enterprise."

The problem was that Reagan knew little or nothing

about free enterprise. And he was no stranger to politics — it was widely rumored in the late '40s that his first wife, Jane Wyman, had dumped him because of her inability to bear the tedium of his constant attempts at political discussion. But his political views were not particularly friendly to free enterprise. He was a New Deal liberal who believed Franklin Roosevelt's heavy-handed interference in market processes had "solved" the Great Depression and a staunch trade unionist who served as president of one of Hollywood's most powerful unions, the Screen Actors Guild.

More important, Reagan seemed to lack any sense of the larger political picture, what George H. W. Bush was famously to call "the vision thing." Even as late as 1956, when he was 45 years old, Reagan "apparently had not arrived at a clearly defined political philosophy," according to biographer and former *Los Angeles Times* reporter Bill Boyarsky. As a result, "the company's president, Ralph Cordiner, became concerned over his difficulties in answering audiences' questions." Cordiner told Reagan, "You'd better get yourself a philosophy, something you can stand for and something you think this country stands for."

Reagan, who didn't know much about politics or anything else, but did know what side his bread was buttered on, promptly got himself such a philosophy — "and what could be more natural," asked Milton Mueller in one of the most astute articles ever written on Reagan's political career, "than his selection of the traditionally American doctrine of limited government, individual rights, and free enterprise, the philosophy of the American revolution?" On the other hand, Mueller emphasizes,

[W]e should be attuned to the delicious symbolism here: Reagan found his ideology and began his political career at General Electric, and General Electric is synonymous with millions in government contracts. GE was one of the original parties to the post-World War II alliance between big business and big government which came to be called the "military-industrial complex." This military-industrial complex is both a prime cause and a consequence of the "big government" Reagan says he deplores; among other things it is responsible for the virtual nationalization of higher education, much of the federal government's role in energy research and development, and about one-third of the government's spending.

In effect, Reagan was lying for a living once again, traveling the country claiming that his employer favored free enterprise when what it actually favored was something closer to corporatism, mercantilism, or state capitalism.

That Reagan himself cared little or nothing about limited government, individual rights, and free enterprise became abundantly clear when, in 1966, his years of speechifying finally landed him in the California governor's mansion in Sacramento. For, as Murray Rothbard noted in 1980,

Despite his bravado about having stopped the growth of state government, the actual story is that the California budget grew by 122 percent during his eight years as governor, not much of an improvement on the growth rate of 130 percent during the preceding two terms of free-spending liberal Pat Brown. The state bureaucracy increased during Reagan's

administration from 158,000 to 192,000, a rise of nearly 22 percent — hardly squaring with Reagan's boast of having "stopped the bureaucracy cold."

Nor "is Reagan's record on taxes any comfort. He started off with a bang by increasing state taxes nearly \$1 billion in his first year in office — the biggest tax increase in California history. Income, sales, corporate, bank, liquor, and cigarette taxes were all boosted dramatically." After his re-election as governor in 1970, "[t]wo more tax hikes — in 1971 and 1972 — raised revenues by another \$500 million and \$700 million respectively." Overall,

[b]y the end of Reagan's eight years, state income taxes had nearly tripled, from a bite of \$7.68 per \$1000 of personal income to \$19.48. During his administration, California rose in a ranking of the states from twentieth to thirteenth in personal income tax collection per capita, and it rose from fourth to first in per capita revenue from corporate income taxes.

During his 1970 campaign for re-election, Reagan engaged in his customary orgy of lying — assuring voters, for example, that his feet were set "in concrete" against adopting payroll withholding of state income tax in California. Less than a year later he was joking that "the sound you hear is the sound of concrete cracking around my feet," as he signed exactly that provision into law.

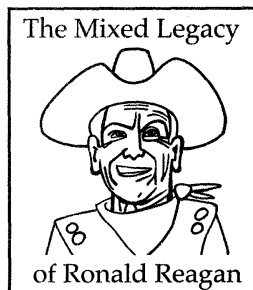
Rothbard noted that Reagan "created seventy-three new state government councils and commissions, with a total budget, in his last year alone, of \$12 million. Included was the California Energy Commission, which put the state hip-deep into the energy business" and created a regulatory climate under which a three-year review process was required before any new power plant could be constructed in the state.

Among Reagan's most flagrant lies concerning his tenure as governor of California were his claims to have "reformed" welfare in the state. As Rothbard noted in 1980, he "removed more than 510,000 from the welfare rolls by — among other things — forcing adults to support their welfare parents." Unfortunately, "[h]e then turned around and boosted the amount of welfare paid to those remaining by 43 percent, so that total welfare costs to the taxpayer didn't decline at all."

In 1974, having done all the damage he could legally do in California, Reagan began running for president. And by the fall of 1980 he had succeeded at this latest outrage, winning both the Republican nomination and then the election against the incumbent, Jimmy Carter, in that banner year. In January 1981, when called upon to deliver his first inaugural address, Reagan built the speech on the by-now-familiar lies that had characterized his entire career in politics up to this time. "For decades," he told Americans,

we have piled deficit upon deficit, mortgaging our future and our children's future for the temporary convenience of the present. To continue this long trend is to guarantee tremendous social, cultural, political, and economic upheavals.

You and I, as individuals, can, by borrowing, live beyond our means, but for only a limited period of time. Why, then, should we think that collectively, as a nation, we are not bound by that same limitation? We must act today in order



to preserve tomorrow. And let there be no misunderstanding — we are going to begin to act, beginning today. . . .

"It is my intention to curb the size and influence of the Federal establishment," Reagan thundered. "It is time to . . . get government back within its means, and to lighten our punitive tax burden. And these will be our first priorities, and on these principles, there will be no compromise."

But of course it was all lies, as it always had been before. Both taxes and deficits increased under Reagan. As Murray Rothbard put it in a 1988 retrospective on Reagan's years in the White House:

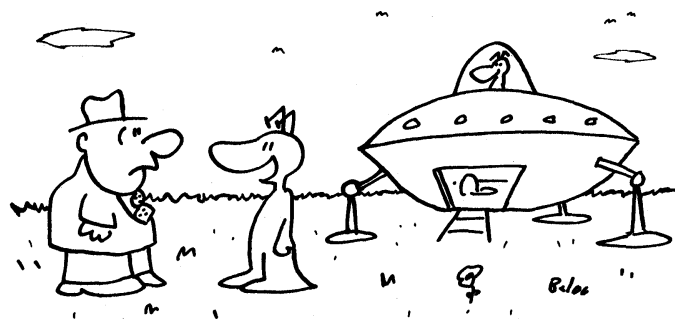
In the first place, the famous "tax cut" of 1981 did not cut taxes at all. It's true that tax rates for higher-income brackets were cut; but for the average person, taxes rose, rather than declined. The reason is that, on the whole, the cut in income tax rates was more than offset by two forms of tax increase. One was "bracket creep," a term for inflation quietly but effectively raising one into higher tax brackets, so that you pay more and proportionately higher taxes even though the tax rate schedule has officially remained the same. The second source of higher taxes was Social Security taxation, which kept increasing, and which helped taxes go up overall.

Moreover, in each of the seven years that followed that phony "tax cut," taxes increased:

with the approval of the Reagan administration. But to save the president's rhetorical sensibilities, they weren't called tax increases. Instead, ingenious labels were attached to them; raising of "fees," "plugging loopholes" (and surely everyone wants loopholes plugged), "tightening IRS enforcement," and even "revenue enhancements." I am sure that all good Reaganomists slept soundly at night knowing that even though government revenue was being "enhanced," the president had held the line against tax increases.

As for deficits, *Slate's* Timothy Noah puts the matter succinctly: "The deficit, which stood at \$74 billion in Carter's final year, ballooned to \$155 billion in Reagan's final year. In the words of Vice President Dick Cheney, 'Reagan taught us deficits don't matter.'"

Taxes and deficits weren't all Reagan lied to the American people about in 1980 (and again in 1984), however. There was also free trade. "Our trade policy," he intoned, "rests firmly on the foundation of free and open markets. I recognize . . . the inescapable conclusion that all of history has taught: the freer the flow of world trade, the stronger the tides of human progress and peace among nations." Then, as president, he "imposed a one hundred percent tariff on selected Japanese electronic products,"



"Hi! — We hear this planet has the best unemployment benefits in the galaxy!"

explaining that he did so "to enforce the principles of free and fair trade." As president he "forced Japan to accept restraints on auto exports"; "tightened considerably the quotas on imported sugar"; "required 18 countries, including Brazil, Spain, South Korea, Japan, Mexico, South Africa, Finland, Australia, and the European Community, to accept 'voluntary restraint agreements' that reduced their steel imports to the United States"; "imposed a 45% duty on Japanese motorcycles for the benefit of Harley Davidson, which admitted that superior Japanese management was the cause of its problems"; "pressed Japan to force its automakers to buy more American-made parts"; "demanded that Taiwan, West Germany, Japan, and Switzerland restrain their exports of machine tools"; "extended quotas on imported clothes pins"; and "beefed-up the Export-Import Bank, an institution dedicated to distorting the American economy at the expense of the American people in order to artificially promote exports of eight large corporations." By the time Reagan left office, at least 25% of all imports were restricted, a 100% increase over 1980. As Reagan's Treasury Secretary, James A. Baker, put it, Reagan "granted more import relief to U.S. industry than any of his predecessors in more than half a century."

Then there was draft registration. In 1979, Reagan told *Human Events* that conscription "rests on the assumption that your kids belong to the state. If we buy that assumption then it is for the state — not for parents, the community, the religious institutions, or teachers — to decide who shall have what values and who shall do what work, when, where, and how in our society. That assumption isn't a new one. The Nazis thought it was a great idea." A year later, he promised voters to end compulsory draft registration, which had been resurrected by President Jimmy Carter. Again, he lied. As Murray Rothbard noted in a 1984 appraisal of Reagan's first term, "compulsory draft registration has been continued, and young resisters have been thrown into jail."

"Reagan," Rothbard wrote, "has been a master at engineering an enormous gap between his rhetoric and the reality of his actions. All politicians, of course, have such a gap, but in Reagan it is cosmic, massive, as wide as the Pacific Ocean. His soft-soapy voice appears perfectly sincere as he spouts the rhetoric which he violates day-by-day" ("Reagan Phenomenon"). "Wherever we look," Rothbard wrote four years later, as Reagan left office for the last time, "on the budget, in the domestic economy, or in foreign trade or international monetary relations, we see government even more on our backs than ever. The burden and the scope of government intervention under Reagan has increased, not decreased. Reagan's rhetoric has been calling for reductions of government; his actions have been precisely the reverse."

Before we leave Rothbard's 1984 assessment of Reagan behind, however, it is worth reflecting on one key passage from that article. "And what of the man himself?" Rothbard wrote,

What explains him? There are only two logical explanations of the Reagan phenomenon. Either he is a total cretin, a dimwit who really believes in his own lies and contradictions. Or, he is a consummate and conniving politician, the shrewdest manipulator of public opinion since his hero FDR. Or is he some subtle combination of both? In any case, Reagan

continues to enjoy enormous personal popularity, the nice guy and the soothing-syrup voice topped by that truly odious jaunty smirk of self-satisfaction, that smile that says that he is objectively lovable and that the public adulation is only his due.

It seems evident that there are only two logical explanations of the public adulation that attended Reagan's terms in the White House and provided accompaniment for the inex-

*Reagan started off his governorship with a bang by increasing state taxes nearly \$1 billion in his first year in office — the biggest tax increase in California history.*

pressibly vulgar observances of his death that disfigured the first half of June (highlighted by the grotesque act of flying his corpse back and forth between the East and West coasts — at taxpayer expense, of course). Either the people of the United States are total cretins, dimwits, who really believe in Reagan's lies and contradictions, or they are willing participants in a truly colossal fraud — they know exactly the real nature of Reagan's policies and support them.

The first of these hypotheses seems to me to be the more appealing. Rothbard, in his 1984 article on "The Reagan Phenomenon," considered the possibility that voters, particularly conservative voters, "are dumb, and don't see the contradictions. Certainly, this fact plays a role. What Lawrence Dennis used to call the 'dumbright' and Macaulay called the 'stupid party' still exists in America." At another point in the same piece he refers to Reagan's "quasi-libertarian rhetoric, by which he sucks in the dumbright conservative voting masses."

Another question remains, however: how are we to account for the widespread worship of Reagan among supposed libertarians? During the days that followed Reagan's death, the nation's TV screens and the pages of its public prints were filled with a veritable tidal wave of bilge about his legendary status as an advocate of limited government and individual rights. And, shockingly, libertarians were among those shouting the loudest hosannas. Tibor Machan gushed that "[t]hose who love liberty lost one of their premier leaders when Ronald Reagan died . . . he was the greatest political friend of liberty of our time." Aaron Starr, the chairman of the Libertarian Party of California, announced in a news release that Reagan was "a great champion of individual liberty." Doug Bandow of the Cato Institute declared that Reagan was "one of America's greatest, and most optimistic, advocates of freedom." David Boaz, Cato's executive vice president, delivered himself of the opinion that "the best aspect of American conservatism is its commitment to protecting the individual liberties proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence and guaranteed in the Constitution" and that "Ronald Reagan spoke for that brand of conservatism."

How are we to account for this outpouring of delusional

admiration on the part of people who ought to know better? One possible answer is that all of them buy into one of the most persistent — and perplexing — myths about Reagan's time in the White House, the notion that he "won" or at least "ended" the Cold War, by "bringing down the Soviet Union." So great an achievement, these nominal libertarians argue, casts into relative insignificance Reagan's "failure" to lower taxes, reduce deficits, or cut back the overall size and intrusiveness of government.

John Fund, who started out as a libertarian back in the 1970s as a paid staffer for the Libertarian Party of California and a paid contributor to *The Libertarian Review* and other movement publications of the day, has labored for most of two decades now in the neoconservative vineyards of *The Wall Street Journal* and its various spinoffs. So it is perhaps unsurprising that he should wish to characterize Reagan as the far-seeing victor of the Cold War. But when, apparently with a straight face, he quotes former CIA director Robert Gates as saying that "Reagan, nearly alone, truly believed in 1981 that the Soviet system was vulnerable . . . right then," he tests the credulity of any intelligent person. For, as Fund knows perfectly well, there were plenty of other people in the early 1980s who believed the Soviet Union couldn't endure much longer. Ludwig von Mises understood as far back as the 1920s why the Soviet system must eventually collapse and explained his reasoning at that time. He and his most famous disciple, Friedrich A. Hayek, spent much of the '30s and '40s elaborating and popularizing his explanation.

Rothbard sneered that "Reagan obscenely calls himself the intellectual disciple of Bastiat and Mises," but perhaps in this case he really was. If he was, he must have known that, for reasons Mises had spelled out 60 years earlier, the Soviet economy had to be in parlous shape by the early 1980s, whatever extravagant claims the Soviet government might make to the contrary. And if he knew that, he had to know that any policies he might pursue vis à vis the Soviet Union

*The deficit, which stood at \$74 billion in Carter's final year, ballooned to \$155 billion in Reagan's final year. In the words of Vice President Dick Cheney, "Reagan taught us deficits don't matter."*

would have little or nothing to do with the inevitable collapse of the rival "superpower." Jim Powell, author of *The Triumph of Liberty* and longtime editor of the *Laissez Faire Books* catalog, another "libertarian" you'd expect to be capable of seeing through the Reagan mythology, considers the possibility that the Soviet implosion had little to do with American policies, but rejects it. After all, if he accepted it, he'd have to give up his absurd pretense that Ronald Reagan belongs in a book on the "lives of freedom's greatest champions."

Glenn Garvin, editor of *Inquiry* magazine during the first Reagan administration and another, apparently, former libertarian, similarly ridicules the idea that Reagan didn't really "win" the Cold War, but was merely "the political equivalent of the millionth customer at Bloomingdale's. He was the guy lucky enough to walk through the door as the prize was handed out." For Garvin, bent on the mysterious Reagan worship that seems to afflict so many aging former advocates of individual liberty, it is self-evidently absurd to think that "everything was pre-ordained and would have happened the same way no matter whether the White House had been occupied by Michael Dukakis or George McGovern or Susan Sarandon." Maybe Garvin should brush up on his Mises and Hayek, though — because that's pretty much the inescapable conclusion for anyone who understands Austrian economics.

The attentive reader will have noticed by now the manner in which I have slid in the last few paragraphs, as though down a slippery slope, from wondering aloud how

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*He promised voters to end compulsory draft registration, which had been resurrected by President Jimmy Carter. Again, he lied.*

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self-described libertarians can lend any credence whatever to Reagan's official mythology to describing those libertarians who do as "former libertarians," thereby implicitly questioning their libertarian bona fides. I have certainly noticed this tendency within myself, and have given rein to it only after some years of thought on the matters under discussion here. Murray Rothbard stated flatly in 1984, at the mid-point in Reagan's White House career, that "The presidency of Ronald Wilson Reagan has been a disaster for

libertarianism in the United States." Bill Bradford and Doug Casey denounced Reagan in similar terms at a conference in 1983. Justin Raimondo makes a similar, albeit somewhat

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*Ronald Reagan and his libertarian fifth columnists managed to persuade the American electorate that a libertarian is just another kind of conservative.*

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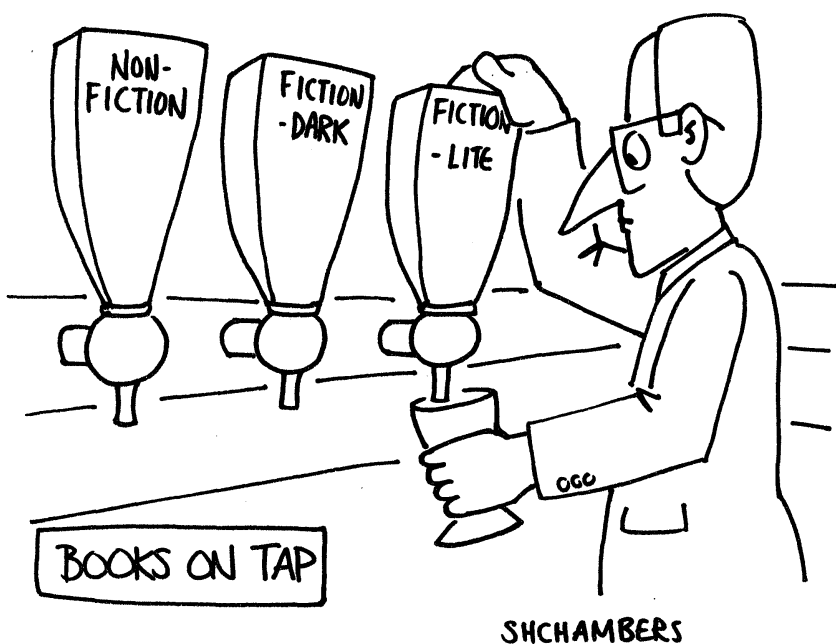
muted, point in an otherwise surprisingly pro-Reagan column published online in early June when he writes:

There was real passion and conviction in his voice when he denounced the evils inherent in government authority, and that was one of the real problems being a Libertarian Party activist in the 1980s — the Gipper was borrowing our rhetoric, and even some aspects of our program (without, of course, following through). The genial, inspiring, funny GOP standard-bearer was stealing our thunder, dammit, and charming the country into believing that he would really roll back the power of government in America and set us all free.

