

Liberty

August 2006

\$4.00

How to
Wreck
A City

George Bush: Champion of Liberalism

by Jon Harrison

My Memories of Ayn Rand

by John Hospers

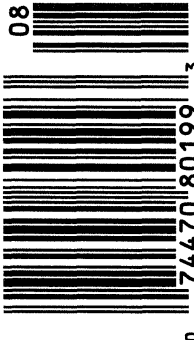
Holy Blood, Hokum Grail

by Eric Kenning

Of Meat and Myth

by Lawrence Reed

Also: *Travis Stewart* plumbs the shallows of "Poseidon," *Timothy Sandefur* flees from the Cylons, *Jayant Bhandari* escapes the outposts of democratic dictatorship . . . plus other articles, reviews & humor.



US \$4.00 / Canada 5.95

"Government must necessarily make war on Liberty." — H.L. Mencken

About Your Subscription

- Q: When does my subscription expire?**
A: Please look to the right of your name on your mailing label. There you will find (except in some cases when receiving your first issue) the number of issues left in your subscription, followed by the word "left," as in "3 LEFT."
- Q: I've moved. How do I change the address to which my magazines are sent?**
A: Write us at the postal or email addresses below. Be sure to include your previous address, your new address, and a telephone number or email address where we can reach you if we have questions. It's best to send us your current label and your new address. Allow 4–6 weeks to begin receiving *Liberty* at your new address.
- Q: I'm receiving duplicate copies of Liberty. What should I do?**
A: Clip the mailing labels from both copies and send them to the postal address below. We'll make sure you receive all the issues you've paid for.
- Q: How can I buy gift subscriptions for friends and family?**
A: Call the toll-free number below. We'll be happy to assist you.
- Q: Is Liberty on the Web?**
A: Yes. Selected articles from each issue are published online. Visit our website at libertyunbound.com.

To subscribe, renew, or ask questions about your subscription

E-mail: circulation@libertyunbound.com

Write: Liberty Circulation, P.O. Box 1181, Port Townsend, WA 98368

Call toll-free: (800) 854-6991 during regular West Coast business hours

Outside the U.S., call: (360) 379-8421

Letters

Bullseye

On April 9, Dr. Eric Pianka, the professor from the University of Texas who stirred up great debate in two speeches in March by noting that 90% of human beings deserve to die by the Ebola virus because we have mismanaged the earth (see "Don't cheer the reaper," Reflections, July), was nearly gored to death by one of the bison he raises.

One has to wonder, what was he thinking as this bull, interestingly named Lucifer, was bearing down on him? Was he elated to be an exemplary sacrifice on the altar of Gaia, attended by a magnificent high priest, a 2,600-pound symbol of the human destruction of the American prairie and the Native American? Did he have visions of being revered forever as the icon of anti-anthropocentrism? Or did he think such honors should be reserved for the stupid humans who live in trailers and let their lizard-killing cats run free?

As he was being airlifted to a nearby hospital, did he disdain all the technology that was saving his life because it exploited natural resources and emitted pollutants, or did he appreciate all the human brilliance that has generated such compassionate uses of technology that have saved millions of human and animal lives?

Or did he, perhaps, achieve a sudden clarity on the sanctity of human life?

Amanda Bohm
Austin, Texas

Where Was TR?

Dale Gieringer presents an interesting history of drug legislation ("Centennial of an Unnatural Disaster," June), marred only by a curious error. He refers to "the Philippines, which had been captured by the U.S. at [Theodore] Roosevelt's initiative when he was assistant secretary of the Navy during the Spanish-American War."

The timeline of relevant events is as follows:

April 25, 1898: Congress declares war on Spain, effective April 21; Theodore Roosevelt promptly *resigns* as assistant secretary of the Navy and begins to recruit a volunteer infantry regiment.

May 1, 1898: Adm. George Dewey defeats the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay.

July 1, 1898: A U.S. expeditionary force storms the heights of San Juan and El Caney, Cuba, involving the "Rough Riders," led by Lt. Col. Theodore Roosevelt.

July 14, 1898: Santiago, Cuba, surrenders to Gen. Nelson A. Miles; troops begin to demobilize.

Aug. 13, 1898: Manila is invested by Gen. Wesley Merritt, ending war in the Philippines.

Fall 1898: Roosevelt runs for and is elected governor of New York.

Feb. 6, 1899: The Senate ratifies the Treaty of Paris, in which Spain cedes the Philippines to the United States.

Fall 1900: Roosevelt runs for and is elected vice president of the United States.

July 4, 1901: William H. Taft becomes the first U.S. civil governor of the Philippines.

Sept. 14, 1901: Roosevelt becomes president of the United States upon the death of President William McKinley.

It is difficult to understand how, after Roosevelt had resigned his post as assistant secretary of the Navy, the Philippines could be captured at his "initiative" — especially when he was at the time fighting an expeditionary campaign as an Army officer halfway around the world, or otherwise being a private individual and holding office as governor of New York.

Gieringer doubtless can explain his mistaken account, but it bothers the reader to think that a) this anecdote is

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

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

Subscriptions are \$29.50 for twelve issues. Foreign subscriptions are \$34.50 for twelve issues.

The editorial offices can be reached at (360) 379-0242. Please do not call with proposals for articles. Rather, request our writer's guide, which includes manuscript submission guidelines, by sending a SASE to Writer's Guide, Liberty, PO Box 1181, Port Townsend, WA 98368. It is also available at our website, libertyunbound.com.

Advertising inquiries may be directed to the business office at (206) 367-0454.

Opinions expressed in *Liberty* are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Liberty Foundation. Copyright © 2006 Liberty Foundation. All rights reserved.

R.W. Bradford
(1947–2005)
founder

Stephen Cox
editor

Patrick Quealy
publisher

Andrew Ferguson
managing editor

John Hospers

Bruce Ramsey

Jane S. Shaw
senior editors

Brien Bartels

David Boaz

Alan W. Bock

Douglas Casey

Eric D. Dixon

Brian Doherty

Lanny Ebenstein

David Friedman

Bettina Bien Greaves

Leon T. Hadar

Gene Healy

Robert Higgs

Bill Kauffman

Dave Kopel

Bart Kosko

Loren E. Lomasky

Sarah McCarthy

Wendy McElroy

William E. Merritt

Robert H. Nelson

Randal O'Toole

Ross Overbeek

Durk Pearson

Scott J. Reid

Ralph R. Reiland

Sheldon Richman

Jeff Riggenbach

Timothy Sandefur

Sandy Shaw

Jo Ann Skousen

Mark Skousen

Tim Slagle

Fred L. Smith Jr.

Martin M. Solomon

Clark Stooksbury

Thomas S. Szasz

Martin Morse Wooster

Leland B. Yeager

contributing editors

Kathleen Bradford

Mark Rand

assistant editors

S.H. Chambers

Rex F. May

cartoonists

2 Letters Our readers kick things off.

5 Reflections We freeze our assets, plot against Canada, rediscover Jimmy Carter, bring Maoism to North Carolina, open the border, close the border, tax the obese, segregate graduations, count corpses, and challenge Google with two cups and a string.

Features

15 George Bush: Darling of the Liberals Why won't the Left lay off President Bush? After all, *Jon Harrison* finds, he's giving them everything they want.

19 Remembrance of Things Past *John Hospers* looks back on his friendship with Ayn Rand, and a wealth of fascinating ideas and debates.

23 Of Meat and Myth Upton Sinclair's libels on American industry have become "facts." *Lawrence W. Reed* sets the record straight.

27 Blue Jeans and Belarus *Jayant Bhandari* hops a plane to the ex-Soviet satellite and wonders why the people are so eager to reelect their dictator.

32 Portland Derailed The city's "light-rail Mafia" plunges off the tracks. *Randal O'Toole* surveys the wreckage.

Reviews

37 Jesus' Baby Mama Drama Conspiracy, history, theology, and a lot of flapdoodle: *Eric Kenning* examines the elements of "The Da Vinci Code."

39 Let's Roll *Jo Ann Skousen* bristles at the claim that it's "too soon" for "United 93."

40 The Cylons' Makeover "Battlestar Galactica" is back, and without clownish robots. *Timothy Sandefur* joins the search for the planet called Earth.

42 Blood in the Water In the remake of "The Poseidon Adventure," there isn't a single likable character or moment of personal growth. But, *Travis Stewart* notes, the actors do have nice tans.

44 The Water and the Blood *Jo Ann Skousen* remembers the days when action movies could afford a bit of allusion.



43 Notes on Contributors Agitators, instigators, and explicators.

46 Terra Incognita We only wish we were making these up.

How to Subscribe to

Liberty

Liberty takes individual freedom seriously . . . and the status quo with more than one grain of salt!

Every issue of *Liberty* brings you news you can't miss, opinions you won't find anywhere else, and the best libertarian writing in the world.

You won't want to miss a single issue!

Act Today!

Liberty offers you the best in individualist thinking and writing. So don't hesitate. You have nothing to lose, and the fruits of *Liberty* to gain!

Use the coupon below or call:

1-800-854-6991

Please enter my subscription to *Liberty* immediately!