It wasn't only Reagan's persuasiveness that took the wind out of the libertarian movement's sails back in the 1980s, though. It was also the behavior of so many members of the libertarian movement: the writers who fawned over Reagan in the style exemplified today by Machan, Bandow, and Boaz; the "libertarians" who actually took jobs under Reagan and went to work in Washington — as though there was a real chance that libertarian policy goals could be accomplished in an administration dominated by men like Alexander Haig and Edwin Meese. Together, Ronald Reagan and his libertarian fifth columnists managed to persuade the American electorate that a libertarian is just another kind of conservative and that there's no need to involve oneself in a libertarian movement in order to

achieve libertarian goals, because the Republican Party stands for all the same things and actually has the power to make those things happen. They managed, too, to persuade almost everyone who didn't like the consequences of Reagan's policies that those consequences were the result of deregulation, privatization, tax cuts, spending cuts, reductions in the size and power of government — all the things libertarians recommend but which Reagan never even attempted to implement.

So it was that, with a little help from his "libertarian" friends, Ronald Reagan, a washed-up movie and TV actor of marginal talent who carved out a new career slurping at the public trough and mouthing platitudes he didn't even understand himself, did more damage to the movement for individual freedom than any other American politician of the 20th century. Ronald Reagan, R.I.P.? . . . Rest In Peace? Balder-dash! Ronald Reagan, R.I.H.! Let him Rot In Hell. □





# Prestige Has Consequences

by Stephen Cox

Some years ago, I used to attend the monthly meetings of the Libertarian Supper Club in Los Angeles. Like a number of other participants, I had the bad habit of carrying a book with me, in case the conversations got dull — although my habit was not so self-destructive as that of one regular attendee, a gentleman who invariably sat down, opened his book, and remained immune to all threats of conversation throughout the evening.

At the end of one session I was wandering aimlessly around the room, hoping that someone would talk to me, when I brushed the outer fringes of a group that had gathered around a well-known libertarian personality. He was an adept of Ayn Rand's ideas and was holding forth about her concept of "romantic art." "Wait!" he cried, pointing in my direction. "What's that book you're carrying?"

"Oh," I said, delighted to be noticed. "It's called *Roman Architecture* . . ."

"Uh," he replied, inspecting the object with disgust. "I

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*Friedrich Hayek, the great libertarian theorist, had intellectual prestige. His disciples, Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, turned it into love, and used it to change the world.*

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thought it said *Romantic*." He swivelled abruptly back to his disciples. "As I was saying . . ."

Since that sad day, I've noticed that many libertarians have the habit of obliterating from their notice or affection any entity that fails to fulfill their immediate ideological purposes. Rome? Uninteresting. Patriotism, national or local pride? Irrational. Military, diplomatic, literary, or cultural history? Irrelevant. Religion? Lies. Politicians? All the same, except the ones who claim, as Ronald Reagan did, that they themselves are libertarians. Those are worse than all the others put together.

President Reagan's death on June 5 has provoked a torrent of libertarian critiques of him, some of them thoughtful and accurate, many of them one-sided and abusive. I have

my own disagreements with his ideas and actions in office, but I won't list them here. You can easily guess what they are, and besides, I don't feel like offering incense to the Reagan-haters. It's enough to say that where Reagan failed, in my opinion, he did so by behaving like virtually all other American politicians of his time. If you've ever read a newspaper, let alone a book, that shouldn't be the cause of hysterical disappointment. Reagan's significance lies in the things he did that were different.

He announced, plainly and bravely, that there is evil in this world, and that collectivist states are the focus of evil. With equal clarity, he announced that there is good in this world, and that its focus is individualism and individual rights. He drew the proper deduction, that small government should be the goal of political action. He put that idea into practice by engineering an enormous tax cut and by harassing communist collectivism wherever he thought it was vulnerable, until it collapsed and the world was free of its Satanic power.

Reagan did not single-handedly "defeat the Soviet Union." Its defeat had many causes, just as the defeat of fascism had many causes. Yet everyone who remembers wak-

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*Thatcher's heroic appearance at Reagan's funeral, where she was seated next to Mikhail Gorbachev, the Hayekian winner next to the Marxist loser, can tell you almost all you need to know about politics.*

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ing in the night from dreams of nuclear obliteration has good reason to thank the shade of Ronald Reagan.

Libertarian intellectuals — many of whom are so loud in debunking his legacy — have the most reason to thank him, for the savage blow he dealt to the prestige of their competitors, the class of modern liberal and socialist thinkers who dominate the academic establishments of the West. These people believe that nothing is true except the imagined truths of collectivism, that individual rights aren't rights at all, that state power is intrinsically good and nothing is

intrinsically evil except the act of calling something evil. Reagan may not have convinced many of the soi-disant intellectuals themselves, but he showed them that the antitheses of their notions were still alive after all, and that the majority of the American people still responded to them. He bequeathed to the cause of liberty a popular affection it had not enjoyed for many decades.

If you think that ideas have consequences, imagine also that prestige has consequences. No libertarian movement can ever succeed without prestige, and the political manifestations of prestige — respect and love. The problem with the current libertarian movement is that there is practically no one in it who is capable of arousing anything like the kind of love and respect that President Reagan did. Friedrich Hayek, the great libertarian theorist, had intellectual prestige. His disciples, Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, turned it into love, and used it to change the world. Thatcher's heroic appearance at Reagan's funeral, where she was seated next to Mikhail Gorbachev, the Hayekian winner next to the Marxist loser, can tell you almost all you need to know about politics.

One thing you can learn is that you cannot lead people to change the world without making them feel *able* to do it and *proud* to do it. You cannot lead them to do much of anything

by analyzing their weaknesses and defacing their flags. That is where, thank God, modern liberals and modern collectivists, the Jimmy Carters and Mikhail Gorbachevs of the current era, continue to go wrong. They have never taken Reagan seriously. Libertarians should learn from their mistake.

Ronald Reagan was a man of great personal courage. He was also a charming, kind, and generous man. His anger was never petty; his responses to life were never bigoted. He thought soberly and expressed his thoughts ingeniously, with less damage from his provincial background and philistine cultural milieu than anyone could ever have expected. Over the course of a long and difficult life, a life filled with failures and half-successes, he established peculiar, and peculiarly powerful, means of psychological self defense. In politics, too, he was capable of strange twists and turns, inconsistencies to which he often seemed, and perhaps was, wholly oblivious. He was a complex human being, psychologically one of the most complex and interesting men ever to serve as president. Yet his basic ideas, like the basic features of his personality, were as firm and lofty as a line of Roman arches. Should libertarians be impressed by Ronald Reagan? Yes, I think we should. □

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# A Great Man

*by Alan Ebenstein*

Ronald Wilson Reagan was born on February 6, 1911, and died on June 5, 2004. His life spanned an incredible era in United States history, from before World War I to the War on Terror. He was one of the greatest Americans, in a league with Washington and Lincoln. He nobly advanced the cause of liberty at home and around the world. The passing of a two-term president is an occasion for reflection, because such leaders are so much a part of the life of everyone old enough to have followed the news when he was in office.

My earliest memory of Reagan is from his 1966 campaign for governor. My parents were Roosevelt-Truman-Kennedy-Johnson Democrats, who had probably never considered voting for a Republican in their lives. I remember watching a TV special shortly before the election where incumbent governor Pat Brown showed and made fun of a clip from one of Reagan's movies. It was to Reagan's great

political advantage that he was often underestimated.

Reagan was a shrewd politician. Though he had great integrity, he was flexible enough to change his positions. When he was elected governor in 1966, he ran on a platform of opposition to withholding taxes from workers' wages, and said his position was "in concrete." After a few months and a mounting state budget crisis, he announced one day that "the sound you hear is the sound of concrete cracking around my feet."

In 1967, Reagan signed a bill essentially legalizing abortion in California well before the United States Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision, but he later supported a constitutional amendment banning abortion.

Reagan was from a different time and place in American history. He grew up poor, in small-town, Midwestern America. Despite, or perhaps because of his humble origin, he retained incredible optimism throughout his life. He was

introduced to the national audience through his movies. Though often belittled, he was actually a grade B+ actor — not too shabby, considering how many are called and how few are chosen for this most sought after employment.

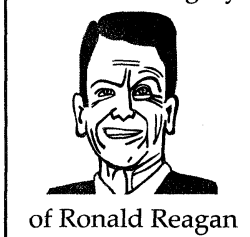
On October 27, 1964, a group of Goldwater supporters bought a half hour on national television for Reagan to argue on Goldwater's behalf. "You and I are told we must choose between a left or right," Reagan said, "but I suggest there is no such thing as a left or right. There is only an up or down. Up to man's age-old dream, the maximum of individual freedom consistent with order, or down to the ant heap of totalitarianism. Regardless of their sincerity, their humanitarian motives, those who would sacrifice freedom for security have embarked on this downward path."

His closing words made it clear that this was no ordinary political campaign:

You and I have a rendezvous with destiny.

We will preserve for our children this, the last best hope of man on earth, or we will sentence them to take the first step

### The Mixed Legacy




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*There was no moral ambiguity in his mind, nor any doubt as to which of the two superpowers should win the Cold War.*

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into a thousand years of darkness. If we fail, at least let our children and our children's children say of us we justified our brief moment here. We did all that could be done.

It was an electrifying performance, and it launched the political career that led him to the governorship of California and the presidency of the U.S.

When Reagan called the Soviet Union an "evil empire" early in his presidency (much to the chagrin of even many of his advisers, much less most of the media), he meant it. He saw the United States and the Soviet Union locked in a life or death, good versus evil struggle. There was no moral ambiguity in his mind, nor any doubt as to which of the two superpowers should win the Cold War.

Reagan won the Cold War largely through the Strategic Defense Initiative. Though derided at the time, the Strategic Defense Initiative was what, more than anything else — at least according to former high Soviet officials — caused the Soviet Union to knuckle under. If it were not for Ronald Reagan, there could well have been a World War III.

Reagan was a man of peace. He thought that peace, on the nation-state level, is obtained through strength. Largely as a result of his determination, the United States embarked on a major arms build-up during the 1980s which has served the nation well to this day. In 1987, when he went to Berlin and spoke the words, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!" he meant it. Two years later, the Berlin Wall fell.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 justified his presidency.

Reagan was more than a great leader in foreign affairs. It

can be argued that his social policies were as influential as those of any recent president.

He was once described as a "closet tolerant," and I think this well describes him. Actors are always a liberal bunch when it comes to lifestyle. No one ever accused Reagan of personal bigotry. Indeed, in the 1970s he opposed a California state initiative that would have prohibited homosexuals from being public school teachers. Paradoxically, I believe that the extent to which America is now moving in a pro-life, pro-traditional values, pro-traditional marriage direction, is as much due to Ronald Reagan as to any other man.

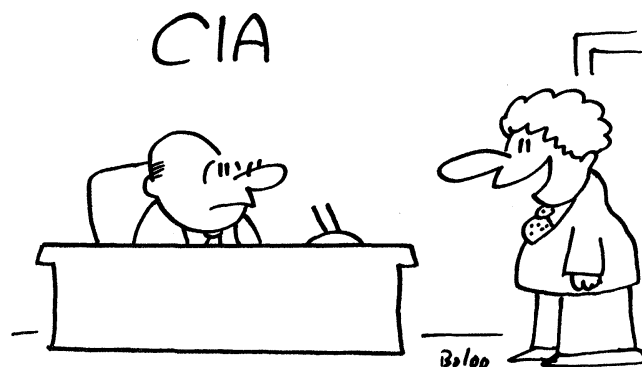
Reagan was much more intelligent than many gave him credit for being. According to his adviser Martin Anderson, Reagan's reading of the great free-market economists, including Ludwig von Mises, Friedrich Hayek, and Milton Friedman, was instrumental in the formulation of his domestic policies.

Once in office, Reagan implemented a decidedly free-market program — slashing tax rates, indexing taxes for inflation, supporting efforts of the Federal Reserve to eliminate inflation, cutting regulatory excess, and curbing domestic spending. While he did not make as much progress as he would have liked, he at least started the process of turning the tide against ever-increasing government.

As Reagan was taking the oath of office on January 20, 1981, Americans who had been held hostage in Iran for over a year lifted off the tarmac in Tehran, symbolizing the renewal of national hope and inspiration. During the Reagan years, America cleaned up the world and made a start on putting our own house in order.

I saw Reagan twice, once at a Santa Barbara fiesta when he was governor of California, and in 1992 when, both out to pasture, he met Gorbachev in Santa Barbara. On the latter occasion, there were several hundred invited guests in the airport hanger. I did not shake Reagan's hand, but I passed within a few feet of him. He was a tall, good looking man, with clear eyes. I was impressed by his straight posture both of the times I saw him. Now that Reagan has died, the question of a suitable national memorial for him will undoubtedly arise. I agree with those who think Reagan should replace Alexander Hamilton on the \$10 bill.

Reagan loved his ranch in Santa Barbara, now owned and



"I'm suspended for three months? Great! — It'll give me time to work on my book!"

operated by Young America's Foundation. He called it Rancho del Cielo, "Ranch of the Sky." He liked to joke that, while his ranch might not be heaven, it shares the same ZIP code.

Ronald Reagan famously echoed John Winthrop in declaring the land he loved so much to be "a shining city upon a hill." He was a man of optimism, a man of vision, and a man of peace. May he rest in it. □

# "Just Saying No" to Freedom

*by Dale Gieringer*

Ronald Reagan was one of the more impressive presidents of my lifetime, though unfortunately that's not saying too much. He deserves credit for bargaining tough with the Communists, instituting a round of nuclear disarmament, trying to curb excessive government spending and regulation, and cutting through liberal cant on the need for government to address every conceivable problem.

On the other hand, his drug policy was entirely disastrous, marked by an aggressive expansion in government powers that in every way betrayed his supposed conservative belief in personal freedom and limited government.

The Reagan administration introduced unprecedented and aggressive new tactics in the war against non-government-approved drugs. The DEA was unleashed to employ increasingly unscrupulous tactics, using paid informants, sting operations, entrapment, and pressuring foreign countries to enforce U.S. laws.

Sweeping federal asset forfeiture laws were enacted allowing the government to seize homes, bank accounts, vehicles, and personal property loosely related to a drug offense. He introduced CAMP helicopters to disrupt the peace of our wilderness in an endless search for marijuana gardens. While

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*The Reagan administration introduced unprecedented and aggressive new tactics in the war against non-government-approved drugs.*

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his administration professed its devotion to free enterprise, its tactics were more reminiscent of Cuban-style socialism.

These tactics were approved by the federal courts, where Reagan appointed "law and order" judges who habitually favored law enforcement, no matter how ill-advised, over civil liberties. Their epitome was the arch-"conservative"

Justice William Rehnquist, a drafter of the Controlled Substances Act, whose opinions consistently favor unprincipled state power over personal freedom, and whose appointment as Chief Justice remains a festering, toxic legacy of the Reagan revolution to this day.

The Reagan administration came down especially hard on marijuana. Even though Nancy and he were rumored to have puffed a joint at a dinner party, in their hearts they saw it as an inimical, counterculture menace. As governor, Reagan vetoed the first California bill to reduce marijuana penalties. As president, he spurned the recommendation of the National Academy of Science report that marijuana be decriminalized, ignoring the success of the numerous state decriminalization laws that had been enacted in the '70s.

Under Reagan, research on the medical use of cannabis was terminated, leaving the field to two decades of neglect; information favorable to marijuana was suppressed from libraries, and millions of research dollars were wasted trying to prove the bogus theories of Gabriel Nahas about supposed adverse effects of marijuana on cell membranes, hormones, the immune system, etc.

Most memorably, Nancy Reagan cheered the drug war along with her famous "Just Say No" campaign. When addressed to school pep rallies, these efforts were at worst irritating but unobjectionable. As Tim Leary observed, "Just Say No" is good advice for kindergartners.

What was more seriously disturbing was how the Reagan administration was treating adults. The administration that was supposed to get government "off our backs" instead got into our bladders by promoting widespread drug urine testing, including mandatory random testing of the military, government workers, and thousands of non-governmental workers in the transportation industry.

The freedom to create and design new drugs was quashed by new laws outlawing analog drugs and precursor chemicals. Draconian new mandatory minimum sentence laws for

*continued on page 52*

# Dark Horse on the Third Ballot

*by R. W. Bradford*

The Libertarian Party nominates a candidate without knowing his views or knowing about his brushes with the law.

By now, most libertarians know that the Libertarian Party chose as its presidential nominee Michael Badnarik, the darkest of dark horses, and a figure hardly known within the party and virtually unknown to non-LP libertarians. Badnarik is a self-taught constitutional scholar whose views were scarcely known to most LP members and delegates prior to the nomination.

Coming into the convention, the favorite for the nomination was Gary Nolan, a talk-radio personality who had raised the most money, won all five LP primaries, and put together a professional campaign staff. Nolan proposed the same electoral strategy that the LP candidate had employed in the previous two elections: he'd try to appeal primarily to conservatives, reaching out to them on talk radio.

Badnarik was different. He had embarked on a quixotic quest, traveling from state to state in a 1999 Kia Sephia, visiting state party conventions, speaking wherever he could, staying in the guest rooms of supporters whenever he could arrange it, hitting cheap motels when he couldn't. In late 2003, he interrupted his campaign to take a job in telemarketing to earn some much needed cash.

Badnarik believes that the federal income tax has no legal authority and that people are justified in refusing to file a tax return until such time as the IRS provides them with an explanation of its authority to collect the tax. He hadn't filed income tax returns for several years. He moved from California to Texas because of Texas' more liberal gun laws, but he refused to obtain a Texas driver's license because the state requires drivers to provide their fingerprints and Social Security numbers. He has been ticketed several times for driving without a license; sometimes he has gotten off for various technical legal reasons, but on three occasions he has been convicted and paid a fine. He also refused to use postal

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ZIP codes, seeing them as "federal territories."

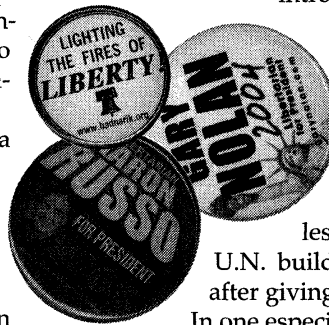
He has written a book on the Constitution for students in his one-day, \$50 seminar on the Constitution, but it is available elsewhere, including on Amazon.com. It features an introduction by Congressman Ron Paul and

Badnarik's theory about taxes. His campaign website included a potpourri of right-wing constitutional positions, as well as some very unorthodox views on various issues. He proposed that convicted felons serve the first month of their sentence in bed so that their muscles would atrophy and they'd be

less trouble for prison guards and to blow up the U.N. building on the eighth day of his administration, after giving the building's occupants a chance to evacuate. In one especially picturesque proposal, he wrote:

I would announce a special one-week session of Congress where all 535 members would be required to sit through a special version of my Constitution class. Once I was convinced that every member of Congress understood my interpretation of their very limited powers, I would insist that they restate their oath of office while being videotaped.

One assumes, although one cannot prove, that none of this is an exercise in irony. At any rate, these opinions were removed from the website shortly after he won the nomination, and they didn't come up when he visited state party conventions. Nor did his refusal to file tax returns, thereby risking federal indictment and felony arrest. While many of his closest supporters were aware of these issues, they were



unknown to most LP members.

During the first year of the campaign, Nolan and Badnarik met each other on the campaign trail. They made

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*The favorite for the nomination was Gary Nolan, a talk-radio personality who proposed the same strategy that the LP candidate had employed in the previous two elections: he'd try to appeal primarily to conservatives, reaching out to them on talk radio.*

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an agreement not to criticize each other, and became "close friends," in the words of Gary Nolan. Both expected that Nolan would win the nomination easily.

In mid-January, former Hollywood producer Aaron Russo, who staged a brief independent campaign for the presidency in 1996 and ran for the Republican nomination for governor of Nevada in 1998, announced his candidacy for the Libertarian nomination. He put together an all-volunteer staff, began to visit state conventions, and put up a very impressive website. He was worried about the prospect of another campaign like the past two, in which LP nominee Harry Browne had spent millions of dollars but had gotten .50% and .36% of the vote. Russo thinks Browne is a "disgrace to the Libertarian Party" because Browne promised to spend the money he raised during the campaign on advertising, but spent it instead on personal travel, generous salaries for his staff, and building a fundraising base for future use. (Browne had spent only \$8,840 of \$1.4 million on advertising in his first campaign, and about \$117,000 of \$2.7 million on advertising in his second.)

Russo quickly gained considerable support, more than enough to worry front-runner Nolan. Part of the reason Russo gained ground so fast was Nolan's association with Browne, in addition to proposing to repeat Browne's obviously failed strategy. This impression was reinforced when Browne publicly endorsed Nolan's candidacy.

In 1996, Browne hired Perry Willis, the party's national director, and Bill Winter, editor of the party's newspaper, to work for his nomination. This violated party rules and the terms of both employees' contracts. When exposed, Browne, Willis, and Winter all agreed to end their business relationship. Five years later, copies of invoices for services rendered were found among files archived on Willis' computer at LP headquarters, revealing that he and Browne had conspired to continue their illicit relationship and, with other members of Browne's staff, had conspired to pay Willis by a process of laundering the funds through another legal entity. Willis admitted that he had done this, arguing that his work for Browne's candidacy, though in violation of his employment contract and LP rules, was of such vital importance to the party that it justified his and Browne's lying and defrauding the party. Browne at first told supporters that he could explain everything in a way they'd find acceptable, but as

the evidence mounted, he simply refused to say anything on the subject, not even responding to the National Committee's investigation.

The party's National Committee passed a resolution banning the party from doing further business with Willis or any entity with which he was involved, and condemning Browne and the other members of his management team who were implicated in the scheme.

But one of Browne's conspirators remained in charge of the party's publications and, not surprisingly, chose not to report very much about the episode, and other party officials presumably were reluctant to publicize Browne's misdeeds out of fear of hurting their ability to raise funds. Despite the lack of publicity within the party about Browne's malfeasance, a substantial number of party activists

learned about it and were disgusted with Browne.

Nor did it help Nolan to have Steve Dasbach as his campaign manager. Dasbach was not directly implicated in Browne's scandal, but he was the party's chair and then its executive director during the period of Browne's hegemony, and had proved extraordinarily cooperative with Browne and extraordinarily unvigilant about Browne's fraud. Furthermore, Dasbach had mismanaged the party during his tenure at its national office, bringing it near bankruptcy, even as paid staffers gave each other "outstanding" performance reviews.

Although Nolan's association with Browne and Dasbach undoubtedly helped him with fundraising, it left a very bad taste in a great many delegates' mouths. From my informal canvasses of delegates, it seemed quite apparent that had Nolan not been associated with Browne and Dasbach, he would have easily won the party's nomination.

Michael Badnarik seemed to most in the party a right-wing sideshow. He campaigned tirelessly, and was a sincere and attractive spokesman for his interpretation of the Constitution, but that was all.

Russo, on the other hand, proved an extremely attractive candidate: he had enjoyed considerable success in business,

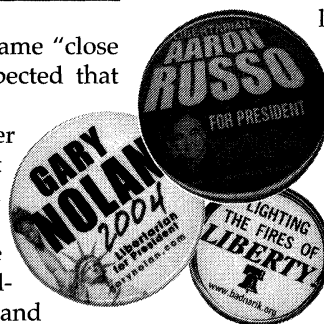
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*Badnarik seemed a right-wing sideshow. He campaigned tirelessly, and was a sincere and attractive spokesman for his interpretation of the Constitution, but that was all.*

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including the production of a handful of Hollywood movies, and had garnered 26% of the vote in the Republican primary for governor of Nevada in 1998. In 1996, he had declared his candidacy for president as the candidate of the Constitution Party. He had caused considerable worry among Browne and his supporters before he dropped out of the race well before the election.

Russo also offered a very different style of libertarianism from Browne and Co.: he was a fiery speaker who appealed





to people's emotions. His passions sometimes took him in strange directions, mostly of a far-right character, especially in his views of the IRS and the Federal Reserve System, but also toward some environmentalist positions that did not resonate well with LPers. He is believed to be wealthy and to have wealthy friends, and many LP members believed he might invest substantially in his campaign and raise significant funds from his friends. As Russo campaigned for the nomination on the Internet and at LP state conventions, what had looked like a cakewalk to the nomination for Nolan quickly became a real horse race.

Russo is convinced that the only way an LP presidential candidate can gain real visibility is to advertise on television, and promised to spend half the money he raised to air television advertisements. He wanted to assure delegates and potential supporters that he was serious about his campaign having real impact. He also hoped to goad Nolan into making the same promise, so that whichever candidate was nominated, the campaign would not repeat the Browne debacles in which virtually no money was spent to purchase advertising, despite the candidate's promises. To drive his point home, he produced a number of hard-hitting television spots, which were aired on Atlanta television during the convention.

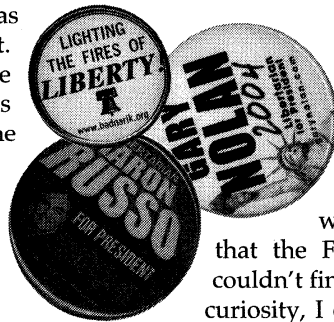
Russo also promised to engage in civil disobedience

at any presidential debate from which he was excluded, if he was showing up at any reasonable level in the polls. And he hired a pollster to survey Americans on a num-

*Aaron Russo proved to be an extremely attractive candidate. What had looked like a cakewalk to the nomination for Nolan quickly became a real horse race.*

ber of issues that the LP might use to gain public support. He was plainly a new kind of candidate for the LP nomination, offering a new kind of strategy.

I've known Aaron Russo for ten years, and had been lobbied long and hard by a supporter of Gary Nolan, the front-runner. I had heard Nolan's performance on a Seattle talk radio program, and had been very favorably impressed. I knew little of Badnarik aside from what I'd picked up in a brief look at his website, where I had learned that, like Russo, he believed that the Federal Reserve System is privately owned. (I couldn't find anything about this on Nolan's website. Out of curiosity, I called Nolan and discovered that he shared this



## Welcome to the LP Convention! —

I was reluctant to go to the convention because of past experience with covering the LP. Prior to the 2002 convention, getting press credentials was simply a matter of showing up, stopping by the media office, and picking them up. A few months before the 2002 convention, I contacted the party and asked about credentials. My request was forwarded to the LP's press relations staff — Bill Winter and George Getz — who didn't respond. So I emailed Winter another request. Again, he failed to respond.

I was vaguely concerned that Winter might hassle us because *Liberty* had broken the story that 1996 and 2000 LP nominee Harry Browne had raised millions of dollars which he promised to spend on advertising, but that he actually had thrown only a few thousand dollars in that direction. And *Liberty* had also been among the first media to report Browne's secretly hiring the party's professional staff (including both its executive director, Perry Willis, and media relations director Winter) to help him secure the 2000 nomination, in direct contravention to the LP's rules.

I was told by the party's chairman, Steve Dasbach, that Winter had probably not responded because he was so busy and, while I could imagine that Winter might hassle us, I could not imagine that he would deny credentials to the one news medium that reported on the LP in detail and provided independent analysis of its activities. So I told James Barnett, a young journalist whom I had assigned to cover the story, simply to go to the convention site and see Winter in the media room for press credentials.

The morning the convention began, I got a call from Barnett, informing me that he had been denied credentials

because *Liberty's* past coverage of the LP had been "biased" (unlike coverage in other media, which had been non-existent), and that if he wanted to attend the convention, he would have to purchase a membership and pay a registration fee. Barnett purchased a membership, attended the convention, and filed his story.

As the 2004 convention approached, LP Press Secretary Getz reacted exactly as his predecessor had: he simply didn't respond to my requests. I figured he might very well be planning to bait *Liberty* into coming to Atlanta where he would again refuse to issue credentials to its reporters.

At the *Liberty* Editors' Conference in Las Vegas two weeks before the convention, I ran into George Squyres, a Libertarian National Committee member whom I knew. He asked me whether I would be attending the convention, and I told him about the non-response from Getz. He said he'd look into it. The day I got back to the office, I received two emails with the subject line "Press Credentials," one a form letter from Getz, thanking me for requesting press credentials and informing me that he would have "personalized credentials" for me in the media room when I arrived; the other from Squyres, advising that I "should have received" my press credentials, with a copy of Getz's form letter and a notation that a copy had also been sent to the party's executive director, Joe Seehusen, and the party chair, Geoffrey Neale. It appeared that it had taken intervention from all three to get Getz to provide press credentials — curious behavior from a party that has difficulty getting attention from the press.

It was nine days before the convention, and the cost of flying there had tripled, but with this resounding welcome, how could I refuse to attend? —R. W. Bradford

goofy belief, which I mentioned in the June *Liberty* in a brief comment about the upcoming convention.)

But there's only so much you can learn from candidate websites, blogs, and telephone conversations with activists. To get a real feel for the nomination, I had to talk with the candidates, their managers, and, most importantly, with the convention delegates.

\* \* \*

Thanks to the LP's refusal to grant press credentials to *Liberty* (see sidebar, page 37), I wasn't able to arrange transportation until the last moment, and didn't arrive at the Marquis Marriott Hotel, where the convention took place, until 1:15 a.m. Friday. The convention's usual Thursday night party had disappeared without a trace by the time I arrived.

I was up early the next morning, hoping to find out how the convention was sizing up. I very quickly ran into the affable Steve Dasbach, front-runner Nolan's campaign manager. He confidently predicted that his man would win the nomination, probably on the second ballot. He told me that his campaign had polled delegates and found that Nolan was favored by 51%, Russo by 39%, Badnarik by "about 5%" with the remaining 5% undecided.\* He also told me that according to many observers, Aaron Russo had acted in ways that were inappropriate at various LP state conventions, and was widely regarded as a "loose cannon," whose behavior was sometimes inappropriate. This was the first, but not the last, time a Nolan staffer would impugn Russo's character.

I then went looking for Steve Gordon, the campaign manager for Aaron Russo, who told me that the Russo campaign had also surveyed delegates. Not surprisingly, their survey showed a slightly different outcome: it showed Russo with the support of about 50%, Nolan with about 40%, and Badnarik with 10%.

I had doubts about both surveys: this was the fourth LP nominating convention I'd covered for *Liberty*, and I could not recall a convention where under 25% of delegates were undecided. It seemed unlikely to me that the Nolan camp's estimate of just 5% undecided could be remotely accurate, not to mention the Russo campaign's estimate of 0%.

So I did what I always do at conventions: I began to talk to delegates and the heads of delegations. My doubts were quickly confirmed: it was obvious that at least a quarter of delegates were undecided. I showed Nolan and Russo in a dead heat with support from around 30% of delegates, Badnarik getting about 15%, and the remainder undecided. It looked like a very open convention.

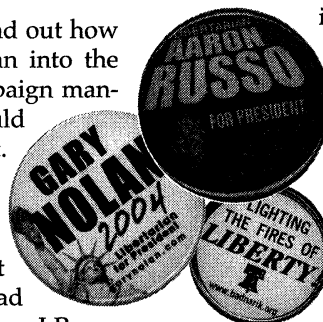
I also interviewed Russo and Nolan. I found Nolan to be as articulate and personable in the flesh as he had been on the radio. Russo was his usual outrageous self: alarmed at

the decline of freedom in America and full of bombast and emotion.

I spent most of the day continuing to canvass delegates and talking with campaign staffers. Every time I ran into a Nolan staffer, I was lobbied about what a bad candidate Russo would be. The main theme was the anti-Russo stuff Dasbach had spun, though told in more lurid language: Russo was crazy, he acted in ways that would embarrass the party, he was a loose cannon. Some added another charge: that Russo's health was bad, that he had cancer and would not be able to finish the campaign. It was the most intense lobbying, and the most negative, that I'd ever encountered at an LP convention.

One Nolan staffer asked me for my impression of the convention, and I told him that my most salient impression was the anti-Russo spinning I got from every Nolan operative I'd run into. He asked me what sort of stuff I'd heard, and I told him about the crazy-loose-cannon stuff, to which he confessed, "Yes, I think I've been doing that." I added that I'd also heard a lot of allegations that Russo's health was too poor to enable him to campaign. "You haven't heard that from me or any Nolan staffer. You must have heard that from Carol Moore!" (Moore was a Nolan supporter who was not directly affiliated with the campaign.) Then he added, "But he has missed half the state conventions that he had said he was going to." At a press conference later that day, I asked Russo how many state conventions he had missed. "Two," he answered.

Russo staffers engaged in no such personal attacks, at least in my contact with them. In fact, they didn't say anything unfavorable about Nolan at all. I have no idea why. Perhaps they were inclined to keep such personal matters



*Russo promised to spend half the money he raised to air television advertisements. He hoped to goad Nolan into promising the same, so that the nominee would not repeat the Browne debacles.*

out of the campaign. Perhaps they were too amateur to engage in such spinning to the press.

The Nolan campaign was bitter about an earlier attack that it believed had its origin within the Russo campaign. On May 21, Russo speechwriter Tom Knapp circulated an email that contained substantial negative information about Nolan: it quoted him as saying something that could be interpreted as hostile to gays and something that was definitely hostile to Native Americans, and denouncing a student who did not want to recite the Pledge of Allegiance in school. It also reported that Nolan had worked for a conservative Republican organization that financed GOP candidates in races against LP candidates.

Shortly thereafter, Knapp discovered that the comments

\*When I spoke to Dasbach two weeks after the convention, he denied that he had told me these numbers. When I asked him what results the Nolan campaign's survey had at the time, he told me he didn't remember. At my request he later emailed me the numbers that the campaign had as the convention opened: Nolan 45%, Russo 16%, Badnarik 8%, others 2%, undecided 29%.

about Native Americans had actually been made by someone else (he'd picked up the information from a Native American website that had attributed them to Nolan) and emailed a correction to those who had gotten the original email. Whether this was an action of the Russo campaign is in dispute: Knapp was a volunteer speechwriter for Russo, but he had begun the email with a warning that it was "not written on behalf of, at the behest of, or with the knowledge or permission of, Aaron Russo's presidential campaign, on which I am a volunteer. As a matter of fact, I rather expect to be dismissed from that campaign for writing it." That the Russo campaign did not dismiss him was interpreted by Nolan's people as evidence that he had in fact sent the email on behalf of the campaign.

While many people, including me, find Russo's bluster and boisterousness charming, it also sometimes rubbed people the wrong way. Longtime LP activist and National Committee member Steve Trinward described his encounter with Russo at the opening night reception: "I walked up to him, shook his hand, and began talking about the time we had met once before, which he clearly did not recall. He then asked me point-blank, 'Do I have your vote?' When I pulled back my lapel to show the Badnarik button and said, 'Not on the first ballot,' he immediately changed his tone to a dismissive one. His only concern was that Gary Nolan not win on the first ballot, and when I told him that was even less likely if Badnarik got any support on the first ballot, he simply looked at me briefly and walked away, uttering the words, 'You're a fool!'"

Obviously, Russo's people skills were less than perfect.

Russo had scheduled a couple of speeches in his headquarters suite to introduce himself to delegates who hadn't yet seen his act. I attended both. They were fiery speeches, partly scripted and partly extemporaneous. It was apparent that Russo was troubled by the charges about his health. About 15 minutes into his speeches, he directly responded to the accusation that he still had cancer:

I have no more cancer. I am very, very healthy, although other people are trying to say that I am not. If I wasn't healthy, believe me I wouldn't be running, I promise you that. But other people want to — are trying to find any rea-

*Russo simply looked at the delegate briefly and walked away, uttering the words, "You're a fool!"*

son they can to stop me in this race, and there's stuff going out over the website that I am sick, that I am this, that I had blood in my urine, which is true. But it came because I was taking too many aspirin, not because there was anything wrong, you know, you take one aspirin a day, a little baby aspirin. Me, being an idiot, I took a big one every day and I got an irritation in the lining of my stomach and I

bled in my urine all day. There's nothing wrong with me. I'm totally healthy.

A few minutes later, he returned to the subject:

*"Me, being an idiot," Russo confessed, "I took a big aspirin every day and I bled in my urine all day."*

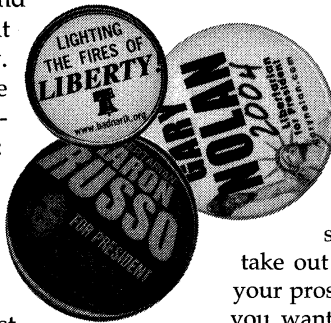
What's radical is the FDA thinking they have the right to limit your options of what medicine you can take when you are sick. What arrogance that is. When I had cancer, the FDA under their rules said I could only have chemotherapy, radiation, or surgery to kill my cancer. That's what they say, that's the law. So I went to the surgeon, and he said, well, after I passed all the initial part of it, the ugly part, well Mr. Russo, I need to take out your bladder and your prostate. I said, really, what's wrong with my prostate. He said, nothin', but, but if I examine you later after I take out your bladder, I can see you better if I take out your prostate. I said wait a second are you telling me that you want to take out my prostate so you can see better later and that there is no cancer? He said that's right. I said what are the consequences if you take out my prostate. "Well the downside is you can't have orgasms anymore." I said, "Doc, I'd rather be dead. Kill me now, kill me now. [By now, he is playing to his audience.] Put a dagger in my heart. What are you, kidding me? What do I wanna be alive for? I have this beautiful wife over here, I love her to death. I mean it's crazy."

It was plain that the Nolan camp's drive to portray Russo as a sick man was having at least one effect: it was getting Russo to get defensive. It was the strangest political speech I've ever heard.

The afternoon's business was a consideration of changes in the platform. The changes seemed sensible and the platform committee's report was well prepared. The delegates accepted most of the changes.

When I returned to my room Friday night, it still looked like a close race between Nolan and Russo. I thought Nolan was the most likely nominee because I judged his staff to be superior to Russo's. But his advantage was small. Delegates to LP conventions tend to remain open-minded and their choice of candidate can change quickly.

Of course, I didn't yet know that the Nolan campaign had good reason to be confident. Unbeknownst to anyone but Nolan and Badnarik and their closest staffers, a deal had been made that Nolan and his staff felt assured him the nomination. Badnarik and Nolan had very early made an agreement not to "go negative" with each other during the campaign. Somewhere along the line, they arrived at an understanding: after Badnarik was eliminated, he would support Nolan; when it came time to nominate a vice presidential candidate, Nolan would endorse Badnarik and his staff would work on Badnarik's behalf. Russo had cut badly into support for Nolan, but the Nolan campaign was still



confident that with Badnarik's support, they would easily capture the nomination.

I learned of this deal only after the convention was over, when Barbara Goushaw-Collins, Badnarik's post-nomination campaign manager, mentioned it in passing in a conversation about the Badnarik campaign. I interviewed Badnarik three days later, and he told me, without prompting, that no deal had been made. The next day, a high level staffer with the Nolan campaign speaking with me on condition of anonymity told me about the deal in considerable detail. I called Dasbach and asked him about it, and he denied that any deal had been made. But his boss, Gary Nolan, acknowledged to me that there was a deal, and two people present at a meeting between Badnarik and Russo confirmed that the Nolan-Badnarik deal was discussed in Badnarik's presence without his protest. It's pretty obvious that both Badnarik and Dasbach had lied to me.

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Saturday began with a breakfast with Neal Boortz, an Atlanta talk-show host who is syndicated in other markets. Boortz's support for Harry Browne in the 2000 race probably accounted for as much as a quarter of Browne's total national vote, preventing an even worse electoral disaster for the LP. But Boortz's appearance was nevertheless controversial, because he was a strong supporter of the Iraq war and had advocated FBI investigation of war critics, a group of people that included many LP activists. Republican Congressman Ron Paul addressed the convention in a morning session, and the luncheon speaker was journalist James Bovard.