12 issues (One Full Year) \$29.50

24 issues (Two Full Years) \$56.00

Add \$5 per year for foreign subscriptions.

name _____

address _____

city _____ state _____ zip _____

phone number _____

I enclose my check (payable to *Liberty*)

Charge my:

VISA MasterCard Discover

signature _____

account # _____

expires _____

Send to: Liberty, Dept. L,
P.O. Box 1181, Port Townsend, WA 98368

stylistically deployed mainly to strike a cut at Theodore Roosevelt, and b) there may be other historical errors undermining his article at large.

Michael J. Dunn
Federal Way, Wash.

Gieringer responds: Mr. Dunn's letter raises an interesting question about TR's role in seizing the Philippines. While Dunn's timeline is accurate, Roosevelt played a crucial role in planning to attack the Philippines before an actual declaration of war. The story is told in Morrison and Commager's "Growth of the American Republic," as follows:

"Two months before the actual declaration of war, Theodore Roosevelt, then Assistant Secretary of the Navy, had cabled to Commodore Dewey in command of the Asiatic Squadron: 'Secret and confidential. Order squadron to Hong Kong. Keep full of coal. In the event of declaration of war on Spain, your duty will be to see that the Span-

ish squadron does not leave the Asiatic coast, and then offensive operations in the Philippine Islands.'"

Note that Roosevelt was just the assistant secretary of the Navy, but took the initiative to issue this directive one afternoon while his boss, John Long, was out of the office visiting the doctor.

No Stockholders We

What a delightful surprise awaited me with "The Books of Summer" (July). It was like walking into a bookstore knowing it only contained excellent books. Paraphrasing Beecher: I never knew my human nature was so weak. 'Fess up — you own Amazon stock! (I've just kicked it up a bit.)

I'm hoping for a future installment.

Ken Green
Chino Hills, Calif.

Misleading Indicators

I'm reluctant to dispute economic questions with the author of a book on

continued on page 18

A reader of *Liberty* sent me a message the other day, indicating her strong disagreement with something I'd written in our last issue. She also commented on what a varied group libertarians are.

I was glad to hear from her, on both counts. The curse of writers is the fact that they rarely hear from the people who read them. Those people are out there, someplace, agreeing or disagreeing, but they keep it quiet. They don't let you know. Or maybe they never read what you wrote in the first place. That's the besetting fear. So please remember: *Liberty* likes to hear from you. Love us or hate us, our Letters columns are open to you.

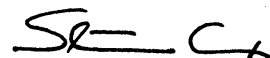
That's the first thing that made me feel good — the reader's expression of disagreement. The second was her celebration of our variety. The fact that people who believe in individual liberty can disagree about nearly everything on the face of the earth is good for our combative spirit. It's also good for the cause of truth: people who debate with one another are more likely to find the good arguments and the important facts than people who are determined to agree.

Something should also be said about sheer curiosity. I didn't think there was anything more to learn about many of

the subjects that appear in this issue of *Liberty*, until I read the articles we're running about them. I've known John Hospers for a long time, and I've done research on Ayn Rand, but a lot of what he says in his article about his friendship with her came as news to me. And I had no idea that the "Poseidon" tales were worth talking about, until I read Travis Stewart's and Jo Ann Skousen's contributions to our Reviews section. The "Da Vinci Code," one of the subjects on which I think I know almost everything (see page 13), benefits greatly from Eric Kenning's perspective (page 37). And it's possible that I will learn something even from Mark Rand's *shocking* rebuttal (page 5) of my ideas on immigration.

It doesn't take much curiosity to be a modern conservative or a modern liberal. Being a libertarian is another matter. If you weren't curious, you would never have wanted something more in your intellectual life. You would never have wanted to find out what "liberty" really means. So if you're still curious . . . read on.

For Liberty,



Stephen Cox
Editor

Reflections

The more things change . . . — With congressional elections just around the corner, let's turn to Rep. Jim Moran, (D-Va.), speaking before the Arlington County Democratic Committee, to see what's at stake: "When I become chairman [of a House appropriations subcommittee], I'm going to earmark the shit out of it."

So, nothing, really.

— Andrew Ferguson

Illiquidity claptrap — It always astounds me when people without money claim to know what is profitable. It further astounds me when they think people who do have money have no idea how to invest it properly. It is this unwarranted conceit that allows socialist ideas to prosper, especially on college campuses, where youthful idealism far exceeds most students' liquidity. It never occurs to them that, quite often, the people who have more money than them have it because they're smarter.

— Tim Slagle

Carter II — Much as Jimmy Carter's administration is now remembered for gross incompetence, not only politically but economically, so shall Dubya's be — both suffering from an internal, yes, spiritual arrogance that kept them from correcting policies that failed in the real world. The principal difference between them is that Dubya got himself reelected, mostly because the Democrats couldn't develop a candidate as attractive to American voters as Ronald Reagan.

— Richard Kostelanetz

Allowing dissent — An AP headline reads, "McCain Says Americans Can Disagree on War."

How wonderful. Sen. McCain no doubt went on to explain that we'll still be forced to pay for the war through taxation, and we won't be able to do anything to prevent our soldiers from dying in the war until Bush & Co. are good and ready to end it at a time of their own choosing. But we *can* — this being America, after all — still disagree on the war . . . though prudence suggests we no longer do so while on the telephone.

— Ross Levatter

Why they hate us — It's strange. Canadians have nationalized health care, a generous welfare system, and few Fortune 500 corporations. They refused to support the war in

Iraq. I don't think Canada gives any aid to Israel. And yet, fundamentalist Muslims *still* wanted to attack the country.

I hope this is a wake-up call for the "why do they hate us" crowd. What angers fundamentalist Muslims about the U.S. isn't our foreign policy, or our loathing of socialism, or our election of President Bush. It's that the American and Canadian governments refuse to force women into burqas, or men to kneel down on rugs five times a day. In America and Canada, we allow people to worship any god they choose, and publish any book, no matter how blasphemous.

The war against the Western infidels is not against capitalism, corporations, Israel, or the military-industrial complex. It

is a war against basic freedoms — the same ones that the "why do they hate us" crowd claim to cherish so much.

— Tim Slagle

He's not heavy, he's my ally —

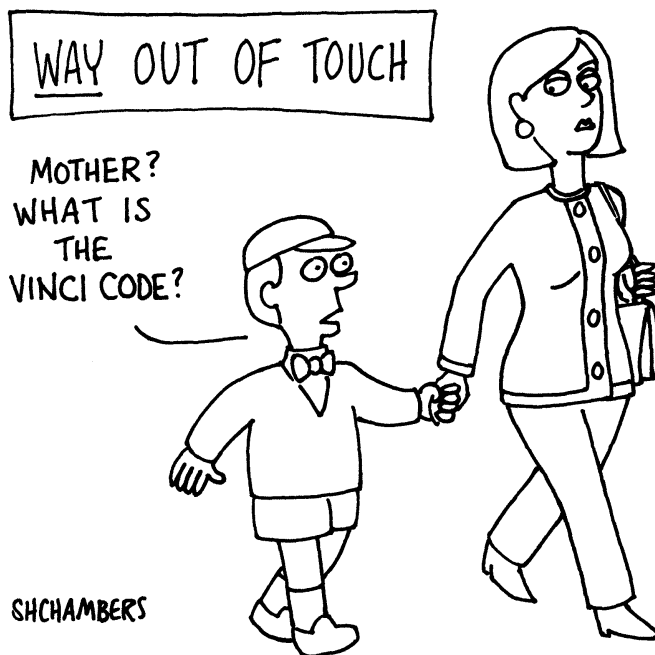
Since the costly "War on Drugs" has been lost, while that in Iraq has stalled at great continuing expense, may I predict that the feds will soon publicize their War on Overweight, which obviously takes more lives prematurely than either recreational drugs or war (not to mention automobiles). Though victory here might be similarly elusive, two charms of the War on Overweight are that it would be a lot less costly (unless those

laid off at the DEA become the Obese Police) and that failure here might discourage our government from declaring further wars, all wars.

— Richard Kostelanetz

Open the borders — In a reflection in last month's Liberty ("I'm sorry to interrupt you . . ."), Stephen Cox raised some interesting questions regarding immigration policy. I will cede the point that a sufficiently large influx of immigrants would cause problems. The problems can be separated into two groups — those stemming from the welfare state, and those stemming solely from scarcity. Let's consider the latter group first.

When the demand for a good increases, so will its price, *ceteris paribus*. When the demand for workers increases, wages rise. When the demand for jobs increases, wages fall. (The "good" here is the wage, and the price paid is the labor.) *Ceteris paribus*. But *do* other things remain the same? They do not. An influx of new labor comes with an increase in new consumers,



SHCHAMBERS

Liberty founder Bill Bradford's death is an irreplaceable loss to the end. Shortly before he passed away, he suggested

Liberty

The 2006 Liberty Editors

Conference in Las Vegas



Mark Skousen

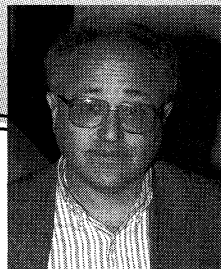
Professor, investment adviser, and author of *The Making of Modern Economics*.