But the main event of the day was the presidential candidates' debate, held at 5:00 p.m. and televised nationally on C-Span. With the large number of uncommitted delegates,

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*It's pretty obvious that both Michael Badnarik and Nolan's campaign manager, Steve Dasbach, lied to me about the deal that Badnarik and Nolan had made.*

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and the willingness of many LPers to change their minds when impressed with a new alternative, the debate was the single most important event in any of the candidates' campaigns.

Before the debate, longtime LP activist Mary Ruwart got Nolan and Russo together in the LP's luxurious suite on the 47th floor. She asked them both to agree to support the LP ticket, whichever of them won the nomination. They agreed, presumably with some reluctance.

Russo tried to use his time for opening remarks to effect the reconciliation. "There's been a lot of scuttlebutt going on here between my campaign and Gary Nolan's campaign, and I think it's very, very important, that we . . ." he began. "Gary, would you come up here a second, please?" He turned to Nolan, standing slightly off stage to Russo's right,

and gestured him to come on stage. Nolan shook his head "no," and Russo continued. "Anyway, the point was that Gary and I had a meeting the other day arranged by Miss Mary Ruwart, and we agreed that no matter who wins the nomination that we're going to support the other person, and that . . ." The crowd applauded, and Russo walked over to Nolan, who shook his hand. Russo returned to the stage, and continued, ". . . all bickering and silly stuff and character assassination is going to stop."

Party officials had chosen a debate format designed to make the debate a showcase for the LP, rather than an attempt to air differences among the candidates. At first,

## Sixteen Minutes of Fame —

For a candidate to be nominated from the podium, he must get a petition signed by 30 delegates. Jeffrey Diket got his 30 signatures and used most of the 16 minutes allotted for his nomination speech to speak directly to the delegates.

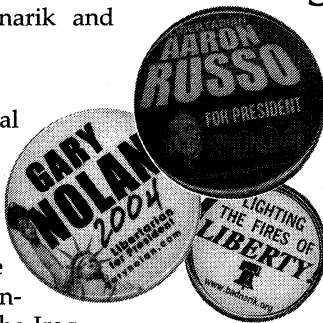
What follows is a transcript of his speech, which raises an interesting question. Should the LP open its podium to candidates with negligible support among the delegates? Some observers, including me, appreciate a delightfully

wacky performance of this sort; others took it seriously enough that they attempted (unsuccessfully) to change the rules so that candidates like Diket, who received 4 votes out of 778 on the first ballot, could not so easily get access to the podium.

Here is his speech:

Ladies and gentlemen of this convention! To those who believe that human sacrifice and baby murder are the price you must pay for liberty: I do not appeal to you. To those who believe that we should give our substance, our industry and trade with the assistance of the government of the United States to communist countries who will use these means for the purpose of building the weapons they wish to destroy us with, with slave labor, claiming to give us lower prices on the products we have sent over to them, while enriching the Communist Party members of those countries: I do not appeal to you. To those who believe that liberty requires that individuals be allowed to become deviants: I do not appeal to you.

But to those who understand that the Constitution of the United States must be interpreted literally, that we need to confine this government by means of destroying unconstitutional cabinet departments and replacing them with an independent sub-treasury system, where the government lives only on the cash it takes in, by replacing income taxes, excise taxes, sales taxes, tariffs and other taxes that dictate how you spend your money with a simple little two percent bill that you pay to each level of government so that *you* can have a higher standard of living, and at the same time cut out those government bureaucrats that are taking away our farms through the wild lands project, taking away our industries through environmental laws — thank you Ralph



they proposed Harry Browne be moderator and questioner, but Russo objected on grounds that Browne was a supporter of Nolan. As a compromise, an Atlanta newspaper reporter was chosen.

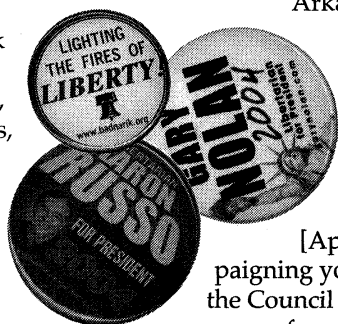
The moderator asked all three candidates a series of pre-written questions about their positions on several issues. There were no questions about how their campaigns would be conducted, and candidates were not allowed to ask each other questions.

Not surprisingly, the candidates agreed on almost every issue. The few divergences from LP orthodoxy that became evident came from Russo. For example, when asked what he

would have done if he were president on 9/11, Russo responded:

If I were president on 9/11, I would have gotten the evidence of who did it, shown it to the people. I would not have gone to Congress to declare war. I would have gone, no matter where they were, whoever did it, I would have gone to any border with a police action and not declare war and gotten the SOBs who did that no matter where they were in the world. [Here he sensed disagreement from the audience.] Okay? I don't think that war against some force that we don't know who it is is a war. It's a police action and the president doesn't have to ask

"Sunset" Nader and your irresponsible scumbags — [Applause] who deprive our children of American history and foreign languages, thank you "no school left behind" George Walker Bush; those who want to get us out of the U.N., get us out of the free trade area of the Americas, get us out of the WTO, the phony trade organization that allows China to have a 55-cent tariff on steel where we can't have a tariff at all — that's right folks, there's your world government for you — and especially to those who wish to protect human rights as described by Nathaniel and Barbara Branden when they said that rights are conditions of rational and genetic origins, from the moment of conception from when the baby acquires the human genome, and wish to protect mothers from being bled to death by knife-tipped vacuum cleaners, being given poisonous RU486 or morning-after pills and other devices that are humanicides, and to those who understand that the price of liberty is eternal vigilance, by giving you the armament you need, the 2nd Amendment implementation, which I intend to implement: I'm your candidate, ladies and gentlemen. I choose this way to do this kind of speech because I wanted you to see me in person. Not with other people speaking for me too much, but me in person because I am the one you've got to look at, I'm the



cial resources, that's why I spoke at the Georgia and Arkansas conventions, why I appeared on the "Power Hour," "Privacy Factor," and "Radio Liberty" programs on shortwave radio going to international listeners with my message. Why I got 5% of the vote in Massachusetts and 7% of the vote in Missouri, and I don't mind telling you folks, I didn't have much money, but I got an effect out of \$900.

[Applause.] And that's the kind of efficient campaigning you need. We're not going to get the money from the Council on Foreign Relations, we're not going to get the money from the tax-free foundations, we're not going to get the money from the rich mucky-mucks or the insiders of this country, because they want world government, world dictatorship, world order, baby murder, possible legalization of drugs only of their advantage, where they can dumb you down to being a little peon, or as one of their documents, "Silent Weapons and Quiet War," said, "Beasts of burden and stakes on the table by mutual choice and consent" — which we are not!

In conclusion, I say this to every one of you: this party could possibly pick up a substantial amount of votes in this country. The message is excellent, but there is a flaw. I've already pointed it out to you. If this party continues down the road of sanctioning baby murder — I'm not bluffing, pal, cause I talked to some of the people I know at EWTN, the International World Television Network, which is one of the pro-life shortwave outlets — and they are telling us that as long as this party continues to support that position, we are not gonna get anywhere and fast! And for those who are asking for alcoholic beverages in this audience — you know who you are! — [Laughing in the crowd] that's why I am laughing at you too, pal. Because you're part of the reason we're not winning elections, part of the major reason. We must be consistent in protecting life, liberty, and property with due process of law. [Applause.] I don't mind the jeers, and I don't mind the reaction, folks!

In conclusion I say this to you: you know where I am! You know where I stand! You know where I am going! To many of you who have committed to other candidates, I realize and understand and respect your commitments on the first ballot. I understand that. But there will be a second ballot hopefully, and to those who wish to talk to me I will be in this room hopefully throughout the first ballot and we will see what happens! Thank you.

*I talked to some of the people I know at EWTN, the International World Television Network, which is one of the pro-life shortwave outlets — and they are telling us that as long as this party continues to support baby murder, we are not gonna get anywhere and fast!*

one you have to support, and I'm the one who has to appeal to you. You're the bosses around here and don't you forget it. [Applause.]

And as president of the United States I am prepared to say that every American citizen is my boss, and I'm not kidding about it, and that's why I am running, that's why I have run for the past year and a half with very little finan-

Congress for [permission to conduct] a police action. And I certainly would not have removed the Taliban from Afghanistan or invaded Afghanistan with our troops. The Taliban had nothing to do with what happened. And as a matter of fact, the Taliban said to George Bush, "Give us the evidence of what happened and we'll give you Osama bin Laden." And what George Bush did was he said, "I don't have to give it to you, I've already given it to Tony Blair," as if that matters. So I would not have invaded Afghanistan, but I would have gotten the people who did it by a police action and I would not have declared war.

For many, Russo sounded another discordant note when he responded to a question about the Bush administration's use of private contractors to conduct the occupation of Iraq:

America has become a fascist country and by fascist I mean the government and the corporations working together to stifle the people . . . when you talk about the mercenaries and private enterprise, private enterprise in my view does not belong in war.

He diverged from the Libertarian consensus again when he responded to Gary Nolan's call for the U.S. to respond to high oil prices by allowing oil production in the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge.

I believe that we have to protect our environment. And I believe that the oil up in Alaska is — I know to be — a six-week supply. That's it. What we have to do in America is build alternative means of energy.

I personally don't want to see more drilling off the coasts. I don't. [Audience boos.] You can boo me, it's okay.

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*"If you were in prison," Badnarik argued, "and you had a 50% chance of lethal injection, a 45% chance of going to the electric chair, and only a 5% chance of escape, are you likely to vote for lethal injection because that is your most likely outcome?" The crowd went wild.*

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I don't want to see more drilling off the coasts. There are better ways of doing it. I'm not here . . . I don't like the oil companies, I think they're part of the fascist government that we have today. We're in Iraq for oil and I don't think giving them the right to build more ref — they should build refineries, but the right to explore more and take out from our oceans and take out from Alaska and destroy our environment, I don't think is a wise way to go. I think the Libertarian Party has never had a good policy on the environment. I've never heard a good one, and I've been looking for one for months, and I'm open to find new ideas on how we can handle the environment. On this issue, to tell the truth, there is a bit of confusion in my mind, but the stock answer that I've been hearing on the environment is not good in my view. Sue your neighbor, and sue this one and sue that one, those aren't good answers for me. And I say let's find alternative means of energy: build wind power, build sun power. There's other ways to go.

When asked "how to get the economy back to what it was in the '90s," Badnarik called for eliminating the income tax, thus "giving everybody in America a 35% pay increase immediately, instead of a \$300 rebate of your own money," and abolishing the Federal Reserve and returning to sound money. Russo responded that he wasn't so sure that he wanted to go back to the '90s, "an era when the economy was pushed by massive injections of liquidity by the Fed . . . I'm not sure you want an economy like the 1990s with the stock market mania and a [stock market] bubble. What we need in this country is a stable currency, a stable environment, where people know from year to year what their money's going to be worth." He also denounced widespread consumer debt and called for sound, non-inflationary money.

Then Nolan walked to the podium. "Just to be sure," he said, "could you give me the question one more time?" The moderator could not remember the question, hunted through his notes, muttered a little bit, then found it and read it again. Nolan responded:

Mr. Russo and Mr. Badnarik are both right. We do need to get rid of the Federal Reserve and get rid of the fiat currency.

But we also, what we also have to do is to quit punishing Americans for working hard. [Applause.] Let's reduce the power of

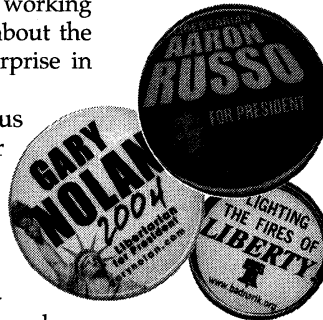
the federal government to its constitutionally mandated limits, get rid of the IRS, quit punishing people for working, quit punishing them more for saving and investing, and allow them to go out and buy the goods and services that they need to protect and raise their families. Because when they've got that money in their hands and they go out and buy a safer car for their children to drive to school in, when they use that money to put their children into a private school, they create a demand for labor. That puts people to work, that creates a hot economy. That's what we need to do. Thank you.

The star of the debate was the dark horse, Michael Badnarik. He saw the debate as the end of his campaign; after it was over, he would inevitably finish third in the balloting and drop from the race, perhaps to be nominated for vice president. He decided to forget that he was in a debate at all, and rather than address the delegates whose votes he ostensibly sought, speak directly to the television audience. He seemed relaxed and ready with intelligent answers, even showing sparks of wit. When asked what he thought about the problem of a manpower shortage for the occupation of Iraq, he responded, "Imagine. People are not willing to go to foreign countries and die the way they used to. Imagine that." He lacked Russo's energy and emotion, while still showing intelligence and passion. He lacked Nolan's grim demeanor, but still had a certain amount of gravitas.

The debate concluded with each candidate making a five-minute closing statement. Nolan's was obviously written in advance, and was well-rehearsed, right down to the gestures.

Badnarik briefly reiterated his constitutional theme, then told his television viewers why they should support the LP:

The preamble of the Constitution establishes some of the





reasons why that document was drafted. In part to establish justice, promote domestic tranquility, and to provide for the common defense. The Constitution establishes the principles for peace and tranquility. Every time we abide by the Constitution, we get peace and tranquility. Violating the supreme law of the land gets the opposite. It destroys our economy, gets us entangled into foreign wars. It is principles sent down to us by our Founding Fathers.

As a Libertarian candidate, I frequently face the "wasted vote" syndrome. People tell me that I'm a good candidate. They believe in what I stand for, but they can't bring themselves to vote for me because they don't want to waste their vote. If you were in prison, and you had a 50% chance of lethal injection, a 45% chance of going to the electric chair, and only a 5% chance of escape, are you likely to vote for lethal injection because that is your most likely outcome? Your survival depends on voting for escape even if that's only a 5% chance. If you continue to vote for the Democrats or the Republicans, you are committing political suicide. The only chance we have of saving our constitutional republic is to vote Libertarian, even if that's only a 5% probability of getting into office. We have to demonstrate that we are not satisfied with the status quo. Voting for the lesser of two evils and your candidate wins and you still get evil.

The Libertarian Party is the party of principle. We have candidates in every state, in every county, that are principled, passionate, and articulate. Please vote Libertarian and help us restore a free country.

Badnarik's argument made no sense at all, but it was very well-received by the delegates, who interrupted it with enthusiastic applause five times and gave him a standing ovation. Ironically, they were not the audience he was addressing.

Then came Russo, and five minutes of fire-and-brimstone libertarianism. He shouted out a litany of government crimes

against people and their liberties. Then he turned to 19th-century oratory:

The real question is, "What are you going to tell your children when they ask you, 'How did America get like

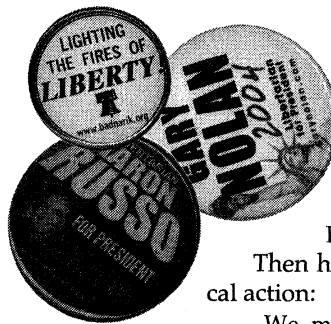
*I asked Badnarik for the first interview after the nomination. He immediately agreed, adding the astonishing statement that no one had ever before asked him for an interview.*

this?" I know that I'm doing everything in my power, I'm using every fiber of my being, to fight these people, to do anything I can to win and stop this government from doing what it's doing to us. I want to get up and look in the mirror every day and say, you know Aaron, you did everything you could possibly do, and when I tell my children that, I want to be proud to be an American. And when I die, and I have my tombstone, I want it to say, "Freedom Fighter."

Then he returned to his emotional commitment to radical action:

We must no longer be a debating society, worrying about the freedom of an ant or a flea. We have to fight and get active. I will do civil disobedience. If they don't let us in the debates, we'll get thousands of people to go there and stop the debates from happening! That's what I stand for! And remember, we are not the property of government. Government is the property of the people! All your freedoms all the time! All your freedoms all the time! Keep it going! All your freedoms all the time!

Immediately after the debate was over, I began asking delegates who they thought had won the debate. To my surprise, all responded that Badnarik had won. Part of it, I suspect, was his concluding speech. Part of it was that his



**Russo Ruminates** — On Monday, Russo stood around the hotel lobby, loitering outside the doors to the convention hall for a few hours, unlike Gary Nolan, who was nowhere to be seen after his loss. Russo had been holding court informally like this since he had lost the nomination, chatting with delegates, basking in their consolation, and, despite his bluster, seeming to revel in the sympathetic and subdued, yet still emphatic, entreaties to "stay in the LP" and "run for governor of Nevada, then the nomination's yours in '08."

Russo was wearing one of those over-sized, short-sleeved, loud print shirts that you'd imagine a portly "Big Time" Hollywood producer would wear, as he sat beside his pool, shouting into his cell phone. I've hectored friends, especially if they're on the heavy side, by addressing them as "Hollywood" or "Showbiz" when done up in such garb. It was fabulous, indeed.

Russo is great one-on-one: grasping, hugging, thanking well-wishers, easing into a softer, sympathetic, "we fought

the good fight" tone of voice.

Russo was deflecting those "stay in the LP" entreaties by professing a belief that I hadn't heard him claim before — that if he doesn't run this year, it will be "too late." To paraphrase: "I really do think that there will be martial law in this country within a year . . . there won't be any more elections."

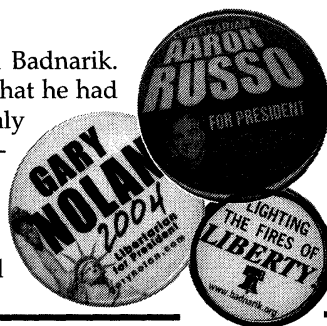
His well-wishers didn't seem to buy into that, but no one challenged him, perhaps because they were trying to be consolatory, or maybe just hoping he wouldn't yet leave the party. Then again, maybe they just realized that there's no point in trying to argue with Aaron Russo when his mind is already made up. Some were clearly still stunned into reticence by the Badnarik victory and in a state of disbelief over the grand, indulgent mistake the delegates had made.

Russo continued with talk about waltzing into the Constitution Party convention — "That's my party; I started it" (a point of some dispute) — or Green Party conventions and being crowned nominee. —Bart T. Cooper

answers reflected the views of the delegates very closely. But a major reason that so many thought he had won the debate was that so many delegates were unhappy with both Nolan and Russo: Nolan seemed like a martinet, and many delegates were unhappy with the prospects of another Harry Browne campaign. Russo's emotionalism didn't resonate with Libertarians who came from a rationalist background. And while the Nolan campaign's attacks on Russo's character and health were not necessarily considered credible, they did raise questions about Russo and left Nolan looking, well, a little like a dirty politician. And here was Michael Badnarik, to whom most delegates had paid little or no attention, articulating their beliefs and using the time for his concluding speech, not to boost his own candidacy, but to boost the LP.

\* \* \*

My main priority Saturday night was to find Badnarik. I'd never spoken with him, but now it appeared that he had an excellent chance to win the nomination. Plainly his support was greater than anyone had anticipated. And the bad blood between Nolan and Russo meant that if either fell behind Badnarik in the balloting, that person would be eliminated from consideration and most of his support would



**Brief Encounter** — Around noon on Monday, just moments after the convention wrapped up its official business, I climbed into one of the glass elevators with another delegate, following LP founding father David Nolan. Nolan may not have been done up in a western cut jacket and sporting a bolo tie, as I remember him from past conventions, but the bushy mustache and wire rim glasses on the man that founded the LP in his Denver living room 33 years ago still managed to evoke that mythical LP delegate you can read about if you dig up old press accounts of early LP conventions. This was a character on the then-cultural cutting edge: vaguely "hippie-ish," yet infused with a rugged, Western, individualist mystique. He might be wearing a cowboy hat, but it might be adorned with a peace symbol, too.