Randy Barnett

Carmack Waterhouse Professor of Legal Theory at Georgetown University Law Center. He appeared before

the U.S. Supreme Court to argue the medical cannabis case of *Gonzales v. Raich*.



David Friedman

Economist, professor at Santa Clara University School of Law, author of *The Machinery of Freedom*, and Bill's favorite anarchist scholar.

Tim Slagle

Renowned political satirist and libertarian comic.



Stephen Cox

Editor of *Liberty*, author of *The Woman and the Dynamo*, and professor of literature at the University of California San Diego

Charles Murray

W.H. Brady Scholar at the American Enterprise Institute and author of *In Our Hands*, *Losing Ground*, and *The Bell Curve*

John Pugsley

Acclaimed speaker, chairman of the Sovereign Society, author of *Common Sense Economics*, and founder of the Bio-Rational Institute

Terry Easton

Private investor, entrepreneur, and adjunct professor at San Jose State University

Rick Rule

President, Global Resource Investments

Jo Ann Skousen

Writer, critic, speaker, and instructor in English literature and writing at Mercy College, Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.

Bruce Ramsey

Journalist, senior editor of *Liberty*, and editor of *Insatiable Government and Other Old-Right Commentaries, 1923-1950*

Randal O'Toole

Senior economist with the Thoreau Institute, prominent critic of "smart growth," and author of *The Best Laid Plans: The Case Against Government Planning*

Neal Levine

Campaign manager for Committee to Regulate and Control Marijuana, the group behind the Nevada initiative to decriminalize marijuana. (Patrick Killen, communications director, may substitute.)

libertarian movement, but he maintained his usual good cheer to the as his epitaph: "Bradford dies. Liberty lives!"

Lives!

Editors and friends of Liberty will gather in Las Vegas for one of our exciting conferences. In addition to our usual array of distinguished panelists and speakers, we'll be joined by friends and family of Liberty's founder, Bill Bradford, at a banquet held in his honor.

The conference lasts Friday afternoon through Sunday afternoon. Included with your conference admission:

- **All conference events**, panels, and workshops.
- **All weekend meals**. Refreshments; breakfast, lunch, and dinner on Saturday; plus breakfast and lunch on Sunday. (Dinner on Friday not included.)

You will receive an information packet including a conference schedule and information on hotel reservations. Liberty has secured excellent weekend room rates at the New Frontier, starting at \$135 per night (plus taxes and fees).

Early Bird registration is only \$195! Payment must be received by August 1 to qualify for this special discount of **over 10% off** the full \$225 price!

Students qualify for a special student rate of only \$125. Proof of full-time student status necessary; call for details.

Questions about the conference, as well as suggestions for ways to remember Bill at the reception, may be e-mailed to:

conf2006@libertyunbound.com

Not all suggestions can be used, but all are deeply appreciated.

What they've said about other Editors Conferences:

"Fascinating — and fun!"

"An intellectual adrenaline rush."

"The best conference I've ever attended."

"Great speakers, great company, great parties, great food. Simply the best!"

October 20–22, 2006
at the
New Frontier Hotel
Las Vegas, Nevada

Our editors throw one heck of a party, and this year it's in Las Vegas, the entertainment capital of the world. Don't wait — secure your spot today! Use the form below, or call toll-free during regular West Coast business hours:

1-800-854-6991

Yes! Sign me up for a weekend of fun with editors and friends of Liberty.

Register my party of ____ person(s) for the conference.

(Please list names of attendees other than yourself on back of this form.)

I enclose a check payable to Liberty for \$195 per person — the special Early Bird rate. (After August 1, please enclose \$225 per person.)

Please charge my: Visa MasterCard Discover

_____ card number _____ exp date

_____ signature

_____ name

_____ address

_____ city _____ state _____ zip

_____ phone number

_____ email address (never sold — used only to send you breaking conference news!)

Cancellations must be received in writing **no later than September 15, 2006** for a refund. Cancellations received after this date will not be refunded, but the amount paid may be applied toward any future Editors Conference that may be held.

Send to: Liberty, Dept. C, P.O. Box 1181, Port Townsend, WA 98368

which means businesses will increase their output, which of course means their need for labor grows to meet the supply. There is ample evidence supporting this argument — immigration does not, in fact, depress wages.

What if the number of immigrants doubles? Or triples? What if it increases ten- or twentyfold? The same argument applies, and again, there is ample supporting evidence. One, whenever we import products, we've effectively imported labor, and despite the anguished cries from every industry that faces foreign competition, imports aren't depressing our average wages. (Quite the contrary, in fact.) Two, domestic industries that can profitably utilize immigrant labor move to (or expand in) areas with large immigrant populations. Native workers may see their options change (and who wants to have to deal with that?), but there will still be options — the pie continues to grow, in both absolute and relative terms.

The other group of problems — those caused by the welfare state — are more intractable. Ideally, we dismantle the welfare state, have a beer, and call it a day. What if we fail to *completely* dismantle it before sundown? I still think we should open our borders to everyone who a) hasn't committed any non-consensual acts that would in this country be felonies, and b) swears (in any language) to uphold the U.S. Constitution. I can't offer any evidence that this wouldn't lead to economic turmoil, but I don't *think* it would. For one thing, the overwhelming majority of immigrants I've met have been much harder working and more self-sufficient than the average native-born U.S. citizen. Is this because INS does a stellar job winnowing out the dross of the applicants? Please. More likely it's because the land of opportunity beckons most enticingly to the most ambitious. Moreover, if a huge influx of immigrants begins to disrupt a local economy, that locality will tend to become less accommodating and hence less attractive to future immigrants, who will search out greener pastures.

Perhaps I'm wrong. My experiences with immigrants may be atypical. An open-border policy may precipitate a surge of immigrants eager to live on the dole in the land of milk and

honey. But right now, we're telling millions of people — living, breathing, dreaming, hard-working human beings — that because they weren't born here, and because *we* can't control *our* democratic institutions, *they* must continue to endure poverty and oppression. And no perhaps on this one — that's *wrong*.

— Mark Rand

Body count — Consider the number 12.

That is the ratio of the Iraqi population (25 million) to the U.S. population (300 million) at the start of the war.

Why is that important? Because, depending on one's purposes, it provides the factor by which one should multiply Iraqi deaths, like those at Abu Ghraib, at Haditha, at Fallujah, etc. to accurately convey the effect.

If one is looking to cast moral blame, the exact number of deaths is a reasonable thing to look at. Thirty thousand Iraqi civilian deaths, says our president. In the moral calculus, that's still just 30,000.

But in terms of the effect — of Iraqis who have lost loved ones, had friends caught in crossfire, had acquaintances tortured by American forces, etc. — better to look at the percentages of the population. Better to multiply by twelve.

So let's take 30,000 civilian deaths. If that sort of thing happened in America, it would amount to an invading power — "We're from the EU, and we're here to help you" — inadvertently killing (collateral damage) 360,000 Americans on American soil. Six times more than the number of Americans who died in Vietnam (over a much longer time period). More than a hundred times those who died on 9/11, which was sufficient to push so many Americans into supporting an attack. And if the president is wrong — hard to believe that a president of the United States could lie to his citizens during a war! — and the estimates of 100,000 made by many others are correct, then the number to compare to is 1.2 million Americans dead: twice the number of Americans killed in the bloodiest American conflict, the Civil War.

I think it's numbers like this that tell the true story of this

News You May Have Missed

Nothing Here to Worry About, New Yorkers Agree

NEW YORK — Amid the uproar surrounding the decision by Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff to cut antiterrorism funds to New York City by 40% on the grounds that there are no important monuments in New York to protect, a survey finds that many people in the city agree with Chertoff. "He is good man," said Abdul Ali Akbar, 28, who said he was a student currently studying both photography and chemistry. "No monuments here, none, none," he insisted. When asked about the Brooklyn Bridge, which he was photographing from numerous angles when a reporter approached him, he remarked, somewhat cryptically, "No, no, I am telling you, no monuments, or soon, soon."

On Liberty Island in New York Harbor, Starkrav Ingmad, 37, a bearded Kravtsov-born artist dressed in a colorful camouflage outfit who was busy making sketches and elaborate diagrams, was asked whether Chertoff's assertion might be contradicted by the famous sight looming before him. "Statue?" he said. "What statue?" Chertoff, he added, "makes a very good point, Allah willing."

Meanwhile, Homeland Security officials defended the simultaneous increase of antiterror funds for places like Nebraska and Kansas, citing the grave danger posed by Islamic fundamentalists "determined to attack our nation's vital reserves of empty space."

But after New York politicians of both parties angrily protested the decision, the Bush administration finally relented, earmarking \$423 million in federal funding for the city to erect suitable monuments worth protecting, such as 200-foot-high nude marble statues of Michael Chertoff, Harriet Miers, L. Paul Bremer, and George W. Bush, to be placed in the middle of Central Park, plus an additional \$13.8 billion to give them the 24-hour protection they would need from what the Department of Homeland Security estimates as 7.9 million potential terrorists residing in New York City who would be constantly attempting to blow them up. — Eric Kenning

war and its aftermath: a war of terror continually fueled by the victims of our intervention, a war that will never end.