Nolan gave us few moments of his time, a gracious act for a certified local celebrity on the move. The other delegate in the elevator had been a fervent Russo backer who had been stumbling around in a state of disbelief over Badnarik's nomination since the last ballot. By Monday, he had been shaken from his stupor by an increasingly urgent desperation over what the LP had wrought for itself. In search of a consolatory note for himself, the delegate took the opportunity of this audience to appeal to that fabled Nolan institutional memory and asked him, with his long history of LP activism, how many votes did he reckon Michael Badnarik might attract this November. Nolan shrugged and threw a few stats around, offering, "The easy answer is between a quarter million and around 500,000 votes. But, you never know." Happy to have obliged us, he got off on the mezzanine level and went on his merry way, maybe to the LNC meeting. The discouraging figures he invoked certainly bolstered his reputation for institutional memory, but they marked roughly the LP's low and unimpressive high water marks in the popular

go to Badnarik.

So I went to Badnarik's hospitality suite, an impromptu affair in an ordinary guest room. Badnarik was talking with some delegates, and as I waited to speak with him, his mother introduced herself to me and offered me a drink. I explained that as a journalist, I do not accept anything but access from subjects I'm writing about, and that I was here to talk to her son. She was immensely proud of him and quickly charmed me. After a few minutes I spoke with the candidate. I told him that he'd moved from dark horse to contender, and that I thought he was now the favorite. I asked him for the first interview after the nomination. He immediately agreed, adding the astonishing statement that no one had ever before asked him for an interview.

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Sunday morning, it was time for delegates to choose the LP nominee, in front of a national C-Span audience. The nominating speeches were pretty predictable, and delegates for the most part paid little attention.

Fifteen minutes before the nominations began, Badnarik ran into Fred Collins, a city councilman from Berkley, Mich., and asked Collins to second his nomination from the

vote since 1980.

Nolan has become known these days more for his histrionics on the convention floor than for his status as party founder. When Nolan addresses the assembled delegates from a floor microphone, he earnestly implores them (especially the newer delegates) to take into account his hard-earned veteran's perspective, gained from decades in the trenches of LP activism. Occasionally, when the chair recognizes Nolan, he notes that the LP was founded in Nolan's living room. More often, Nolan takes it upon himself to remind the convention of this fact. His fellow delegates routinely return only a confused, if respectful, smattering of applause. Nolan speaks with authority, seemingly under the impression that he is universally known, and maybe even universally loved, as the LP's elder statesman. But if David Nolan is so well known, and as well regarded, as he seems to think he is, why does he feel the need to so emphatically beseech the delegates to heed his advice?

The delegate in the elevator looked at me, his face obviously betraying a renewed disbelief and dismay in the fact that his party's founder was so unperturbed, so clearly undiscouraged by his low expectations. I had missed the speech, but others told me that David Nolan invoked his long history with the LP in seconding Gary Nolan for the nomination. I saw David Nolan conferring with Badnarik partisans after Gary Nolan was eliminated on the second ballot. While David Nolan may not have enjoyed the celebrity status among delegates he seemed to think he has garnered, he certainly reflected the average LP delegate's complacent outlook regarding the prospects of a Libertarian presidential ticket headed by a computer programmer-cum-self-taught "constitutional scholar" without a driver's license. —Bart T. Cooper

dais. Collins agreed and went up to his room to change into a suit, and returned to second Badnarik's nomination, telling delegates that Badnarik had demonstrated his dedication to the party by his willingness, unlike the other candidates, to accept a vice presidential nomination. He concluded with praise for Badnarik's goofy answer to the wasted-vote argument: "This moved me more than anything I've heard this weekend. Has anyone, in all these years that we have been doing this, heard a better answer to the wasted-vote argument than the one Michael Badnarik gave yesterday at the debate?"

The Russo camp used the first part of its 16 minutes to run its television commercials. One of Russo's seconders brought up, for the first time at the convention, one of Russo's main selling points, the fact that he promised a campaign different from the failed campaigns of the recent past: "What's the difference between a rerun and an original episode?" asked John Clifton. "The difference is we know the outcome of a rerun. Two of our three leading candidates today are reruns. I admit that they are extremely strong reruns that I'd like to go to again sometime. But not this year. This year I want a new episode, and a new outcome. If you want the same outcome go with the rerun. Only one of these fine contenders presents the best possibility of a different outcome."

As the delegates began balloting, I again encountered Steve Dasbach, Nolan's campaign manager, who told me with supreme confidence that the only question coming into the convention was whether Nolan would win on the second or third ballot. He was now quite certain that Nolan would take it on the second. A few minutes later, I ran into Nolan himself, and he expressed the same opinion with the same confidence.

As the states read off their votes, it quickly became evident that, contrary to what everyone had thought only 24

*Obviously, Nolan and Badnarik's secret deal was no longer operative. Very quickly a new deal was made: if either finished third, he'd endorse the the other.*

hours before, it was a three-way race, and a very close one. Whether it was Badnarik's debate performance or merely the fact that he was an alternative to Nolan and Russo, both of whom had substantial negatives, he was running neck and neck with the two main candidates. The first round of balloting was a virtual tie:

Russo	258
Badnarik	256
Nolan	246
Diket	4
Hollist	1
None of the Above	13

LP rules specify that after the second ballot, the candidate with the least votes must be dropped from consideration. A motion was made to drop the hopeless Diket and Hollist and requiring the candidate who finished third in the next round

*Nolan was worried about his deal to endorse Badnarik. He feared Badnarik may already have been indicted.*

to be eliminated as well.

The bad blood between Nolan and Russo and their respective campaign staffs meant that if one of them finished third, most of their supporters would go to Badnarik, who would easily win the nomination. Only if Badnarik finished third would there be any doubt about the outcome of the third ballot.

Obviously, Nolan and Badnarik's secret deal — that neither would criticize the other, and that after Nolan won, he'd gently support Badnarik for the vice presidential nod — was no longer operative. Very quickly a new deal was made: if either finished third, he'd endorse the other.

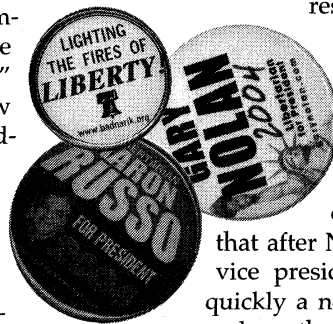
The situation on the floor was confusing: the chair had called for the second ballot, and the nominating session was recessed for delegates to get lunch. Many left without realizing that they were supposed to vote before going to lunch. Outside the convention hall, people were running about asking delegates whether they'd voted, and sending them back into the hall to do so.

Inside the convention hall, two Russo supporters, unaware of the Nolan-Badnarik deal, tried to talk Russo into approaching Badnarik and telling him that Russo would consider him a fine vice presidential candidate, in hopes of getting Badnarik's support if he finished third. Russo was reluctant, but finally approached Badnarik with his good wishes. Of course, Badnarik had already made a deal with Nolan, so Russo's sentiment went for naught.

The Marriott's restaurants were not prepared to handle the crowds, and many delegates were still at lunch when the convention reconvened and the results of the second ballot were announced:

Russo	285
Badnarik	249
Nolan	244
NOTA	10

As the votes were being read off by state party chairs, the Nolan staff began to read the writing on the wall, and Nolan was worried about his promise to endorse Badnarik. Unlike the great majority of the delegates who were voting for Badnarik, Nolan knew that Badnarik had not filed income tax returns for some years. He was afraid that Badnarik might actually have been indicted by the federal government, and thought it would look very bad for Nolan if he were to endorse an indicted man. A Nolan staffer met with Badnarik, asking him for his "word of honor" that he had



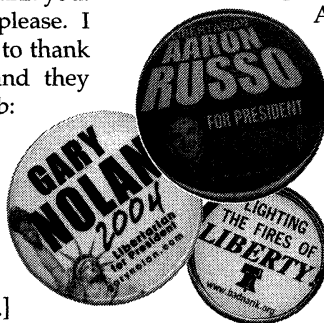
not been indicted. Badnarik swore that he hadn't, and Nolan began to prepare his endorsement of Badnarik.

Meanwhile, word of Nolan's defeat spread throughout the public areas of the hotel. In the sports bar, two middle-aged white guys did a high five. Harry Browne's candidate had been defeated, and the party would at last try a new strategy: the radical, emotional approach of Aaron Russo or the right-wing constitutionalist approach of Michael Badnarik.

Party chair Geoffrey Neale asked the convention to suspend the rules so that Nolan could address them for five minutes, and the convention agreed. Nolan took the podium and smiled for the first time I'd noticed during the convention. Nolan then kept his word:

Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, ladies and gentlemen, please. I would like to take an opportunity and a moment to thank my campaign staff. They were so dedicated and they worked so hard and they did such a terrific job: Steve Dasbach, Justin Kemp, Erika Brown, Mary Ann Volke, the list goes on and on. Terrific people. Thank you so much for your hard work and devotion.

What I'd like to do now, ladies and gentlemen, is offer up my support and ask my delegates to support Michael Badnarik. [Cheers.] Michael Badnarik, Michael Badnarik has shown more heart, more dedication, more belief in the Libertarian Party and in the principles [A heckler says something inaudible] — I would expect a little courtesy from the Russo people for just a moment, thank you [Cheers] — Michael Badnarik



*I heard a commotion from across the lobby. It was outgoing National Chair Geoff Neale screaming at a man, "You have no right to talk to me. I have a right to privacy!"*

has worked tirelessly, working on a shoestring budget, he's gone from state to state, I've met him at every convention and he's fought every day. He deserves your support. Michael Badnarik, carpe diem. Go Libertarians. Thank you.

The entire speech took about a minute and a half, including the pause for cheering from Badnarik's and his own supporters and the interruption to demand courtesy from "the Russo people," by which he meant the sole person heckling from the audience.

Then the states began to caucus to vote. Even without Nolan's endorsement, Badnarik's nomination was a virtual certainty, and with it Russo was simply dead meat. The final vote:

Badnarik	423
Russo	344
NOTA	11

Again, the rules were suspended so that a defeated candidate could address the convention, presumably to endorse the winner. Russo walked to the stage and did what was

expected — except that he added, "I wasn't so sure [whether] I was in this race so I could lead this party, or just to make sure that Gary Nolan didn't," thereby equalling Nolan's ungraciousness when he refused to join Russo on the stage at the beginning of the debate or his strange response to a heckler during his concession speech.

The nomination process was over. LP delegates had chosen as their standard-bearer a man who had willfully refused to file his federal tax return for years, refused to get a driver's license but continued to drive his car despite having been ticketed so many times that he couldn't recall the exact number, proposed to blow up the United Nations building, wanted to force criminals in prisons to stay in bed until their muscles atrophied, and planned to force Congress to take a "special version" of his class on the Constitution.

And the overwhelming majority of delegates didn't know any of this about their nominee.

Shortly after Badnarik made his acceptance speech, Larry Fullmer, an Idaho delegate and Russo supporter, learned from an Oregon delegate that Badnarik hadn't been filing his income tax returns. Fullmer, he later recalled, "freaked" at the news. "From early afternoon until 5:00 a.m. Monday, I spent every second telling folks about Badnarik and the IRS." Fullmer spoke to more than a hundred delegates, and didn't find a single delegate who knew that Badnarik hadn't been filing returns. Most were "shocked" at the news.

Among others, Fullmer spoke with Mary Ruwart, who responded, "Larry, ya gotta get the election reconsidered," and proceeded to tell him that Robert's Rules required that a motion to reconsider the nomination was in order only if it was made by someone who had voted for the nominee. Fullmer also approached Judge Jim Gray, the LP senate candidate in California, and told him about Badnarik's not filing his tax returns. "You are running on a ticket headed up by a constitutional nutcase who has refused to pay his taxes for years. What do you think about that?" Gray responded, according to Fullmer, in these words: "Larry, if what you say is true . . . you already know what I think."

Fullmer argued that Badnarik had committed fraud when, in response to a question at a candidates' debate at the Florida LP convention, he said that there was nothing in his background that could embarrass the party. When I asked Badnarik about this, he responded that he wasn't ashamed of his refusal to file tax returns. I reminded him the question (from Janet Hawkins, secretary of the Florida LP) was "Is there anything in your background that would embarrass you or the LP?" He responded that he had misunderstood the question.

Fullmer is an abrasive and intemperate person, and some of those whom Fullmer talked with did not take him seriously. One person whom he spoke with described him as a "nutcase," and simply didn't believe him.

Immediately after Badnarik's acceptance speech, I located him in the lobby. He was now surrounded by a coterie of well-wishers and new campaign volunteers, and his handlers clamored for him to do other interviews and to second the nomination of Michael Dixon, a candidate for national

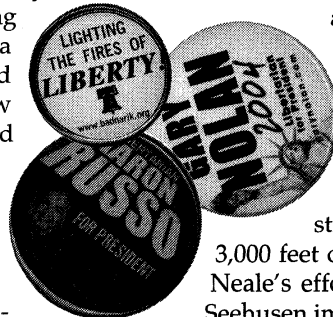
chair. His staffers urged him to finish the radio interviews and go to his motel and rest for the important appearance he would make at the banquet that evening. But he graciously remembered his commitment to me for an interview and excused himself from his staff. We found a quiet place and I interviewed him for about 20 minutes. Despite the fact that he was obviously tired and under considerable stress, he responded to my questions with considerable intelligence and a good deal of grace. But he needed to rest, so I cut the interview short after he promised to make himself available for a telephone interview later in the week. (See "An Interview with Michael Badnarik," page 50.)

That night I again made the rounds of the convention area. I visited the Russo suite, where the candidate was delivering his last talk, and then spoke informally with supporters about his future plans. Walking down the hall toward the lobby, I noticed a meeting going on in a board room, so I walked in. Seated around a large table were the new nominee and a number of supporters. Fred Collins, who only a few hours earlier had been asked to nominate Badnarik, was in charge of the meeting, giving everyone else explicit orders.

I ran into LNC member George Squyres, whose intervention had secured press credentials for *Liberty*. He told me that LP Executive Director Joe Seehusen wanted to meet me and had invited me to the LP staff's suite. So I went up to the 47th floor and knocked on the door. Seehusen greeted me in a friendly fashion and offered me a drink. I refused, explaining that report-

ers for *Liberty* do not accept food or drink from candidates or parties that they write about. I fear this may have gotten me off on the wrong foot, as he then apologized for the luxuri-

*LP delegates had chosen as their standard-bearer a man who had willfully refused to file his federal tax return for years, refused to get a driver's license but continued to drive, and proposed to blow up the U.N. building.*



ous suite, complete with grand piano, liquor, and fine wines, a sharp contrast to the hospitality suites with their spreads of bottled beer, boxed wines and taco chips. (He explained that the hotel had given the party the suite for free, and had refused to exchange it for smaller sleeping rooms that could have saved the party money.) We discussed the party's financial plight — it's still saddled with a \$100,000 per year lease for 3,000 feet of basement office space — and his and Geoffrey Neale's efforts to put the party on a sound financial basis. Seehusen impressed me as a bright and capable manager.

I returned to the convention area. While talking with friends, I heard a commotion from across the lobby. It was outgoing National Chair Geoff Neale screaming at a man, "You have no right to talk to me. I have a right to privacy!" causing the sort of disturbance one seldom sees in the lobby

## The Next Vice President of the United States! —

The man whom delegates chose to be their nominee for vice president, Richard Campagna, was largely unknown to most delegates, in part because of his only recent involvement in the movement: Campagna embraced libertarianism only two years ago, shortly before becoming Clive Cleveland's running mate in Iowa's gubernatorial contest.

He describes himself as a multi-disciplinary professional. And his academic credentials are extensive: he received a B.A. from Brown in Political Science, an M.A. from NYU in Ibero-American Studies, an M.A. from Columbia in Counseling Psychology, a J.D. from St. John's University, and a Ph.D. from the American College of Metaphysical Theology. He claims fluency in multiple languages, and is a member of the California and New York Bar Associations.

While most people would consider the unaccredited institution that awarded him his doctorate a diploma mill — its website offers Ph.D.s for \$249 — Campagna says that he "literally did a traditional Ph.D., with all the course work and internships and practica that the traditional non-diploma-mill school would encompass," and that "this was really the way that [his] Ph.D. could reflect [his] philosophy, spirituality, and approach to education." His doctorate is in Pastoral/Counseling Psychology. He earns his living as a community college instructor, translator, and as a "legal, psychological,

and financial counselor for transgendered people."

Campagna describes himself as having an "optimistic, existential, personal-responsibility approach to life," and he believes there is a link between an existential personal philosophy and a libertarian political philosophy. He is confident that his low-key, friendly, mainstream approach can connect with people who have not traditionally voted Libertarian, especially academics, ethnic minorities, and professionals. Through appealing to these largely non-Libertarian constituencies, and focusing on the war in Iraq and the overall need for a drastic change in America's world view, Campagna is "cautiously optimistic that the LP can garner more votes than it has ever gotten on a national ticket."

Campagna's claim to be able to raise upwards of \$200,000 from non-traditional sources surely played a part in his nomination. This may not prove to be \$200,000 in hard cash. When asked about this by *Liberty*, he said that by "non-traditional sources," he meant "friends, families, and colleagues. . . . A lot of those monies are contributions in kind to assist me in my travels around the country. I happen to be someone who travels a lot. I'm in a lot of places, a lot of locations, with a lot professional and non-political associations."

— Andrew W. Jones

of a fine hotel. The man was Larry Fullmer, who was telling Neale about Badnarik's not having filed income tax returns. According to Fullmer, Neale later apologized and thanked him for telling him about the problem.

The convention was still in session. It hadn't yet elected a party secretary, treasurer, National Committee, or Judicial

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*"Judge Gray, you are running on a ticket headed up by a constitutional nutcase who has refused to pay his taxes for years. What do you think about that?"*

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Committee. Word about Badnarik's refusal to file tax returns or get a driver's license was circulating, and Fullmer had, at Mary Ruwart's suggestion, found a delegate who had voted for Badnarik and was willing to make a motion for reconsideration. To Fullmer's extreme disappointment, the person failed to make the motion.

After the convention elected a new National Committee, Fred Collins was given an opportunity to address the convention. He explained that, yes, Badnarik had some "minor" issues regarding his tax returns, and that these would be corrected, and that Badnarik did not have a driver's license, but that he hadn't been driving lately. The announcement was so low-key that many delegates hardly noticed it. In the half dozen other detailed reports on the convention I've read, it was not even mentioned.

Later, at the first meeting of the newly elected National Committee, Collins said, regarding Badnarik's refusal to file tax returns, "I will fix this or I will walk away from the campaign. . . . If Michael Badnarik refuses to follow my directions about this problem, and you know what it is, I will walk away." Even this announcement was low key: I've read several accounts of the LNC meeting, and only one mentions it at all, and it notes that "LNC members were reticent to name the concerns." One LNC member told me that they were "trying to talk about the problem at the same time not saying what it was."

Collins, along with his wife, Barbara Goushaw-Collins, an experienced campaign manager, and Greg Dirasian, who were in control of Badnarik's campaign, were moving quickly to minimize what they perceived as Badnarik's problems. Dirasian removed from the campaign website Badnarik's promise to blow up the United Nations building, his proposal to confine prisoners in bed until their muscles atrophy, and other eccentric items.\* When Fox News asked Badnarik for his views on same-sex marriage, immigration, the economy, abortion, freedom of speech, the war in Iraq, drug legalization, and gun control, he answered all by simply stating the LP's position. To the question, "Where do you

stand on gun control?" Badnarik answered, "The Libertarian Party is strongly in favor of the 2nd Amendment and all other amendments in the Bill of Rights." Even to a question about the separation of church and state, a subject about which, as a constitutional scholar, he certainly had intelligent and pungent opinions, he answered simply, "I don't know that the Libertarian Party has an official position on the separation of church and state."