What would *you* do if over a million of your countrymen were killed by outside forces, even if they came saying they wanted to help?
— Ross Levatter

What War? — A newspaper columnist in my hometown summed up the social effect of the Iraq occupation in an interview with a soldier who had just returned. This soldier reported that none of his friends and acquaintances seemed interested in what he had seen and done, or what he thought about those things. It was not that they didn't support the occupation; he expected that some wouldn't. But he wasn't finding opposition. He was finding indifference.

I see some of myself in those people, and am not particularly happy about it. There was a time when I thought a lot about the impending war. I opposed it. I made my opposition known in the public prints and spoke at a public meeting against it, months before it was begun. I wrote about it afterward. I read several books on it. Now I find myself in the position of this man's friends.

I saw the headlines about the killing of civilians at Haditha, allegedly by U.S. Marines. Yeah, I thought, this is the sort of thing occupying forces do. I turned on the car radio to hear right-wing populist Michael Savage stating the opposite assumption: that the good American Marines would not do that. Savage was suggesting that the dead Iraqi civilians videotaped by the perfidious Sunnis were probably shot after they died, to make it look as if the Marines had done it. And I thought, naw, they probably did it. But I didn't know, and Savage didn't either. He was outraging an audience and I was driving down a road, and we were both fueled by our assumptions.

What would it take to really know, and what difference would it make? I think: a lot, and none. Would I change my view of the occupation if I could see that Savage was right? No. Would Savage, in the same position, change his? No.

— Bruce Ramsey

To be perfectly frank — It's been a rough year for Jacques Chirac, president of France. The French public spurned his pleas to ratify the EU Constitution, his unemployment reforms went up in smoke, and in poor Parisian suburbs more than a few Peugeots went up in flames. Also, his hand-picked prime minister, Dominique de Villepin, is accused of ordering secret investigations on chief political rival Nicholas Sarkozy; and, though as president, Chirac is immune to prosecution, his dealings as mayor of Paris could land him in prison once he is out of office.

But Chirac has a brilliant idea for raising both himself and

his country out of the political gutter, a solution so elegant only government could have thought of it. He will cause to be built . . . a search engine.

Never mind that the funding is minuscule compared to the amounts Google and Yahoo! can call on. Never mind that the engine, Quaero (Latin for "I search"), will already be obsolete the day it goes live. What's important is that it's French! state-funded! technology!

With a combination like that, what can go wrong?

— Andrew Ferguson

A bodyguard of lies — Nestled among news about Pittsburgh Councilwoman Twanda Carlisle giving \$28,795 in tax money to a family friend for what was basically a cut-and-paste "health study," the ongoing public anger across

Pennsylvania about the post-midnight 16% to 54% legislative pay grab in Harrisburg, and news that FBI agents found \$90,000 in cash hidden in U.S. Rep. William Jefferson's freezer, comes the publication of "Good and Bad Government: The Ideals and Betrayals of Government," a new book by Geoff Mulgan.

Summarizing his long look backward, Mulgan, a former senior adviser to Tony Blair, writes that he found consistent vices in government over many thousands of years. He quotes the reply from Russian historian Nikolai Karamzin, when asked to

sum up the business of government in a word. "Voruiut," replied Karamzin ("They steal").

What's "timeless" across the ages, contended Karamzin, is that "bureaucrats over the millennia have proved equally adept at manipulating public power for their own ends."

What's equally timeless is that politicians have proved to be similarly adept in attempting to manipulate the truth for their own ends. "In wartime," stated Winston Churchill during World War II, "truth is so precious that she must be attended by a bodyguard of lies."

The idea is that strategic deception and lying play a key role in safeguarding military operations, i.e., loose lips sink ships.

Nonetheless, time and again, we've seen that bad policies can also sink ships, and that politicians see the truth about their blunders in military actions as so damning that it "must be attended by a bodyguard of lies."

In wartime, governments lie sometimes to bury information that could "rouse negative public opinion," and "sometimes to save lives and sometimes to make the killing easier," writes Thomas R. Lansner, adjunct associate professor of international affairs at Columbia. "Imputing the literally diabolical to one's nemesis allows moral justification and sometimes



SHCHAMBERS

spiritual comfort for those who will be called upon to kill, as well as for those in whose name killing will be done."

In a moral crusade, in short, we're painted as "The Great Satan" and they're the "Axis of Evil." The job of the spinmasters at the top, on both sides, is to manufacture the public's consent. In the offices of central planning, the notion that the public should receive complete and candid information to evaluate a war and employ their democratic rights to change policies if a conflict has been misrepresented or mismanaged is seen as both menacing and useless.

"For one school of thought, none of this matters much," Mulgan writes in a recent issue of *The Spectator*. "According to this view, government is just a sideshow to real life in the age of iPod and global markets, a soap opera that is occasionally entertaining and often exasperating, but of limited significance."

"Living in an individualistic age, we prefer to ascribe our successes to our own virtues, not to the actions of bureaucrats and politicians."

The evidence suggests that this stance of standing apart is profoundly mistaken. It matters when our tax dollars are being squandered by a city council; it matters when politicians mismanage health care, education, and war; and it matters when a congressman has more hundred-dollar bills than ice cubes in his freezer.

Rep. Jefferson (D-La.), caught on videotape in a Ritz-Carlton accepting \$100,000 in \$100 bills from an FBI informant, allegedly planned to use the money to bribe a top-ranking Nigerian government official in order to grease the skids of a business deal from which Jefferson's children would get a cut of the revenues.

The serial numbers on the cash in the freezer, found wrapped in foil in plastic food containers in packs of \$10,000, reportedly match the serial numbers of the bills supplied in a briefcase to Rep. Jefferson by the FBI at the hotel.

Jefferson's lawyer, Robert Trout, contends that the videotape and cold cash are just "part of a public relations agenda and an attempt to embarrass the congressman."

What doesn't work to fix any of the above is apathy and detachment, Mulgan maintains. "Democracy," he writes, "has decisively enhanced the virtues of government and constrained the vices by making governments more afraid of citizens than vice versa."

Warning of the dangers of public passivity, Mulgan quotes French philosopher and economist Bertrand de Jouvenel: "A society of sheep must in time beget a government of wolves."

— Ralph R. Reiland

A Pirate's life — David Maraniss (author of bios of Clinton, Gore, and Vince Lombardi, among others) was on the radio the other day promoting his new book "Clemente." The interview brought up the issue of humanitarianism, and its ability to obliterate everything else from the consciousness of Americans.

If you're not familiar with him, Roberto Clemente was one of baseball's first Latin superstars. Playing in small-market Pittsburgh on some bad Pirate teams, Clemente was pretty much ignored nationally until the Bucs won the pennant and World Series in 1960. Although he hit safely in all seven games of the series and was probably the best player on the team, the series is remembered for only three things; Pirate player Bill Mazeroski's last inning homer to win Game 7; a bad-hop,

double-play grounder that hit Yankee shortstop Tony Kubek in the throat, sparking a rally that gave Maz his big chance later on; and the Yankees' utter demolition of the Pirates in the three games they won: 10-0, 12-0, and 16-3.

Clemente went on to win four batting titles and an MVP in the '60s, yet still played in the shadow of Mays, Aaron, and Frank Robinson. And properly so. As great as Clemente was, those three players were better. When fans got around to mentioning Clemente, it would be either because of his unbelievable throwing ability (he had, arguably, the best outfield arm in major league history) or because of his being one of the game's biggest hypochondriacs.

Finally, in 1971, again on the national stage, Clemente received his due. He put on one of the greatest World Series performances ever, fielding spectacularly and again hitting safely in all seven games to lead the Pirates to another World Championship. He was chosen the Series MVP. He'd go on to have another fine season in 1972, finishing the year with exactly 3,000 hits for his career.

On Dec. 31, 1972, Clemente was killed in a plane crash on a "mercy mission" for the Managua earthquake victims. His body was never recovered from the ocean.

Back to the radio interview. I'd say that 25 of the 30 minutes were spent on Clemente's humanitarian efforts, which as far as the interview was concerned, consisted chiefly of boarding a criminally overloaded plane with a drowsy pilot and crashing and dying. This is undoubtedly tragic and I give Clemente all the credit in the world for trying to help. He appears to have enjoyed doing work for charity. And it should be pointed out that for his efforts he's held in great reverence throughout Latin America (he was from Puerto Rico). Still, it's always disturbed me that this tragedy now defines his life even in the United States, and his stellar Hall-of-Fame baseball career is all but forgotten.

Let's face it, it's only because he was a baseball superstar that his "humanitarian" efforts are remembered at all. I dunno, maybe he'd prefer being remembered only for his final attempt at good works. But it's as though his accidental death had assigned him a new job title . . . "humanitarian." And erased "baseball player" from his resume.

— Carl Isackson

Vote FCSLP! — Richard Kostelanetz ("Ain't that America," *Reflections*, April) asked why the Libertarian Party isn't doing better if, as James Carville said on talk radio, most Americans describe themselves as "socially liberal and economically conservative."