When I interviewed Badnarik four days later, he seemed like a different person than the man I'd spoken with at the convention. He couldn't remember why he had answered Fox News' questions so perfunctorily. He brought up the subject of his agreement with Nolan only to deny that any such agreement had existed, a claim that contradicted the claims of his own campaign managers, Nolan, and at least one high level Nolan staffer. He confirmed that he had agreed to settle with the IRS with all due speed to avoid the possible embarrassment of a federal indictment and arrest, and no longer to drive without a license.

\* \* \*

When I left home for the LP convention, one of *Liberty's* staffers reminded me that "conventions are all about sex," something that I had not observed at past conventions of the Libertarian Party. But this convention did have a certain similarity to a certain kind of sex. Thanks to the odd concatenation of events that I have described here, the LP had metaphorically gone to bed with someone it barely knew, and it had awakened in the morning with troubling second thoughts. Some members wanted to end the relationship right then, but most were probably too embarrassed to make such a public confession, and a few were pretty happy about the relationship.

It wouldn't have happened if Russo and Nolan hadn't hated each other so much. It wouldn't have happened if everyone — including Badnarik himself — hadn't dismissed Badnarik as a fringe candidate with no chance. It wouldn't

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*The LP had metaphorically gone to bed with someone it barely knew, and it had awakened in the morning with troubling second thoughts.*

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have happened if Nolan hadn't hated Russo so much that he preferred to endorse a man he feared might be under indictment rather than allow Russo to win the nomination. Most importantly, it wouldn't have happened if party members had bothered to read Badnarik's website or his book on the Constitution.

But it did happen, and the party had to figure out what to do. Should it decide that it had a lemon and make lemonade? That is, should it figure that if its candidate were arrested by

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\*If he hoped to keep these eccentric proposals from reaching the press, he was too late: *The Economist* included these exotic details in a report on the LP in its June 5 issue.



# An Interview with Michael Badnarik

Only minutes after Michael Badnarik won the Libertarian Party's presidential nomination, he sat down for an interview with *Liberty's* R. W. Bradford.

*Liberty:* Tell me a little bit about yourself. Where'd you come from? What sort of education did you get?

*Badnarik:* I grew up in Hammond, Ind., just outside Chicago. I went to Indiana University, where I started out with marine biology, and then majored in chemistry. I got a job at a nuclear plant in Zion, Ill. I was transferred from there to a nuclear simulator which is basically a \$6 million computer game that they use to train nuclear operators. I moved to California in 1985 when I decided that cold and snow were 4-letter words and I worked for two years on the stealth bomber, then moved to San Luis Obispo to work for four years on the Diablo Canyon nuclear plant. In 1997, I relocated from California to Austin, Texas, where I worked as a computer consultant and a technical trainer.

*Liberty:* What degree did you get?

*Badnarik:* I actually didn't get a degree. I majored in chemistry and did four and a half years and decided I was tired — I didn't really want to have a job in chemistry and so when I got a real job in the world, I decided not to continue.

*Liberty:* You've been running for president full-time for the last 18 months?

*Badnarik:* Yes. I made my formal announcement in Austin at the state capitol on Feb. 17, 2003, which was President's Day.

*Liberty:* And you've been on the road campaigning ever since?

*Badnarik:* I've been on the road campaigning. We spent March through June 2003 visiting as many state conventions as we could. We returned to Austin in July so that I could resume a telemarketing job for a while. And then I took some time off to finish my book. I wrote a book on the Constitution that I now use as the text for my eight-hour Constitution class and did fundraising and campaign preparations. We — my friend John Earhart and I — left Austin Jan. 8 and continued traveling just short of 25,000 miles before we came here to Atlanta.

*Liberty:* I've heard stories that you're into some kind of right-wing constitutional antitax activities.

*Badnarik:* It's not right wing. We the people ordained and

established the Constitution. We invented government and government works for us. The government has not been responsive to the people. If the IRS is planning to collect taxes they have to determine how those taxes are valid, how you become liable for those taxes. Americans across the United States have been asking the IRS how do

I determine whether or not I am valid and how much tax I am valid for. And the Department of Justice and the IRS have continuously refused to answer those questions.

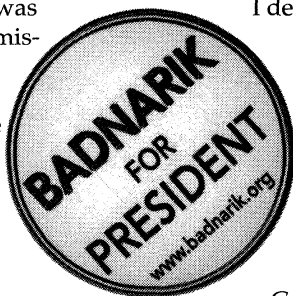
*Liberty:* Do you counsel people about whether or how to pay their taxes?

*Badnarik:* No I do not. I do not give any legal opinions. I am not a lawyer, I choose not to be a lawyer. I am simply requesting that our government live within the scope of the Constitution.

*Liberty:* Do the courts have the right to determine whether laws are constitutional?

*Badnarik:* No they do not. The decision was *Marbury v. Madison* in 1803 and it's a double-edged sword. *Marbury v. Madison* is usually quoted because it says that any law repugnant to the Constitution is null and void. I certainly agree with that. The second part of *Marbury* is that the Supreme Court should assume the responsibility for interpreting the Constitution. But the Supreme Court cannot tell us what the Constitution is because the Constitution tells us what the Supreme Court is.

*Liberty:* Do you think the usurpation of the right to judicial review makes it easier for Congress to enact unconstitu-



tional legislation?

**Badnarik:** Absolutely. And we the people should take a more supervisory role over what Congress does.

**Liberty:** How does your class on the Constitution work? Will you continue to give the course during the campaign?

**Badnarik:** It's an eight-hour class, typically done in one day from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

**Liberty:** How much does it cost?

**Badnarik:** Up until now it has been \$50.

**Liberty:** What size classes have you taught?

**Badnarik:** I have taught classes as small as four or five. But Thursday I taught a class here at the hotel that had 32 students.

**Liberty:** Will you continue to do this during the campaign?

**Badnarik:** I would not be adverse to teaching the class during the campaign because my job is specifically to spread the word. If it is deemed that that is a lower priority than some of the other things that I am doing, then certainly it would take a back seat.

**Liberty:** Do you know who your campaign manager will be?

**Badnarik:** I do have an interim campaign manager, Fred Collins.

**Liberty:** Will he be the permanent campaign manager?

**Badnarik:** No. He has indicated that he wanted to be an interim campaign manager. His primary job will be to organize the structure so that we can take this campaign all the way to November in a very professional manner.

**Liberty:** Last night, I told you that I thought you'd gone from long shot to dark horse in the debate, and that you might very well be the favorite. You almost seemed stunned at your rise. When did you first realize that you had a shot at the nomination?

**Badnarik:** After the second ballot.

**Liberty:** What do you think will be the primary issues?

**Badnarik:** I don't know. I really haven't given it much

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*We spent March through June 2003 visiting as many state conventions as we could. We returned to Austin in July so that I could resume a telemarketing job for a while.*

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thought.

**Liberty:** Have you given any thought to putting together some academic advisors?

**Badnarik:** I do have a few academic advisors. But there was never any formal arrangement for the process, but certainly by the end of the week, we will have a staff.

**Liberty:** Why do you think you won the nomination?

**Badnarik:** I would like to think that it is because I tenaciously hold to libertarian fundamentals and that when I express my ideas it is obvious to the listeners that I sincerely hold those views, that the words that I speak are not rhetoric

and that I believe what I say from the bottom of my heart.

\* \* \*

*The interview continues, by telephone, on June 4.*

**Liberty:** When Fox News asked you for your positions on various issues you responded with brief summaries of the LP position rather than your own views. This contrasted

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*I've never been put in jail for not having a driver's license, because it's a class three misdemeanor, and they can't put you in jail for that.*

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sharply with the intelligent and witty responses to those same questions during the debate.

**Badnarik:** I really don't know . . . were the Fox News questions and answers written?

**Liberty:** Yes.

**Badnarik:** Yes? That was some time yesterday.

What I do is just answer the questions with whatever comes to mind and if an interview is following a particular trend I just kind of stick with it.

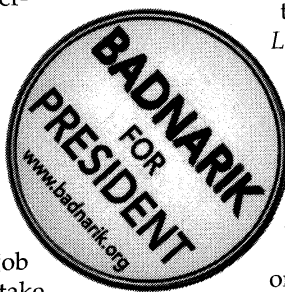
**Liberty:** It was my impression that the answers you gave were extremely perfunctory. All but one of your answers for Fox News simply summarized the LP position, despite the fact that Fox had asked "where do you stand" on the issues.

And the one question to which you didn't merely give the LP's official position was "Where do you stand on the separation of church and state?" I would think that someone who is a constitutional scholar like yourself would give an answer more than "the Libertarian Party doesn't have a position on this issue."

**Badnarik:** Well, the problem that I saw at the time, at least I interpreted that they were asking what the Constitution says. And the Constitution doesn't mention the separation of church and state. The separation of church and state comment comes from a letter from Thomas Jefferson to, I forget which church it was . . . but I don't have any . . . there was no particular strategy to answering the questions that way.

**Liberty:** When asked about the war in Iraq and calls for resumption of the military draft during the debate, you responded, "Imagine, people are not willing to go to foreign countries and die the way they used to. Imagine that." To Fox News, you said, "The Libertarian Party is opposed to the War in Iraq and we are also opposed to the potential draft that Democrats and Republicans are planning to revise." It almost seemed as if you were downplaying some of your views.

**Badnarik:** No. There have been no decisions made to do that, and I have just been under the gun and traveling. I haven't slept past 6:00 in five days. I think I am holding up pretty well with the lack of sleep and the traveling. We have not made any strategy decisions to downplay anything



*Liberty:* Should we expect you to continue to answer questions in this perfunctory way?

*Badnarik:* There is no deliberate strategy to do that . . . I haven't been able to count the number of interviews I've been involved in and I think it has been going very, very well and I think I've been improving as I've gone along.

*Liberty:* I'm curious because I think the kind of answers you gave in the debate were a lot better.

*Badnarik:* I haven't even seen the debate yet.

*Liberty:* When did you last file a federal income tax return?

*Badnarik:* I've been unemployed for about three years.

I'm not sure exactly when the last one was. I've sent letters asking the IRS to clarify my tax [situation].

*Liberty:* In your book, you suggest that people should ask the IRS whether they are liable for income tax, and how does one figure out which "items of income" are excluded for tax purposes. Are these the kind of questions that you have asked the IRS?

*Badnarik:* Yes

*Liberty:* Barb Goushaw-Collins, your campaign manager, told me that you are trying to settle with the IRS right now. Is this true?

*Badnarik:* Yes.

*Liberty:* Is this a campaign decision to make the campaign go more smoothly?

*Badnarik:* Yes.

*Liberty:* Some of your supporters who were aware of your status as a non-filer suggested to me that if the IRS actually arrested you during the campaign, it would be great publicity. You've rejected this line of thinking?

*Badnarik:* Yes, because I represent the Libertarian Party. I don't think that the Libertarian Party endorses that level of activism. I was doing that on my own for lack of any other venue for getting my message out. I had several people tell me that this was a compromise of values and I don't necessarily see it that way. In order to accomplish things, there are times when we have to postpone our goals for an intermediate step.

You know the Founding Fathers, most of whom were opposed to slavery, bit the bullet and consented to a clause in the Constitution which forbids Congress from [interfering with] slavery until 1808. It wasn't an acceptance of slavery. It was an acceptance of the fact that you can't eliminate slavery immediately. When I was doing that I was doing whatever I could to put government in its place. As a spokesman for the Libertarian Party, I think I have much better opportunities to get our message out and to damage the IRS than to create this big brouhaha which could very easily be spun to discredit us and marginalize us. Although I still intend to eliminate the IRS, this is only a temporary strategic [decision].

*Liberty:* One of your aides said you don't have a driver's license, that you let yours expire when you moved to Texas, because they wanted your Social Security number . . .

*Badnarik:* They wanted my Social Security number and a fingerprint and I was trying to obtain one without that. That apparently wasn't possible, and so again, I chose that bat-

tle because even if I lost, I figured the worst that would happen is that it would cost me money. I've actually been very successful. I've actually won several of my court battles. I've gone to court, picked a jury, and after I have picked the jury, the prosecutor raised his hand and asked the judge — filed a motion to dismiss.

*Liberty:* You've been stopped without a license, right?

*Badnarik:* Yes. I've been stopped several times without a license and I have been given citations. I've never been put in jail for not having a driver's license, because it's a class three misdemeanor, and they can't put you in jail for that.

*Liberty:* Have you been fined?

*Badnarik:* Yes, I've paid fines. I've actually gone to court and won some of them. The dramatic behind-the-scenes issue is that when I get the ticket, I go to the police station and they ask me how I want to pay the fine. And I tell them point blank that I don't want to pay the fine, I want to go to court. They say, "Go

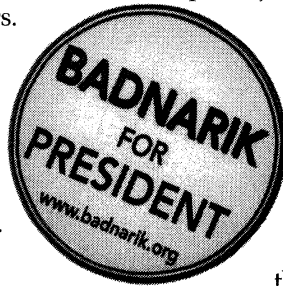
home and we'll send you a letter indicating when you're supposed to appear in court." They tell me that they will, and they're legally obligated to send me notice but they don't. Not being omniscient, if they don't send me a letter telling me when the court appearance is, I don't know when I'm supposed to be there. When I fail to show up, they call my name and file a warrant for my arrest for failure to appear. The next time I'm pulled over for not having a driver's license, due to my lack of knowledge that there was a warrant out, I get handcuffed and taken down to the county jail and get processed.

*Liberty:* How many times has this happened?

*Badnarik:* Three. I've been told recently that Alabama does not require a fingerprint or Social Security number for driver's license and I've been advised that I can get a driver's license there.

*Liberty:* Why does your campaign card list your address as Buda (78610), Texas, rather than putting the ZIP code after the state?

*Badnarik:* ZIP codes are federal territories. It's just a style




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*I've been unemployed for about three years. I'm not sure exactly when the last tax return I filed was. I've sent letters asking the IRS to clarify my tax situation.*

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thing.

*Liberty:* Had you talked to Gary Nolan before the convention?

*Badnarik:* Gary Nolan and I promised each other when we first met in March of last year at the Wisconsin convention that we would conduct our campaigns strictly above board, we would keep it on the issues, that we would not resort to mud-slinging at all.

*Liberty:* When Nolan finished third and was eliminated

from the ballot, he threw his support to you. Do you think that was critical in your winning the nomination?

*Badnarik:* Everything was really, really close . . .

*Liberty:* That final vote wasn't very close, was it?

*Badnarik:* I think on the third ballot I got something like 55%. I am still kind of dazed by the whole process. I wasn't surprised when Gary did that, but I wasn't expecting it. I mean we didn't have any agreement or arrangement, as had been suggested.

*Liberty:* Had you talked at all with Aaron Russo before the convention?

*Badnarik:* When I discovered that Aaron had entered the race, I sent him an email and offered him the same no-mudslinging offer. I had met Aaron Russo in, I think, September 1997. I happened to be in Las Vegas and I was driving along and I spotted an Aaron Russo for Governor sign so I stopped and ended up speaking with him because I had seen his "Mad as Hell" video and had learned of him that way. Aaron and I always remained friendly but I just didn't interact with him as often because typically he would arrive just before the debate and just didn't hang around. Politically I thought that all three of us were pretty much down the party line. It was difficult for us to debate each other because our positions were so similar.

*Liberty:* I had the impression that the debate at the convention was designed to showcase the candidates and the party rather than to bring out differences.

*Badnarik:* Yes. And all I did was to . . . I was actually speaking to the C-Span audience. Basically I was ignoring the delegates and trying to do my best to do a good show for the C-Span audience because frankly I thought that the debate was my last responsibility in the campaign. I was hoping to do well, I didn't anticipate that I would

go home in disgrace, but I certainly wasn't anticipating that I would actually win the nomination.

*Liberty:* At the Florida convention, all three candidates were asked whether there was anything in their background that could come out during the campaign that could bring bad publicity to the LP or to their campaign or to themselves, and all three candidates including you said that there wasn't.

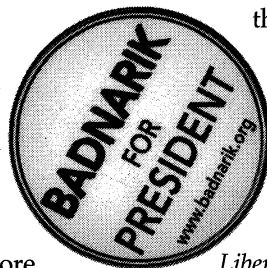
*Badnarik:* Right.

*Liberty:* Did you think that not having filed your federal income tax returns was something that could bring bad publicity?

*Badnarik:* That wasn't something I was ashamed of. If I thought the Libertarian Party would be comfortable with it, I would be happy to challenge the IRS. You know, we invented the government, they work for us, and the IRS has a responsibility to answer our questions. We are asking what law makes us liable? The question was, "is there anything in my background that I was embarrassed about."

*Liberty:* Oh. I was told that the question was is there anything in your background that could come out that could be a problem, and to a lot of people the fact that you could be arrested at any moment is that sort of problem. And now that you've won the nomination, you're trying to take care of that IRS problem.

*Badnarik:* Well, the IRS wants money. They don't necessarily want me in jail, they just want compliance. I intend to start paying them the money, then there's no reason for them to throw me in jail. As an interim measure, I will resolve my differences with the IRS so that it doesn't bring any embarrassment to the LP and then once I'm finished with the election after November, I will pick up my battle with the IRS again.



## "Just Saying No" to Freedom, from page 34

drug offenses were enacted, producing an unprecedented number of victimless drug-crime prisoners who are with us to the present day, ironically endowing Reagan's "land of liberty" with the largest prison population on earth.

At Nancy's urging, the administration supported a new federal law forcing states to adopt the 21-year drinking age. This was not the first time that a conservative government abandoned states' rights, and it would not be the last. Yet it was another telling indication of Reagan's lack of seriousness when it came to philosophical principles. Of course, consistency of principles isn't a common virtue in politicians. It's to Reagan's credit that he signed one of the most liberal abortion laws in the nation when he was governor of California. His later change of mind was due to the growing influence of anti-choice zealots who took over within the Republican Party, not because of any profound moral conviction by the Hollywood actor who was our first divorced president.

As a lifelong Goldwater Republican, I welcomed

Reagan's election. By the end of his regime, however, I was appalled by the mounting wreckage caused by his blithe, hypocritical abandonment of free-market and limited-government principles in waging the War on Drugs. I don't believe that Ronald Reagan is personally responsible for the totality of the disaster; Democrats cheered him along and rivaled him in proposing tough antidrug measures. Reagan was a product of his generation, ignorant of marijuana, and responded to the powerful tide of popular antidrug sentiment that swept the nation during the coke-addled '80s.

Reagan was a "B" movie actor and a "B" president. That's not too bad compared to recent tenants of the White House, but it's a shame he didn't have the seriousness of purpose or depth of intellect to apply his principles of free-market economics and limited government to drugs. He deserves credit for helping bring an end to the Cold War, for his genial and entertaining ways that made some Americans feel better, and for making me an ex-Republican. □

# Reviews

*The Right Nation: Conservative Power in America*, by John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge. Penguin Press, 2004, 450 pages.

## America the Exceptional

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Bruce Ramsey

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Libertarians are forever thinking of themselves as a minority fighting against high odds. Here is a book that paints them as part of a new American establishment.

Imagine that.

"The Right Nation" is the name these British authors give for conservative America, which they say has become culturally and politically dominant. Collectivism, they say, is "all but vanquished"; left-liberalism a shadow of its former self. Not only do they say that libertarians are part of the force that did this, but that they are a distinctive, defining part of it.

The authors are Oxford-educated editors of *The Economist* who have traveled extensively in the United States, especially in the "red" states of the South and West that Europeans and New Yorkers seldom visit. John Micklethwait is the magazine's U.S. editor, based in London; Adrian Wooldridge is its bureau chief in Washington, D.C. This is their fourth book, following one on management consultants, one on globalization, and one on the history of the corporation.

They contrast America's conservatism with Edmund Burke's conception. Burke defined conservatives by their

suspicion of state power, their preference for liberty over equality, their patriotism, their defense of established institutions and hierarchies, their skepticism of progress, and their veneration of aristocracy. The American Right, these authors say, exaggerates the first three of these attributes and contradicts the last three.

"The American Right exhibits a far deeper hostility toward the state than any other modern conservative party," they say. One example is homeschooling, which, they say, "represents a remarkable rejection of the power of the state." So does the insistence of a right to bear arms in self defense.

By European standards, The Right Nation is markedly religious and moralistic; issues the Europeans allow technocrats to deal with, such as abortion, the Americans address with fundamental principles. The Right Nation is populist, wielding the power of initiative and recall in those states, mostly in the West, that allow it. In Europe, only Switzerland uses initiatives in this way. The Right Nation is remarkably pro-capitalist. "Its heroes are not paternalist squires but rugged individualists," the authors say. It exhibits the "conservatism of a forward-looking commercial republic."

Libertarians tend to cite their differ-

ences with conservatives. Libertarians define themselves — and it is the radical ones that see the greatest need to do this. Micklethwait and Wooldridge use a more forgiving definition of the Right, which encompasses both libertarians and conservatives. They are writing partly to explain America to Europeans, and they are looking at America from the outside in. Said Micklethwait in an interview on National Public Radio, "If ever there was a subject for which being an outsider is an advantage, 'The Right Nation' is it."

Their book does two things. It describes The Right Nation, almost anthropologically, and it makes an

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*Left-liberalism is a shadow of its former self. Not only do the authors say libertarians are part of the force that did this, but that they are a distinctive, defining part of it.*

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argument. The argument is that The Right Nation is a resurgence of nationalist and classical liberal America, an echo of pre-New Deal America that

has no referent outside of the United States. No other country has a Rush Limbaugh, an Ann Coulter, a *Wall Street Journal* editorial page, or a Fox News; no other country has a National Rifle Association, a Focus on the Family, and a university for home-schoolers; no other country has a Heritage Foundation, a Hoover Institution, American Enterprise, Cato, Hudson, and Manhattan Institutes, a state-level network of right-wing think tanks, or the kind of money that keeps all these things churning.

America has a Left, and it recognizes its cousins abroad. Our Greens salute their Greens. But the American Right is not blood brothers with the German Right or the French Right or the Japanese Right or even the British Tories (except for Margaret Thatcher, who the authors consider culturally American). The American Right is exceptional. One reason, Wooldridge said at a recent Cato Institute seminar,\* is that the American Right "is

\*Available at [www.cato.org](http://www.cato.org).

much more anti-state, much more libertarian." (Of course he is using "libertarian" in that fuzzier sense.)

Micklethwait and Wooldridge argue that the exceptionalism of The Right Nation flavors the whole country, and is one reason why America is so often at loggerheads with Europe. America will not ratify the Kyoto Treaty or the International Criminal Court and it will not have its soldiers commanded by U.N. bureaucrats. Europeans will give up their national currency and sovereignty; Americans don't even like their currency redesigned. Europeans have all had socialist governments, and they have socialist institutions. America never had a socialist government. (The authors say the New Deal was too tame to qualify.) Americans see government's job as providing the background conditions for individuals to pursue their own interests; Europeans see government's job as making sure no one is left behind.

America thinks of itself as a young country, but really, these Britons say, it is not. It is the oldest republic in the

world. It settles disputes by arguing over a document written in 1789 and makes bestsellers of biographies of the Founding Fathers. It goes to church, prays to God, sends robbers to prison and murderers to hell. It has a vice president who takes a gun and goes

*Bush may be ejected in November. But a President Kerry would not be able to govern from the Left any more than Bill Clinton was.*

out in the woods to shoot animals. (No European politician, they write, would want to be seen to "point a gun at a fluffy-looking creature.") It expects healthy adults of working age to pay their own way without much state help. In these things, America had the cultural soil. But The Right Nation as an enterprise did not really get going until the 1960s. It had some earlier prophets — Russell Kirk, Ayn Rand, and some others — but Barry Goldwater was its first flag bearer and Ronald Reagan its first president. George W. Bush is its standard bearer now, though he imperfectly represents it.

"Bush's enthusiasm has generally been for business, particularly big business, rather than for the free market," the authors write. "His own career was a textbook example of crony capitalism." They note that he has aided "the Republican Party's incontinence" (such a delightful word!) on federal spending, and that his invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq have given "steroids" to the state. They worry that under Bush II "the Republicans have moved from being the party of small government to the party of big government (as long as it isn't run by Democrats)."

Bush may be ejected in November. But a President Kerry would not be able to govern from the Left any more than Bill Clinton was. Even if Americans eventually elect Clinton's "socialist wife," she will be forced to govern like an Eisenhower Republican. "America would still be different," they say.



*Jolie, Barbra, even Sammy, Leo, and Liz*

"Almost every Jew in America owes his life to laissez faire capitalism. It was relatively laissez faire America that welcomed Jews in unlimited numbers, and progressive, New Deal America that turned them away by the boatload, and back to Auschwitz... For Jews especially: God Bless America should be God bless laissez faire capitalism."

For *The Jewish Debt to the Right*,  
see [Intellectually Incorrect](http://IntellectuallyIncorrect.com) at [intinc.org](http://intinc.org)



What do libertarians get from this? The book's message is that we are part of a much larger political army. The authors see us as a congeries of militias — Christians, tax cutters, gun defenders, property rights defenders, small-business conservatives, support-our-troops nationalists, neocons, paleocons, abortion opponents, all of them jostling for position. Among

these factions libertarians are small and not very ferocious, but they do have one advantage. They are the fount of ideas some of the others are using: school vouchers, privatization of Social Security, and so on. More than that, they are the proponents of the theory that explains and justifies The Right Nation's hostility to the state. □

***A Fierce Discontent: The Rise And Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870–1920*, by Michael McGerr. Free Press, 2003, 395 pages.**

# Curse of the Progressives

Timothy Sandefur

We live today in the world the progressives made. The administrative state they built has received vast transfusions of funds by crusading politicians from Franklin Roosevelt to Lyndon Johnson to George W. Bush, but the creature itself is a product of what Michael McGerr calls the “stunningly broad agenda” of the progressive age. *A Fierce Discontent* collects numerous examples of that agenda: from laws regulating wages and prices, to censorship, land-use planning, prohibition, and even segregation. The progressives, McGerr writes, “wanted not only to use the state to regulate the economy; strikingly, they wanted nothing less than to transform other Americans, to remake the nation's feuding, polyglot population in their own middle-class image.”

Unfortunately, although McGerr brings together a wealth of sometimes shocking material showing how profoundly anti-individualist the progressives were, he somehow fails to arrive at a solid definition of the term. This

undermines his larger theses. According to McGerr, progressivism, a radical and thorough attempt “to reconstruct the individual human being” and to “reshape values and behavior,” was led primarily by the middle class, which sought to impose its values on the entire society. “More inclined to socialism than they liked to admit,” writes McGerr, progressives “were radical in their conviction that other social classes must be transformed” so as to conform to a middle-class vision of the proper order.

There are two primary problems with this interpretation. It does not tell us what that “proper order” was, and it is inconsistent with the elitism of the progressives themselves. Unlike populism — the movement that foreshadowed the progressive age — progressivism was led primarily by intellectuals; by people like Oliver Wendell Holmes, Louis Brandeis, Herbert Croly, Woodrow Wilson, and many other names that would re-emerge in Franklin Roosevelt's “Brain Trust.” While it is easy to describe the “values” of progressives as middle

class, a more precise definition would include its overriding hostility to individualism and the dynamic society that it created. Progressivism was a technocratic movement that sought to organize progress along tracks that the intelligentsia thought were the right ones.

This would require a genuine revolution of American society. Inequalities of wealth or condition were the result, said socialists, of a society based on corrupt notions of justice inherited by capitalists. Marx wrote that:

in the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will. . . . The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. . . . It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness.

In other words, transactions between actors in society are so influenced by mores or other social influences that the law inevitably institutionalizes inequalities. When transactions are later made according to these laws, the transactions are tainted by this inequality, and these become precedents for further transactions, ad infinitum.

Thus even a consensual transaction today cannot be said to reflect an objective, nonpolitical meeting of the minds between buyers and sellers, because it is permeated by social influences which “determine” the parties’ “consciousness.” The mores of individualism, of working for what one gets and then being free to keep it, were among these influences, and to eradicate them meant transforming morality as well as politics.

For instance, McGerr notes that the progressivist Walter Rauschenbusch

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"emphasized the fundamental importance of transforming individual human beings." He quotes Rauschenbusch: "The greatest contribution which any man can make to the social movement is the contribution of a regenerated personality. . . . Such a man will in some measure incarnate the principles of a higher

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*While it is easy to describe the "values" of progressivism as middle class, a more precise definition would include its overriding hostility to individualism and the dynamic society that it created.*

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social order in his attitude to all questions and in all his relations to man, and will be a wellspring of regenerating influences."

In 1900, such a far-reaching assault on individualism was much more radical than today. Its leaders, therefore, advertised their campaign in terms their target audience would accept: moral uplift; protecting the weak; helping the poor; serving your fellow man. This packaging attracted the middle-class audience, raised on Victorian moralism; Mencken said that Woodrow Wilson spoke to voters in "vague and comforting words — words cast into phrases made familiar by the whooping for their customary political and ecclesiastical rabble-rousers. . . ." The union of government and altruism — what came to be called the "Social Gospel" — was born. This explains the apparently middle-class origins of progressivism. But the product itself was — as with all socialist movements — built by elites and sold to the people, *not* the other way around. Despite their fre-

quent invocation of democracy, the progressives were quite undemocratic; their state would be a democracy programmed and operated by experts. John Dewey, for instance, insisted that "the cure for the ailments of democracy is more democracy," but he defined democracy as "that form of social organization, extending to all the areas and ways of living, in which the powers of individuals shall . . . be fed, sustained and directed." Directed by whom? By Dewey, of course.

Progressivism transformed democracy from rule by the people into rule by a government elite in the name of the people. As McGerr writes, "In 1908, the Democratic platform demanded, 'Shall the People Rule . . . ?' It was a deceptively simple question. Who were 'the people' . . . ? It was not obvious at all." Indeed, "the people," as used by collectivists, has always meant the rulers, who claim that being controlled by the state is in "the people's" interest, whether they like it or not. Even the socialist historian Eric Foner criticizes the progressives for being overly confident "that the state could be counted upon to act as a disinterested arbiter of the nation's social and economic purposes." But when their bureaucracy failed to reach this unreachable star, the progressives' only solution was to further insulate the bureaucracy from public influence. The result of this was a state that was *less* democratic, not more. As their pursuit of "rational," disinterested economic planning increased, so too did the exclusion of the voices of the people, who seemed always, to the progressives, to be tainted with "partisan" interests.

Consider also the many exclusionary programs created by the progressives — programs which show that not everybody counted as "the people," notwithstanding the progressives' "pull-together" rhetoric. When Theodore Roosevelt said he had to "stop the influx of cheap labor, and the resulting competition which gives rise to so much bitterness in American industrial life," he was explicitly excluding a vast group of the world's population from achieving the prosperity and "more abundant life" that

the progressives invoked as their aim. In this case, organized labor was "the people," not the Chinese immigrants.

Legal segregation was another progressive "solution." The late 19th century saw a rash of lynching throughout the nation — in some years, more than one every other day. "The solution," McGerr writes, "was a dramatic intensification and codification of segregation. . . . Through differing mixtures of law and custom, every Southern town, city, county, and state tried to achieve two goals: first, to send an unmistakable message of racial inequality that would intimidate blacks and reassure whites; second, to deprive blacks of so much economic and political opportunity that they could never threaten white power."

In short, the progressives failed to solve the problem they created, which Richard Hofstadter describes as "whether it is possible in modern society to find satisfactory ways of realizing the ideal of popular government without becoming dependent to an unhealthy degree upon those who have the means to influence the popular mind." They failed because this task is impossible — and because whose influence is "unhealthy" depends entirely on whom you ask. Like all government intervention, progressive "solutions" were subject to

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*The progressives' moral relativism gave the illusion of democratic values because of its majoritarian style. But in fact, it set the standard of justice as The Rule of the Stronger, whoever that rule-maker might be.*

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the public-choice effect. As government becomes more powerful, as it redistributes more resources to favored groups, the incentives for lobbying increase. Government power then falls into the hands, not of the most deserving, but of the most politically adept. Since the 1900s, political

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innovations intended to put "the people" in charge have sooner or later been taken over by political elites. And every year's crop of candidates speechifies that *this* time, they really *will* eliminate the "special interests," and empower "the people" to rule through a new menu of agencies and bureaus.

But progressives had also destroyed their only hope of rescue from government-by-faction when they attacked the concept of natural justice. Progressive political theory laughed at the idea that human beings were naturally free, or that political principles preceded the state. Instead, since "social being determines consciousness," justice could be chosen a priori and imposed by government: a society was "unjust" if it differed from some preconceived idea of the "good society." And without any pre-political standard of justice, those shaping society (on behalf of "the people") were free to choose any standard they wished, and once written into law, it became, ipso facto, justice. The progressives' moral relativism gave the illusion of democratic values because of its majoritarian style. But in fact, it set the standard of justice as The Rule of The Stronger, whoever that rulemaker might be. This is how progressives justified violating individual rights in the name of "democracy," even though previous generations had understood that democracy could never legitimately violate individual rights. For Justice Holmes, it was a oxymoron to say that a law was unjust — it was "like shaking one's fist at the sky," because "the U.S. is not subject to some mystic overlaw that it is bound to obey." But without a pre-political standard of right and wrong, how could progressives complain when government was taken over by "special interests"? Moral relativism undermined their appeals to democracy, therefore, even as it enshrined the absolute rule of the majority.

Imposing preconceived standards of justice on society meant a lot of cutting and stretching, and thus progressives saw World War I as "a special opportunity for reform, a chance to promote their agenda at point after

point."

In particular, the need to raise an army, stimulate the production of food and war materials, and ensure loyalty would require an activist state. "Laissez-faire is dead," declared a reformer. "Long live social control. . . ." The activist state would surely cripple the progressives' old enemy, individualism. "War necessitates organization, system, routine, and discipline," observed the journalist Frederick Lewis Allen. "We shall have to give up much of our economic freedom. . . . We shall have to lay by our good-natured individualism and march in step. . . ." Full of "social possibilities," the war, John Dewey suggested, would constrain "the individualistic tradition" and teach "the supremacy of public need over private possessions."

Nothing quite that serious came from the progressive era. But it made serious inroads on the political and moral independence of Americans. The notions that government should push society into a more "just" form; that disinterested "experts" could run society the "right" way, without being swayed into evil by the wiles of lobbyists; that it is "cynical" or "nihilistic" to argue that government should confine itself to more mundane tasks; that natural justice or natural rights are superstitions; that the personality is the result of environment — all of these have remained. More subtle forms of progressive control have remained also: the state monopoly on education, for example. Henry Adams said that "all state education is a sort of dynamo machine for polarizing the popular mind; for turning and holding its lines of force in the direction supposed to be most effective for state purposes." Dewey and other progressives openly embraced this justification, and when educators today criticize homeschoolers for failing to "socialize" their kids, they are simply reverting to the language of their progressive forebears. Even rituals like the Pledge of Allegiance — a progressive invention for inculcating national obedience — remain today, and are defended even by con-

servatives otherwise hostile to the progressive movement.

These all indicate the final failure of McGerr's otherwise very interesting book: he imagines that the progressive era is over. The election of Calvin Coolidge, on an explicitly individualistic platform, ended the progressive dream, writes McGerr. "Reformers," he says, "had to sit back

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*Even rituals like the Pledge of Allegiance — a progressive invention for inculcating national obedience — remain today.*

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and watch the Republican administrations of Warren G. Harding, Calvin Coolidge, and Herbert Hoover pursue a politics of individualism and laissez-faire." Yet he admits that "the nation would not abandon progressivism and its ideas completely," and that Franklin Roosevelt, Lyndon Johnson, and other presidents pursued progressive goals and employed progressive methods. What could possibly distinguish the New Deal or the Great Society from progressivism? For McGerr, the difference is that while the latter:

knew, better than the old progressives, how much the people were eager for Washington to help ensure their prosperity . . . [they also] realized that most Americans wanted to be left free to pursue pleasure, to indulge in the individual gratification of consumerism. The task of govern-



"I'm not complaining — the economy's finally slowed down to where I can keep up with it."

ment was to make sure Americans could afford pleasure, and then get out of the way.

This is true, but a better explanation is that welfare statists since the 1930s represent, not the repudiation of progressivism, but just new turns in the public-choice effect that the progressives set in motion. The vast bureaucracy they created is conquered by one pressure group after another — prohibitionists, the “war on poverty” crowd, corporate powers, social conservatives, and back again. The post-progressive age has not given up on the progressives’ “ambitious” work; it has simply shifted from one collective

fad to the next, employing the government in a host of sometimes absurd and contradictory reform agendas, each announced in the next State of the Union address.

McGerr’s book brings together hundreds of useful examples which reveal the darkness of this political vision. Unfortunately, he fails to follow the stream to its philosophical headwaters of collectivism, moral relativism, and elitism. Doing so would be a mighty task, but it would help to make the case against the chaotic power lust of the modern progressive state. □

***Against All Enemies: Inside America’s War on Terror*, by Richard A. Clarke. Free Press, 2004, 304 pages.**

***The Price of Loyalty: George W. Bush, the White House, and the Education of Paul O’Neill*, by Ron Suskind. Simon & Schuster, 2004, 348 pages.**

# Courtiers in the House of Bush

Alan W. Bock

When political books come out in an election year, it is usually prudent to approach them with a modicum of caution, understanding that they just might come with a political agenda. Although they contain plenty of information that might cause you to think less highly of George W. Bush, neither of these books is an outright hatchet job. Nor do they make the case for the outright stupidity, incompetence, or malevolence of the president that the newspaper stories revolving around their publication have suggested. But future historians, seeking to assess the Bush presidency more dispassionately than most of us can manage to do just

now, will find both books useful.

Richard Clarke’s book, timed to be released the same week he was scheduled to testify before the 9/11 commission, has made the larger splash. Like his actual testimony — as opposed to the *60 Minutes* interview and the pre-publicity — it is critical of Dubya, but more sober and measured than the condensed, almost hysterical condemnation both supporters and critics of the administration had expected.

The book criticizes the Bush administration’s approach to terrorism prior to 9/11 and outlines Clarke’s own career, beginning in the State Department in 1979, in the context of the crises and problems the United States faced overseas during that

period. I suspect that Clarke was not quite so much at the center of things as he makes it sound, but he was in place and paying attention, from the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Iranian revolution which got the U.S. “Stumbling into the Islamic World” (a chapter title) until just a few months ago.