The months that followed brought examples of how the media rarely associate that common political posture with being libertarian. The May *Atlantic Monthly* had an article about Mark Warner, the Democratic former governor of Virginia and possible presidential candidate. It called him "a fiscal conservative, and a social-issues libertarian," as if "libertarian" did not also describe a fiscal conservative! The *Atlantic's* June cover story described some "suburban Republican women" as "fiscally conservative and socially liberal."

Just today, a Houston public radio (KUHF) report on the memorial service for Lloyd Bentsen, 1988 Democratic vice-presidential candidate, lauded him as a politician "who united social liberalism and fiscal conservatism."

In the June *Reason*, a book review referred to being "fiscally conservative and socially liberal" as "truly libertarian."

How many voters realize that? I seriously suggest that the Libertarian Party could immediately double its vote count by changing its name to the Fiscally Conservative and Socially Liberal Party.

— Thomas Giesberg

The election of 666 — In the June 6 election, voters in San Diego's suburban North County went to the polls to replace Randy ("Duke") Cunningham, the Republican congressman who recently went to jail for taking bribes. It's a Republican district, but the Democratic nominee, one Francine Busby, a school board member who looks exactly like her name, got very far by campaigning against the corruption of the Republicans. She also got a lot of national Democratic money and other campaign help, since her district was the Democrats' no. 1 target in the spring elections.

Her opponent, a middle-of-the-road Republican named Brian Bilbray, ran against illegal immigration and succeeded, with strong assistance from the inane Ms. Busby, in putting her on the bad side of that issue. He ran ads showing a speech in which she ranted against the innocuous congressional effort to make English the country's official language. He made a good case that she was in favor of "amnesty." And then the disaster really happened. Someone in a friendly crowd asked Busby (in Spanish), how he could help her out. "I want to help," he said, "but I don't have papers." This remark having been translated, Busby replied, "Everybody can help, yeah, absolutely, you can all help. You don't need papers for voting, you don't need to be a registered voter to help."

Very unfortunately for Busby, her comment was recorded and played on the radio, and she started issuing statements saying that her tongue had slipped and she had never meant to encourage electoral participation by anyone who is in America illegally, that she just wanted to turn out people who are legally eligible to vote, or perhaps just underage . . .

It didn't work. Busby lost, 44% to 49%. She thinks she'll win when she faces Bilbray in the regular election in November, but I don't think so. Bilbray may have gotten only 49%, but the rest of the vote went largely to a candidate who made opposition to illegal immigration his main, perhaps his sole, political cause. His votes aren't going to Busby.

What does this mean for libertarians? Of course, it's yet another sign, if you can read the signs, that open borders are popular with very few people in America, that even the Democratic Party runs away from

the idea, once it's publicly forced to face the consequences. Libertarians — at least the minority of libertarians who favor open borders — also need to face those consequences. If everybody in the world has the right to cross the border and take up residence in America, then everybody in the world will have the right to vote in America, too. And these mass, low-income, welfare-state voters won't be electing libertarians. They will be the long arm of big government.

It's sadly worth noting that in the Busby-Bilbray race, a wasteland where neither charisma nor even good feeling gathered around the major party candidates, the Libertarian still got only 2%.

— Stephen Cox

The Cultural Revolution in Chapel Hill

— Forty years ago, state-supported bullies in China publicly humiliated dissenters by having them wear signs around their necks expressing shame for their "incorrect thoughts." Although China remained Communist, the government eventually apologized to the victims.

These methods, long since rejected as barbaric in China,

News You May Have Missed

Bush Scores Goose Egg in New Polls

WASHINGTON — President Bush's job approval rating has dropped to zero, an all-time low, according to new polls, which found that his last enthusiastic unindicted supporter, former FEMA director Michael Brown, has suddenly changed his mind.

Brown had given Bush a ringing endorsement as recently as last week, when he was begging for spare change just outside the White House grounds and Bush, out riding his bike for the afternoon, ran into him. After panting Secret Service agents assigned to follow the president on foot and extricate him from any quagmires he might steer himself into disentangled both men from the twisted bicycle spokes and handlebars, Bush slipped a \$20 bill into Brown's paper cup, which prompted Brown to say, "Bushie, you're doing a heckuva job."

But Brown said he had second thoughts when he got home and found that the twenty had a portrait of Karl Rove instead of Andrew Jackson on it. Investigators believe that it was one of the new bills issued by Halliburton, which was recently given a contract by the White House to print its own money.

Asked at a press briefing about the incident, White House spokesman Tony Snow said that given the fact that Beijing now owns the U.S. Treasury, "Michael Brown is lucky that the \$20 bill didn't have a picture of President Hu, of the Peo-

ple's Republic of China, on it instead."

Experts say that the recent erosion of the president's conservative base may be even more drastic than previously recognized, since the president himself no longer expresses approval of his own performance, confusedly asking a pollster who called at 8:15 p.m., just before his bedtime, whether Zogby would do anything for attention-deficit disorder and whether his new prescription-drug plan would cover it.

Administration officials have denied rumors that if the president's standing in the polls falls any lower, to below zero (this can happen when annoyed respondents force polltakers to eat their data), his job would be outsourced to someone who would be able to perform it more competently, and for less money. But in Bombay, India, Bahjaree Ramandra, a 20-year-old customer service representative for an American cellphone company, said that she would be "more than happy" to serve as the new American president "for, let's start with a ballpark figure, around let's say \$6.85 an hour." She stressed that she spoke English fluently, having studied it for months, and that she understood this would now be a requirement for the position. She added that she was also used to getting angry, threatening phone calls all day and telling people to please calm down, so, she said, "I'm sure I can handle the neoconservatives." — Eric Kenning

are now standard practice in the government schools of Chapel Hill, N.C. During a mandatory workshop on diversity, teachers and staff take a survey of 26 questions asking their responses to situations involving affirmative action and other issues. When the results are tallied, the organizers put signs around the necks of each participant showing a numerical score. The organizers then line them up from highest to lowest. Of course, those whose answers are deemed incorrect are made to feel as uncomfortable as possible.

The man responsible for this exercise is Glenn Singleton of the Pacific Educational Group. His "courageous conversations" program is spreading rapidly. In addition to Chapel Hill, the profit centers of Singleton's expanding diversity empire include the Cherry Creek school district in Colorado (which is paying his firm six figures), Bellevue Community College in Washington, and many others.

This is all extremely depressing for people who value education and academic freedom. The worst part of it, however, is the groveling readiness of so many faculty to subject themselves to public degradation under the abusive eyes of Singleton's associates. Meanwhile, the government schools and colleges that are wasting funds and time on this kind of nonsense continue to dumb down standards and preside over the tyranny of low expectations for all students, black and white.

— David Beito

Always bet on red — The Democrats are selling global warming pretty hard this summer. Not only is Al Gore flying his entourage around the world in CO₂-belching private jets, but Barbra Streisand is considering going back on the road to make the case for burning less petroleum.

I'm not certain that I believe their dire predictions. Pardon my lack of faith, but leftists have proved to be very unreliable prophets. Not only were they saying the superiority of Marxism would make the Soviet Union an economic superpower, they have been quite unreliable at predicting elections for the last decade. If I remember, they all were pretty damn certain that Gore would kick Bush's ass at the polls, and then they were sure that Bush would be a one-term president. Demo-

crats are already so certain of their prognosticating that they're making congressional plans for 2007.

Me, I'm taking bets. I'm going to channel all this unwarranted optimism into big profits for myself. I guarantee that on the morning of November 8th, leftist bloggers will be sitting at their desks, still staring at the results in disbelief. And by that afternoon, they'll have concocted some outlandish conspiracy theory about how the election was stolen from them . . . *again!*

— Tim Slagle

Incumbent upon them — Several cities and states have passed or are considering "clean money" campaign finance reforms. Portland, Ore., passed such a law for its city council campaigns. Under this law, anyone who collects signatures and \$5 contributions from 1,000 people is eligible for \$150,000 in public funds to run for the city council. If an opponent who relies on private funds spends more than \$150,000, then the public funds are increased to match.

The law received its first test in the May primary election. Four candidates turned in signatures, including the incumbent who wrote the law. While all were given money, a close look at the petitions revealed that, on two of the petitions, many of the signatures appeared to be faked: the same handwriting was used for many names, people whose names were on the petitions say they never signed them, etc. At least one of the candidates was ordered to repay the money (but probably does not have much to repay).

The clean money law was supposed to bring new faces into politics. But that did not happen. Two incumbents were up for reelection, one of whom chose to rely on private donations. Both won.

As Portland blogger Jack Bogdanski points out, "You can't beat an incumbent without outspending him or her. And under the new system, you will never be able to do that." If the challenger takes public money, he can never do better than match the incumbent's funds. If the challenger relies on private money, an incumbent will always be able to get enough public money to match the challenger's campaign. So "clean money" is really just another incumbent protection scheme.

— Randal O'Toole

Any color you like — Recently, Superior Court Judge Robert Freedman suspended the California high school exit exam, holding that withholding diplomas somehow violated the rights of those who flunked the test. Here is the ideology of compassion in action: because we feel sorry for those who fail, we desire to cover up that failure by handing out diplomas to everyone. In our fantasy compassion world, all children are winners, so all must have prizes. And although a higher court has stayed Judge Freedman's order, it seems likely that the compassion ideologues will win eventually.

The free market may offer a solution. One of the purposes for issuing

continued on page 31

I THINK TINY ELVES HAVE BEEN
TINKERING WITH MICHAEL'S BELIEF SYSTEM.



Word Watch

by Stephen Cox

Of course, the Vatican should never have protested against the “Da Vinci Code” movie. It was silly to give publicity to a thing like that.

Not that the church was spreading any kind of news. A year or so ago, I asked a class of 200 students how many of them had read the book, and 70% raised their hands. I might add that almost all of them were grinning ironically. They understood that the book was junk. When I said, “You know that it’s junk, don’t you?”, almost everyone laughed and applauded. (The others probably hadn’t been listening to the question.) But I’m sure that most of these students have seen the movie by now. All that the Vatican accomplished by denouncing it was to inspire a few extra people into seeing it out of spite.

Yet media coverage of the Vatican protest had its own value and interest. It showed how little you need to know — how few *words* you need to know — to report hot news from the religion front, where “immaculate conception” is always misunderstood as a synonym for “virgin birth,” and “papal infallibility” is almost always interpreted to mean that the pope thinks he can’t take the wrong corridor on his way to dinner.

Most of the “Da Vinci” coverage made the trite point that I just made, the “why do they want to give the movie publicity” point. After the film was released, and the entertainment pages filled with stories of crowds staggering out of theaters in profound states of coma, the point was amended to “why give publicity to such a rotten movie.” (But please visit our Reviews section for Eric Kenning’s somewhat different perspective on this *succès d’ennui*.) The film, it appeared, was without the “excitement” of the novel.

No one seemed to be asking the obvious question: Why were so many people looking for that kind of excitement in the first place? I mean, what’s so mesmerizing about the idea that Jesus had sex with Mary Magdalene? What’s so “exciting” about the alleged “bloodlines” of the Merovingian kings? Clearly, nobody would care about any of that, if it weren’t for the continuing power of the great opposing idea, that Jesus was God, and that his kingdom was, in the most literal sense, what he said it was: “not of this world.”

The excitement of the “Da Vinci” idea comes entirely from its denial of the traditional one. If the traditional conception didn’t continue to occupy the commanding heights of Western culture, the denial wouldn’t stand a chance of commercial success. The fact that the denial takes an adolescent form (the sniggering focus on sex, the tree-house preoccupation with codes and maps and treasures) demonstrates the daunting force of the original — a conception of the world that somehow manages to reduce its opponents to the emotional condition of 3rd-graders.

I didn’t see anyone in the media bothering to interview “Da Vinci” fans to determine why they got so excited over that particular book. The media contented themselves with lamenting the lack of excitement

in the movie. But the real revelation of the intellectual level to which discussions of religion have now devolved appears in a Yahoo News “Top Story”: “Vatican Tries to Break ‘Da Vinci Code.’” Notice that the headline relies on a meaningless pun (“break” = uncode; “break” = destroy). Now read the first sentence of the article: “The Vatican has stepped up its denouncement of the hotly anticipated movie, upgrading its disapproval of the book’s supposedly anti-Christian theories from pulpit-spewing rants to full-blown boycott.”

Obviously, religion news at Yahoo is assigned to the room where they keep the monkeys and the typewriters. “Denouncement” is exactly the kind of “word” that a monkey would type. Because simians don’t read, or at least read much, they wouldn’t encounter the real word, “denunciation”; so they’d have to make up their own, which would, of course, be “denouncement.” And “upgrading its disapproval” is exactly the kind of unvisualizable image that a monkey would create, by jamming together two unrelated words. “I’m sorry, sir; we are unable to upgrade your own ticket, but we’re letting your disapproval sit in first class.” As for “full-blown boycott”: if, like Robert Burns, you claim that your love is “a red, red rose,” I can picture what you mean; but if you tell me that people’s refusal to see a movie is like a flower in full bloom (“full blown”), I’m sorry; I don’t know what I can say to you.

All that stuff is meaningless verbiage, basic illiteracy. But some of the Top Story’s other words do have meaning, and the meaning implies something just as shocking about the type of mentality that is now reporting on religion. To this mentality, what’s shocking is the idea that a traditional institution — in this case, a church — should actually struggle against its adversaries. To this mentality, any reader is assumed to be naturally on the side of those adversaries. They are acquitted in advance: their theories are only “supposedly anti-Christian”; it’s unfair to make them the targets of “pulpit-spewing rants.” Here the monkeys are at work again: we’re supposed to imagine a preacher “ranting” so furiously as to “spew” out his “pulpit.”

Later, we’re told that the movie is “ticking off an entire religion,” as if religion were a choleric geezer who is always getting “ticked off” about something. We are also informed that the “Da Vinci” theories are “viciously opposed by the Church’s teachings,” as if the teachings had been prophetically invented, thousands of years ago, for the single purpose of stomping on a poor little modern book. And no, “viciously” isn’t really just another word for “vigorously”: “viciously” means “in a vicious, immoral, or criminal way.” The church’s “offensive” is “strident” — unlike the offensive of “The Da Vinci Code,” which merely insists that the Catholic church is an institution based wholly on lies, mayhem, and murder.

In popular “intellectual” culture, there are two ways of viewing religion. On the one hand, it’s a lurking psychological threat, a dark survival from the days of old, the scowling old man in the Victorian

mansion that the kids throw stones at, before running away. On the other hand, it's irrelevant; it's the maiden aunt who's always been a little bit "funny." There's no reason to care what she says, or what you say about her to other people.

It must be admitted that Christians have done a lot to get their religion into this fix. For several generations Christian intellectuals have been complaining about the silly, illiterate things that their coreligionists always seem to be saying, and they've been right to complain. Compared to a lot of Christian propaganda, "The Da Vinci Code" is a masterpiece of theological acumen. And the bad stuff just keeps coming. In the 1920s it was Bruce Barton's "The Man Nobody Knows," a book that attained colossal popularity by arguing that Jesus was not an "effeminate," unworldly saint but the world's greatest advertising man. In the 1960s, it was "The Shoes of the Fisherman," both book and movie, the story of a pope who agitates for world peace by selling off the Vatican's art treasures. ("What?" you ask. But it's too silly to explain.) Then it was "The Passover Plot," again both book and movie, presenting the "scholarly" thesis that Jesus planned his crucifixion and his revival afterwards, but something went wrong with the plan. Now it's those awful "Left Behind" books.

None of this is worth any more consideration than the crackpot anti-Christian literature of the 20th century — e.g., D.H. Lawrence's "The Man Who Died" and George Moore's "The Brook Kerith," both stories of a Jesus who survived his crucifixion and lived to repudiate Christianity. But popular silliness has a way of seeping into intellectual culture: witness the curious achievements of Lawrence himself. And there are times when the seepage is all one sees. The popular press is the pipeline. It will let almost anything through.

After the 2004 election, I was interviewed by a nice reporter for a Southern California newspaper who wanted "expert" opinions about religious influences on voting. One of his questions was, "Do you think Christianity can continue to exist in an increasingly democratic society?" I asked him what he meant, imagining that he was working up some theory about the fate of old authorities in this new age of social equality, or something like that.

"Oh," he said, "I mean about how the Bible teaches that in heaven, there are all kinds of different social classes."

"Huh?" I said. "Where does the Bible say that?"

"I'm not sure, but I know it does. It's the part that tells how some people will have more stars in their crowns than other people."

I had to tell him that there is no such passage in the Bible, any more than there's a passage that says that cleanliness is next to godli-

ness. Revelation 12:1 pictures Jesus' mother wearing a crown of stars. Then, getting closer to the probable source, there's an old gospel song, "Will There Be Any Stars in My Crown?" (1897), in which the author, Eliza Hewitt, asks whether she will be remembered for winning any souls ("stars") for Christ. If I remember right, a song in

In the media, "immaculate conception" is misunderstood as a synonym for "virgin birth," and "papal infallibility" is interpreted to mean the pope thinks he can't take the wrong corridor on his way to dinner.

"O Brother Where Art Thou?" (2000) included a similar line: "Who shall wear the starry crown?" There was also a movie, "Stars in My Crown" (1950), that was something about a Christian minister. That's it. Somehow, the echoes of these sources had combined into a theology that the reporter confidently attributed to the Christian church. I could see that he didn't believe me, when I told him it wasn't really Christian.

Whenever I give a literary talk that has anything to do with the New Testament, the first question I am asked is, "What do you think about 'The Da Vinci Code'?" The next question is, "What do you think about the Gospel of Judas?" My answer is, not much. That "gospel" exists in a manuscript dating from the 3rd or the 4th century, although it is possible that the text was composed in the late 2nd century. In any event, it originated several generations after all or almost all of the New Testament was written. It was without apparent influence in antiquity, notably unlike the four standard and canonical gospels, which were composed in the 1st century and accepted by the consensus of local churches. The media ballyhoo about the Gospel of Judas is meant to suggest, however, that it is at least as reliable a witness to early Christianity as anything in the New Testament, and that its discovery is a crucial moment in intellectual history.