Clarke summarizes our involvement with Saddam Hussein in the 1980s, beginning with the premise that “[a]lthough not an ally of Iraq, the Reagan administration had decided that Saddam Hussein should not be allowed to be defeated by a radical Islamist, anti-American regime in Tehran.” Thus the administration removed Iraq from the list of “terrorism-sponsoring” countries, sent Donald Rumsfeld to establish friendly relations, started sharing intelligence, and re-established full diplomatic relations. Clarke says: “Although the U.S. never sold arms to Iraq, the Saudis and Egyptians did, including U.S. arms. Some of the bombs that the Saudis had bought as part of overstocking now went to Saddam, in violation of U.S. law. I doubt that the Saudis ever asked Washington’s permission, but I also doubt that anyone in the Reagan administration wanted to be asked.”

Clarke became Assistant Secretary of State for Politico-Military Affairs in 1990, so he had a front-row seat for and some involvement in the first Gulf War. His comments are mostly useful, especially the observation that the kind of international cooperation the U.S. got in the first Gulf War would have been most unlikely during the Cold War. He goes on:

The Cold War had also served to suppress some traditional ethnic and religious rivalries beneath the heavy glacier of the Communist totalitarian state, particularly in the Balkans and Central Asia where there were many Muslims. To the extent that religion was a political force during the Cold War, it was a weak one promoted by the United States as a counterpoint to the anti-religious ideology of the Soviet Union.

When the Cold War ended, the United States could move massively into the Persian Gulf during a crisis there, ethnic and religious tensions could erupt in the Balkans and Central Asia, and religious fervor could no longer be directed at the

Communists. Those feeling disadvantaged by the global system and wishing to blame their lot on foreign forces had only one world-dominant nation to blame for their troubles, one major target to motivate their followers: America.

Now for the juicy stuff: Clarke, who took on the antiterrorism portfolio in the White House after Clinton was

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*Clarke makes the case that the Clinton administration was more aware of and serious about terrorism than the Bush administration was during its first few months.*

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elected, makes the case that the Clinton administration was more aware of and serious about terrorism than the Bush administration was during its first few months. Clarke makes this case better than I thought it could be made. He says the stuff about Sudan offering bin Laden to the Clintonites on a silver platter, the story so stressed by many Republicans, is bunk. (I don't know enough to assess either claim.) He gives a reasonably good explanation of the rise of al Qaeda. He was more assertive about wanting to get rid of Saddam than anyone else in the Clinton administration, and almost got his way during the crisis of 1996.

Clarke says the aspirin factory really was an aspirin factory, and that the Clintonites had three relatively decent chances to take bin Laden out with a missile but didn't do so. He gives the Clintonites more credit for stopping the "Millennium bomber" who crossed the Canadian border, allegedly with evil designs on Los Angeles International Airport. Yes, they had an alert on, but it seems to have been one alert border guard who made the difference, not the institutional preparedness.

He writes of Condi Rice: "As I briefed Rice on al Qaeda, her facial expression gave me the impression that she had never heard the term before." That's not inconsistent with the fact that Rice did know a bit about al Qaeda and had even referred to al

Qaeda as a threat earlier. But it could also be seen as a putdown.

Clarke's gripes against the Bush administration seem as likely to be bureaucratic grievance-mongering as they are to be genuine concern. Clarke had been operating as a separate shop under the auspices of the National Security Council during the Clinton administration, and Rice downgraded the office so Clarke met with subordinates rather than with the sacred "principals" (the actual people who held the title of Secretary of this or that), which made him less important. Although he makes a case that the government should have been more vigilant during the summer of 2001, he doesn't even try to argue that the 9/11 attack would have been prevented if all his recommendations had been followed.

The case Clarke makes more convincingly is that the Bush administration was obsessed with Iraq and Saddam Hussein from the very beginning and subordinated more effective possible steps against real terrorists to the goal of getting a war with Iraq underway. Paul Wolfowitz, if Clarke's account is even reasonably accurate, did downplay the threat from bin Laden and argued that "Well, there are others that do as well, at least as much. Iraqi terrorism for example." He didn't back down even when Clarke got the terrorism experts from both the FBI and CIA to agree that Iraq hadn't sponsored any terrorism directed at the United States since 1993.

His criticism of the Iraq war is pointed:

Far from addressing the popular appeal of the enemy that attacked us, Bush handed that enemy precisely what it wanted and needed, proof that America was at war with Islam, that we were the new Crusaders come to occupy Muslim land.

Nothing America could have done would have provided al Qaeda and its new generation of cloned groups a better recruitment device than our unprovoked invasion of an oil-rich Arab country. Nothing else could have so well negated all our other positive acts and so closed Muslim eyes and ears to our subsequent calls for reform in their region. It was as if Osama bin Laden, hidden in some high mountain redoubt, were engaging in long-range mind control of George Bush, chanting "invade Iraq,

you must invade Iraq."



The book about former Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill, while informative and useful, annoyed me a bit, largely because of a conceit employed by author and former *Wall Street Journal* reporter Ron Suskind.

Suskind supplies plenty of information to validate the suspicion that O'Neill and Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan were wary of the Bush tax cuts and worked from the outset to reduce them. He constantly portrays O'Neill and Greenspan as pragmatists who were guided only by the economic numbers, which they would recite to one another during breakfast meetings the two men (friends for 30 years) held periodically. By contrast, Bush advisers like Larry Lindsey, who advocated for the largest tax cuts politically feasible, are invariably called "ideologues." This may surprise some, coming as it does a former *Journal* reporter, but it should not. *Wall Street Journal* reporters don't necessarily agree with the supply-side orientation of the editorial-page staff; I know from my own paper that this can be the case, and from some acquaintances at the

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*The Price of Loyalty is worth reading for its picture of how the Bush White House functioned, and especially of the curiously incurious nature of the president himself.*

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*Journal* that it is generally the case there. Suskind doesn't do anything so obvious as putting "ideologues" in italics, but you can almost hear the sneer whenever the word is used.

Pish and tosh. Unless you have some kind of theoretical framework, simply immersing yourself in the numbers can't tell you anything about how the economy is doing. O'Neill was chairman of Alcoa after time in the Nixon and Ford administrations, and apparently did a terrific job turning the company around. He is one of those old-fashioned big-business-oriented Republicans who worries most about

federal deficits and is routinely afraid that a tax cut will be too big, though he at least isn't invariably opposed to them like some "responsible" Republicans. He frets that those simplistic right-wingers will have too much influence. Bush had every reason to know this when he appointed him.

O'Neill met one-on-one with Bush about once every eleven days, and

many meetings were like the first one, where O'Neill recapitulated his memo on the state of the economy and kept up a monologue for 45 minutes. Suskind writes:

There were a dozen questions that O'Neill had expected Bush to ask. He was ready with the answers. How large did O'Neill consider the surplus, and how real? How might the tax cut be structured? What about reforming Social Security and

Medicare, the budget busters. How will we know if the economy has turned?

Bush didn't ask anything. He looked at O'Neill, not changing his expression, not letting on that he had any reactions — either positive or negative.

Maybe it's a management technique, and maybe it's not knowing what questions to ask. Hard to tell.

The good stuff is in here, however. At the first National Security Council meeting, ten days after the inauguration, the second item on the Mideast agenda was "[h]ow Iraq is destabilizing the region, Mr. President," as O'Neill quotes Condoleezza Rice, "in what several observers understood was a scripted exchange." The council pored over a grainy photograph of a factory and pondered whether it was producing chemicals for weapons, though CIA director George Tenet admitted there was "no confirming intelligence" to that effect. After that conversation, "a new direction, having been set from the top, this policy change now guided the proceeding. The opening premise, that Saddam's regime was destabilizing the region, and the vivid possibility that he owned weapons of mass destruction — a grainy picture, perhaps misleading but visceral — pushed analysis toward logistics: the need for better intelligence, for ways to tighten the net around the regime, for use of the U.S. military to support Iraqi insurgents in

## Notes on Contributors

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Richard Kostelanetz has worked with audiotape, videotape, holography, and film.

Lance Lambertson was the Deputy Director of the White House Office of Policy Information during President Reagan's first term.

Mark Moller is the editor of the *Cato Supreme Court Review*.

Wendy McElroy is editor of *ifeminists.com* and is the author of *The Reasonable Woman: A Guide to Intellectual Survival*.

Alec Mouhibian is a freshman at UC Santa Barbara, where he is co-president of the local chapter of Students for Academic Freedom.

Bruce Ramsey is a journalist living in Seattle.

Ralph R. Reiland is the B. Kenneth Simon professor of free enterprise at Robert Morris University and a Pittsburgh restaurateur.

Sheldon Richman is editor of *Ideas on Liberty*.

Jeff Rigenbach is the author of *In Praise of Decadence*.

Murray N. Rothbard passed away in 1995. He was a senior editor of *Liberty* from 1987–90.

Timothy Sandefur is a College of Public Interest Law Fellow at the Pacific Legal Foundation.

Jeffrey A. Schaler teaches at American University's School of Public Affairs.

Jane S. Shaw is a Senior Associate of PERC — The Center for Free Market Environmentalism in Bozeman, Mont.

Jo Ann Skousen is a writer and critic who lives in New York.

Mark Skousen teaches at Columbia Business School and is the author of a very thin book, *Tax Free: All the Legal Ways to Avoid Income, Capital Gains, and Social Security Taxes*.

Clark Stooksbury has written for *The American Conservative*, *Chronicles* and *Metro Pulse* (of Knoxville, Tennessee).

Tim Slagle is a stand-up comedian living in Chicago whose website is [www.timslagle.com](http://www.timslagle.com).

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*The picture that emerges of our president is of a person who makes up his mind quickly (sometimes after a period, real or feigned, of listening to differing advice) and afterward finds it almost impossible to change his mind.*

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a coup." O'Neill concluded, walking back to his office: "Getting Hussein was now the administration's focus, that much was already clear."

There's more, much of it interesting. But the picture that emerges of



our president is of a person who makes up his mind fairly quickly (sometimes after a period, real or feigned, of listening to differing advice) and afterward finds it almost impossible to change his mind, adjust his views, or admit that he might have had incomplete information (as everyone does most of the time) when he decided. That stubbornness might get the U.S. out of Iraq on schedule with

little future political commitment, but it got us into the war when there was no good reason, from the perspective of actually defending the United States against an imminent or even a likely threat.

Minor annoyances aside, this book is definitely worth reading, not only for the evidence that this administration was obsessed with Iraq from the outset, but for the light it sheds on just

how haphazard policy-making is in the actual doing. This is something that has happened in other administrations, but it seems especially characteristic of George W. Bush. *The Price of Loyalty* gives a picture — incomplete, no doubt, but a useful picture nonetheless — of how the Bush White House functions, and especially of the curiously incurious nature of the president himself. □

## Dark Horse on the Third Ballot, from page 48

federal authorities, the LP would have solved its problem about getting media attention? Should it play on Badnarik's strengths, his knowledge of the Constitution and articulateness, and try to appeal to the radical right-wing constitutional movement of which Badnarik was a spokesman?

It seems apparent that the party leadership has decided against that course. Instead, it seems to be striving to

remake Badnarik into a conventional LP nominee, a gray man of the moderate right. The delegates may have voted for a radical constitutionalist, but what they got was a clone of Gary Nolan and Harry Browne.

The two middle-aged white guys who did high fives upon learning of Nolan's defeat will, I suspect, soon be having second thoughts. □

## Letters, from page 4

### The Political Calculus

I agree with K.R. Mudgeon's entire rant except for the conclusion ("Nowhere to Go," July).

Over the past few decades, the voters with few exceptions have increasingly elected state and federal representatives that tell them what to do and how to do it and take care of them at someone else's expense. They want a king. For the foreseeable future, then, our political direction is going to be controlled by Democrats and Republicans with minor political parties playing little role except as occasional spoilers.

Although I am not personally acquainted with any such Republicans, the Republican Party reportedly has a base of people who prefer smaller, less costly, and less intrusive government. If that is the case, the only hope for those of us with libertarian or conservative inclinations is the Republican Party. But that hope can only be realized if the influence of the profligate authoritarians such as George W. Bush and the present congressional leadership is reduced in significance. The most effective way to do this is to turn them out of office, and this is most likely to be accomplished by voting for their Democratic challengers.

There is some danger that the

Republicans will interpret such ousters as a further leftward drift of their constituents, but the pollsters and a few letters to the appropriate Republican organizations should minimize that.

While Mudgeon is out fishing on Nov. 2, I will be voting for John Kerry. God, I can't believe I'm doing this!

Clint Cooper  
Williston, N.D.

### A Long Wait

"When the professors can neither avoid a new idea nor find fault with the substance of it, they'll find it in the form . . ." That was from my book, *The Amateur Science of Economics*, and Richard Kostelanetz, reviewing it in *Liberty* (July), has found plenty of fault with its form. As for its substance, he openly conceded "the truth of (my) message" — though barely scratching the surface of it.

He offered a very nice sampling of my "provocative aphorisms," but passed over what should have been the most provocative of all to a libertarian: "Freedom's worst enemies are its incompetent and false friends, standing in the way of real ones, the prima donnas of conservatism and libertarianism, jealous and fearful of new voices with new ideas, and being left in the wake of intellectual

progress."

But you wouldn't know from his review of it that this book was anything more than another challenge to the "liberals," that it was as much a challenge to Kostelanetz himself and his fellow libertarians. Evasion being the sincerest form of flattery, and a grudging endorsement the best, I'll take it; and, having waited 30 years for libertarians to acknowledge my existence, I can only hope that it won't take another 30 for them to face the challenge.

D.G. Lesvic  
Pacoima, Calif.

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

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## Los Angeles

Curious cultural note, reported by the estimable *Seattle Times*:

O.J. Simpson has announced a plan to star in a new TV reality show. "It's a takeoff on something called punk'd," an MTV hidden-camera show, said Simpson. "It's me doing gags as Juice . . . what they call 'juicing' people."

## Montpelier, France

Dispatch from the War on Terror, from a report in the always provocative *Guardian*:

A French motorist has been given a three-month suspended prison sentence for trying to run over a pedestrian he believed to be Osama bin Laden. The anti-terrorist, identified only as Pierre, pursued his intended victim through several red lights and into a pedestrian zone before crashing into a wall. His military target was not injured.

## Oslo, Norway

Progressive effort to increase economic productivity, from a dispatch in the *Seattle Times*:

Norwegian Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik said yesterday he hopes a new campaign to reduce bullying at work will reduce one of Europe's highest rates of sick leave. Workers in Norway call in sick an average of 8.5% of the time.

## Washington, D.C.

The willingness of the coalition shows signs of strain, as reported in the *Boston Globe*:

While visiting the White House, Afghan President Hamid Karzai told reporters, "It's been very nice visiting the United States again. One likes to stay here and not go, it's such a good country."

## Brussels

Further progress toward a United Europe, from an article in the *International Herald-Tribune*:

Pet owners will be able to take their dogs, cats, and ferrets abroad this summer even if they do not have a pet passport.

## Washington, D.C.

Cultural note from the vigilant *Houston Chronicle*:

A report revealed that the Pentagon wasted \$100 million over six years on unused airline tickets, prompting lawmakers to urge the government to "fix its culture of indifference" to American taxpayers.

## Miami

Further evidence that federal law enforcement is up to the challenge posed by international terrorism, from a *Miami Herald* dispatch:

A teacher's aide who forgot to put away her marshmallows and hot chocolate at Yellowstone National Park last year was taken from her cruise ship cabin in handcuffs and hauled before a federal judge, accused of failing to pay the year-old fine. Hope Clarke, 32, crying and in leg shackles, told the judge she was rousted at 6:30 a.m. by federal agents after the ship returned to Miami from Mexico, and insisted that she had paid the \$50 fine before she left the national park. She spent nearly nine hours in custody.

## Vancouver, B.C.

A conundrum for the Left, as reported by the *Port Angeles Daily News*:

Efforts to capture and relocate a lost killer whale on Canada's Pacific coast were suspended temporarily on Friday following objections from native Indians who say the animal may be the spirit of a dead chief and want it to stay where it is.

## Portland, Ore.

Crackdown on non-FDA-approved treatments, from a *Washington Times* report:

An Oregon doctor who had sex with a patient and then charged the state about \$5,000 for his "treatments" has been jailed for 60 days and stripped of his license.

## Djakarta, Indonesia

An ally in the War on Terror does its part, from Radio Australia:

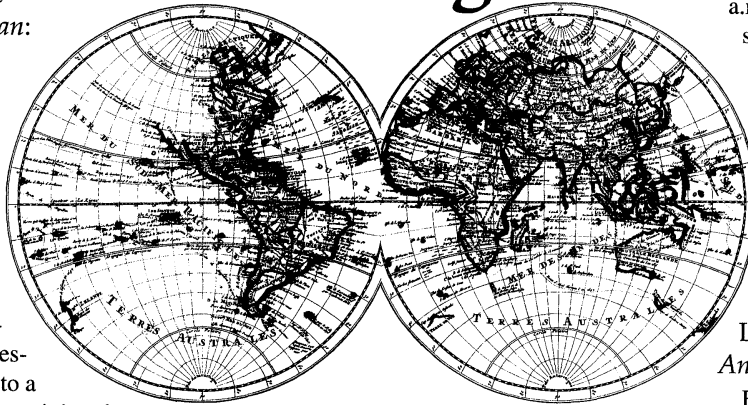
Indonesia's naval chief, Bernard Sondakh, has ordered his commanders to shoot armed terrorists or pirates in key waterways including the busy Strait of Malacca, which carries a quarter of world trade. "In the future, every thief or terrorist at sea has to be shot dead and this should be publicized by the mass media to teach a lesson," Sondakh said in a statement. "Don't take them alive. . . . From now on we will show to the world that the Indonesian Navy alone is capable of safeguarding the Malacca Strait. And don't try and accuse us of violating human rights again."

## Port of Spain, Trinidad

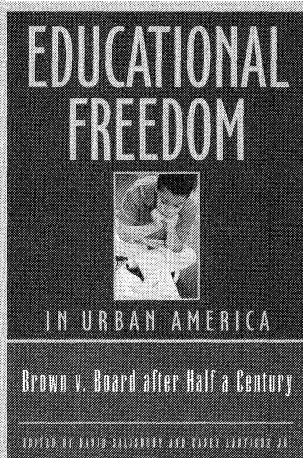
Evidence of the efficiency of state bureaucracy, from a dispatch of the prominent *New Zealand Herald*:

A frail 89-year-old Trinidadian man left his apartment for the first time in eight years after broken elevators in the government-owned building were finally replaced.

# Terra Incognita



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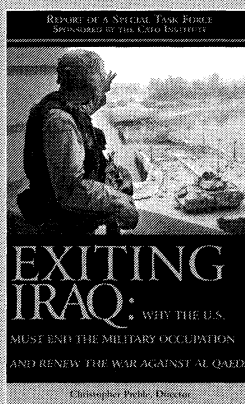
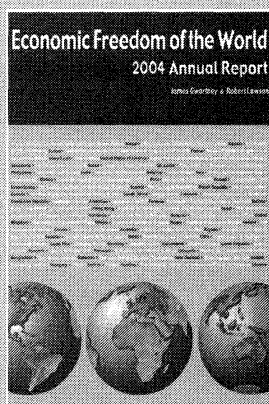
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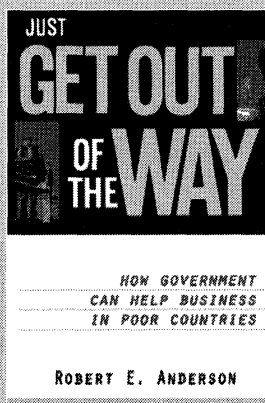
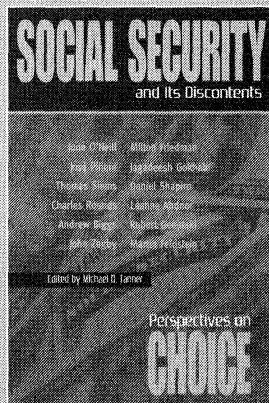


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