Silly? Yup. But those questions about the Gospel of Judas keep coming — because the headlines about its emergence from the obscurity of 1,700 years proclaim that scholars have now "AUTHENTICATED" it. This, to almost anyone, means that the story the document tells is true, or that it was written under circumstances that might make it true. But in this context, that's not what "authenticated" means. It means that the *manuscript* was authenticated as an *ancient* document, not a modern forgery; that scientific tests indicated that the *manuscript* was produced in the 3rd or 4th century — in other words, at about the same distance from Jesus' time that we stand from the time of Sir Isaac Newton.

If you aren't interested in religion, or intellectual history, your reaction to all this will undoubtedly be, "Who cares?" Yet the same silliness can be seen in every field where facts and knowledge are subjected to revision by the monkeys with the typewriters. Is it necessary to mention what happens to the United States Constitution, or the history of the presidency, or the history of the Civil War, or any other war, once the monkeys get hold of it? And junk religion and junk history are the *authentic* relatives of junk science, junk economics, and junk politics. The common element is junk writing. □



"No, anything not specifically prohibited is *not* necessarily okay!"

George Bush: Darling of the Liberals

by Jon Harrison

“President [George W.] Bush has presided over the largest overall increase in federal spending since Lyndon B. Johnson. Even after excluding spending on defense and homeland security, Bush is still the biggest-spending president in 30 years.”¹

Liberal politicians — Howard Dean and John Kerry come immediately to mind — profess disdain for President Bush and his cohorts.* But is this ideologically based contempt justified? Have the actions of the president and his party gone against the liberal grain?

Even to ask such questions may appear bizarre. Yet the record of the past five years shows that they need to be asked — and answered with a resounding “No.” If they care about their liberal agenda, Howard Dean and his friends should be rejoicing, because the president and his party have willingly implemented a very large part of it. Consider:

1) Spending. Total government spending rose by 33% during Bush’s first term. The federal budget as a share of gross domestic product grew from 18.5% on the last day of the Clinton administration to 20.3% at the end of Bush’s first term.²

2) The “No Child Left Behind Act” of 2001, a 670-page federal assault on local control over public schools. This pet project of the Republican president, made into law with the help of Sen. Ted Kennedy and other Democrats, is the direct descendant (technically a re-authorization) of Lyndon Johnson’s Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, a linchpin of the Great Society legislative program.

*For the purposes of this essay the term *liberal* is used to describe the followers of modern, big-government liberalism (i.e., the majority movement in the Democratic Party since Franklin Roosevelt), in distinction to the classical liberalism espoused by the disciples of John Locke, Adam Smith, and Milton Friedman.

3) The Medicare Part D prescription drug benefit. Covering millions of mostly elderly Americans, this new entitlement is projected to cost as much as \$1.2 *trillion* over its first ten years.³ A classic New Deal, Great Society approach to health care, it was originally part of President Clinton’s abortive Health Security Act of 1993. Despite having been proposed by a Democratic president, and rejected even when the Democrats held majorities in both houses of Congress, this new entitlement became law at the urging of President Bush in 2003.

4) The war on drugs. Bush has eagerly continued the bipartisan folly that started in 1914 with the Harrison Act, prohibiting the possession of narcotics for nonmedical purposes. We should note that in 1914 there were an estimated 200,000 users of narcotics in the United States, out of a population of slightly over 90 million. According to information available online from the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, in 1998 there were an estimated 3.3 million “hardcore” users of heroin and cocaine. In other words, there has been a more than *sixteenfold* increase in the number of narcotics users since the beginning of federal regulation, while population during the same period has only tripled. And the sixteenfold increase reflects only those “hardcore” users of heroin and cocaine. Not included in the 3.3 million figure are untold numbers of

casual heroin and cocaine users, methamphetamine users, and marijuana smokers.

That the federal government should continue its campaign to curb the national appetite for drugs, despite the obvious failure of this campaign, and its colossal expense to society, is perhaps understandable from a political point of view. Regrettably, however, Bush has pushed the costs even higher. He has escalated the war on drugs by bringing the U.S. military increasingly to the forefront, combating so-called narco-terrorists, ferreting out smugglers, and harassing growers in Colombia and other places.⁴ Thus are employed the forces that won the battles of Normandy and Iwo Jima. Is this not a solution worse than the problem, a perversion of government power such as only big-government liberalism could conceive? Like his fellow liberals, the president has no compunction about the use of force to impose morality. Which brings us to:

5) The war in Iraq. As we have come to know, President Bush believes that 9/11 justified a crusade to remake the Arab world in our image. To a classical liberal (or, for that matter, a traditional conservative) the proper response to the terror attacks of 2001 was a military operation designed to smash the terrorists and their supporters in their bases in Afghanistan. The president, to his credit, ordered just such an operation (using local forces and a limited U.S. ground presence — sound tactics that worked). But he followed Afghanistan with Iraq. There he has given us a Vietnam in the desert, a folly to match LBJ's foray in the jungle.

Even the rhetoric used to justify the cost in blood and money is the same (just substitute weapons of mass destruction for the domino theory). While there is no evidence that a President Al Gore, lacking the Oedipal baggage of George W. Bush, would have taken us more deeply into Iraq than Bill Clinton did, there can be no doubt that the war in Iraq epitomizes the type of war that world-improving liberal Democrats love to start. It is, indeed, a war that one might believe only a Wilsonian Democrat was capable of starting. But it was not Woodrow Wilson or Lyndon Johnson who ordered the march on Baghdad; it was President Bush, who had previously proclaimed his contempt for "nation-building" in foreign places, only to embark on one of this country's greatest nation-building crusades.

6) NSA spying on American citizens. The mind of a classical liberal recoils at the spectacle of a supposedly strict-constructionist administration asserting its right to spy on Americans without obtaining warrants. To use the government's intelli-

The war in Iraq epitomizes the type of war that world-improving liberal Democrats love to start.

gence-gathering capability in this way is, in a word, Nixonian. Again, we cannot say that Gore would have done the same after 9/11, but the action itself is typical of modern liberalism. Of the four presidents prior to George W. Bush who are known to have indulged in illegal wiretapping, three (FDR, JFK, and

LBJ) were liberal Democrats, while the fourth, Richard Nixon, might just as well have been.⁵ Tellingly, no Democrat opposed the Bush policy (beyond a mild, private expression of doubt from Sen. Jay Rockefeller) until the New York Times made the spying program public.

One could continue this list. Whether Bush is playing with our freedoms⁶ or our money — over \$40 billion spent so far on ineffective Star Wars technology, \$120 billion proposed

Of the four presidents prior to George W. Bush who are known to have indulged in illegal wiretapping, three were liberal Democrats, while the fourth might just as well have been.

for travel to Mars and bases on the moon — he never fails to display his instinctive allegiance to modern liberalism, to his conviction that big (indeed, massive) government has the solution to whatever problems may beset us.

Other people have made the point that the Republican Party under George W. Bush is a party of big government.⁷ Their construct holds that Republicans want a different *kind* of big government from the Democrats. Essentially, this means that Republicans prefer more defense spending and corporate welfare, while Democrats want to expand social programs. But is even this perceived difference between the two parties significant, or for that matter, real? Given the growth in spending and entitlements under the current president (with Republican majorities in both houses of Congress), one cannot help but see the gap between Republicans and Democrats narrowing, almost to the vanishing point. We live today in a country supposedly dominated by conservative (if not quite classically liberal) *principles*, where the *practices* of modern, big-government liberalism prevail. Perhaps this should not surprise us. When great issues divide nations, principles actually mean something. They mean something because the energies of individuals are behind them. But when great issues disappear (the collapse of Soviet power, which carried the Cold War with it) or seem to be settled (the general agreement that government will have a large role in American life), those energies dissipate. Then there is nothing left but the cutting of the cake. How will the national product be divided? How will parties and politicians obtain the money necessary to win and keep power?

These are purely practical matters that shelter behind the rhetoric of policy and principle. It is no cause for astonishment that attempts to reform lobbying or the financing of political campaigns fail again and again, that somehow money always finds new channels to its recipients. The exposure of a Jack Abramoff or a Duke Cunningham changes nothing, *for now only money matters*. Politicians exhaust themselves raising the money they require to win the elections that determine who controls the money that government collects and then distributes, the collection and distribution of money having become government's principal reason for existence. And those who benefit from government largesse are, naturally, quite willing

to return a small portion of the money they receive to the campaign kitty (or the congressman's pocket) in order to keep the game going. Naive idealists, like Sen. John McCain, believe this vicious cycle can be broken by legislative tinkering. They have, repeatedly, been proven wrong.

Money has always meant power. But today money is all-powerful; ideas and principles are mere window-dressing. This is not cynicism. It is the reality of American politics and government in the early 21st century. The 1994 "Contract With America" election was the last to be fought (even partly) over ideas and principles. Since 1994 it has all been about the money.

Only when the money that government dispenses starts to dry up, and government of necessity shrinks, can there be real change. The prospect of national bankruptcy, visible though still distant, *may* one day be enough to cause Congress and the executive to reduce, voluntarily and in a significant way, the flow of money that cycles from government to beneficiary, then back again. But given what we have witnessed since 1994, and especially since 2000, it will probably require actual insolvency to bring an end to the game.

As we look back, how meaningless seems the thunderous Republican applause that greeted Bill Clinton's announcement in 1995 that "the era of big government is over." Certainly President Bush and the Republican leadership in Congress have shown themselves, through their actions if not always their words, to be very comfortable with the liberal status quo. We can truthfully say that George W. Bush is, or at least ought to be, the darling of the liberals. For he has done their work for them. And the Republican Party has followed him every step of the way.

What Is to Be Done?

George W. Bush, the "compassionate conservative" ultimately responsible for most of the errors and follies of the past five years, will soon exit the political scene. We can say with confidence that his policies will one day find their rightful place in the wastebasket of history. But even the most superficial analysis reveals that our problems go deeper than Mr. Bush. We must admit that the root problem is not this president but the American people themselves, together with the political class that they have, with their votes, created.

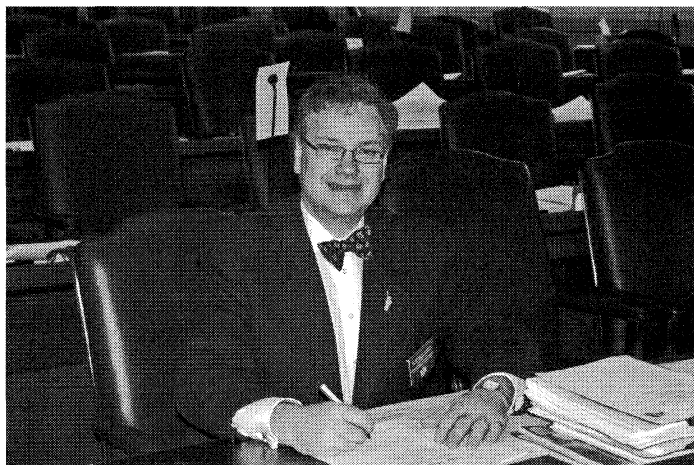
The people as well as the politicians have been corrupted by the culture of big government bequeathed to them by Franklin Roosevelt and Lyndon Johnson. The New Deal-Great Society "consensus" that government is the answer to

virtually all our problems remains largely intact, despite the Republican electoral landslides of 1980, 1984, and 1994. It is difficult to see how either people or politicians can be weaned off the debilitating drug that is modern, big-government liberalism. A financial meltdown, brought on by the cavalier fiscal policies of the federal government, will be the most likely instrument of change.

In the meantime, with an optimism that I confess is somewhat forced, I will offer a couple of very modest proposals.

Don't rush out and vote Republican. The Republicans took the mandates given to them in the 1980s, and again in 1994, and used them, after brief bursts of reform, to reinforce the condition of things as they are. I personally have stopped voting in federal elections. As a wag once said, "Why encourage them?"

Maine State Representative R. Kenneth Lindell



Fighting for liberty in the Maine House of Representatives

- Fighting for free market health insurance reforms
- Fighting for lower taxes
- Fighting big government bureaucracy
- Fighting for property rights
- Voting on principle not politics

Kenneth Lindell needs your help. His opponent in the upcoming election is receiving government campaign financing of up to \$12,000! Lindell has refused to take welfare for politicians to finance his campaign. Please contribute to his campaign by sending a personal or corporate contribution of no more than \$250 with your name, address and profession to:

Lindell for State Rep
PO Box 175
Frankfort, ME 04438

www.Re-electLindell.org

Paid for and authorized by the committee to re-elect Ken Lindell – Robert Hanish, Treasurer.

Think nationally, act locally. At the state, and above all at the local level, possibilities still exist for direct citizen action. Citizens must be encouraged to start taking back power, be-

haps it will come with a crash, like the conclusion of Humpy Dumpty. In any case, we must be ready to pick up the pieces. □

The root problem is not this president but the American people themselves, together with the political class that they have, with their votes, created.

ginning with the public schools. It is scandalous, and tragic, how local control over education has been usurped by education bureaucrats in state capitals and Washington, D.C. Parents and taxpayers, not distant government functionaries, should control the education of our children. As new government education mandates grow ever more expensive, one can only hope that an education revolt akin to the tax revolts of the 1970s and '80s will develop.

This may be no more than tilting at windmills. But it can serve as practice for the day when real power will again be thrust upon the citizenry. Modern, big-government liberalism will someday collapse of its own weight. One hopes that the collapse will be peaceful, like that of the Berlin Wall. Per-

Endnotes

1. Stephen Slivinski, "The Grand Old Spending Party: How Republicans Became Big Spenders," Cato Institute Policy Analysis, No. 543 (May 3, 2005), p. 1.

2. *Ibid.*

3. "Medicare Drug Benefit May Cost 1.2 Trillion," Washington Post (Feb. 9, 2005).

4. There is an extensive literature on the U.S. military's role in the war on drugs. For recent examples see Robert D. Kaplan, "Imperial Grunts" (Random House, 2005) and Peter Dale Scott, "Drugs, Oil, And War" (Rowman & Littlefield, 2003).

5. Why *did* liberal Democrats hate Nixon so passionately? He presided over the consolidation of the Great Society domestic agenda. He eventually extricated us from the war in Vietnam (begun by liberal Democrats, then protested mightily by them). He initiated rapprochement with the Soviets and Chinese Communists. He even imposed national wage and price controls, proclaiming, as he did so, "I am a Keynesian." So what was there for liberal Democrats not to like? Perhaps when they looked at Nixon, and then in the mirror, the resemblance was more than they could bear.

6. Possibly even more chilling than the warrantless spying by the NSA is the trickle-down effect of Bush's proclivity to snoop. We now have local police departments all around the country investigating quite innocuous individuals and groups. On this see "Spies Among Us: Local Police Surveil Ordinary Americans," U.S. News & World Report (May 8, 2006) 40-49. Apparently, according to this article, even vegans may be considered a potential threat to homeland security.

7. Slivinski, pp. 13-14.

Letters, from page 4

Hayek, but much of Alan Ebenstein's argument for blue skies ahead (Reflections, May) is based on factual assertions that appear to be wrong. Contrary to his statement, government numbers are tickled to adjust for product improvements (the so-called "hedonic" adjustment). As a result, inflation arguably is understated (today's computer being so much better than 1996's) and GDP growth is literally marked up (a dollar spent on an improved computer being worth, to the government's statisticians, some amount more than a dollar). Inflation is also understated by contrivances such as the use of "owner equivalent rent" to compute housing costs, which saved the CPI from reflecting the inflationary effects of the housing price bubble. One could go on. As Paul Volcker quipped recently, there's no inflation unless you have to buy something.

Ebenstein's celebration of em-

ployment stats likewise ignores their dubious composition, which relies heavily on government *estimates* of job creation.

The weakest link in his case, however, is his contention that foreigners will continue to accept dollars for goods (presumably he means at a somewhat steady exchange rate). The bearish trend of the dollar against other currencies and commodities, including gold, hardly supports his optimism.

John C. Boland
Baltimore, Md.

Ebenstein responds: I appreciate John C. Boland's comments, but do not agree with them. Revised figures for GDP growth are now available for the first quarter of 2006, and real GDP grew at an annual rate of 5.3%. You can't get skies much bluer than that.

Notwithstanding what Mr. Boland says, many economists, including Alan

Greenspan, believe that current CPI measures understate inflation. In addition to issues with respect to product improvement, the current CPI measure may not adequately reflect increased purchases at discount stores.

Furthermore, imports are a subtraction in the calculation of GDP. As imports to the United States have increased, internal economic growth has actually been higher than reflected in GDP statistics. It is impossible to say with certainty what the future has in store, and it is possible there will be shocks to the economy from external sources. Lacking these, however, the most likely scenario appears to be continued strong economic growth, low inflation, and high employment.

Letters to the editor: Liberty invites readers to comment on articles that have appeared in our pages. 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.

Mail to: Liberty Letters, P.O. Box 1181, Port Townsend, WA 98368. Or send email to:

letters@libertyunbound.com

AdamKnott.com

Libertarian Social Theory

LEGAL SERVICES

Attorney Mark K. Funke

Emphasizing Probate, Estate Planning & Real Estate Law. Licensed in WA.
www.funkelaw.com, P. 206-632-1535

Remembrance of Things Past

by John Hospers

When one great libertarian thinker met another, the conversations were bound to be interesting.

As time threatens to dim the memories of one's experience, it seems more important than ever to retain them in all their original vividness. Some years ago, *Liberty* published an article on my conversations with the novelist and philosopher Ayn Rand during the 1960s ("Conversations with Ayn Rand," July 1990, September 1990), as did *Full Context* and others. But many of our discussions remain (as far as I know) unrecorded.

In view of various misinterpretations of what she said, it seems fitting that I should attempt, under a Proustian title, to summarize some of these conversations as I remember them, so that they can be published, most for the first time, before the remembrance dims.

I met Ayn Rand in the spring of 1960. I attended a talk she gave at Brooklyn College on "Faith and Force: The Destroyers of the Modern World," which was fascinating but left me with a multitude of questions and comments. I asked her, a bit hesitatingly, whether we could have lunch there in the college cafeteria. She said she would give me one hour. Five hours later we were still seated at the table. We discussed everything from animal rights to assisting people in distress. Some of the points we discussed were summarized in my 1990 *Liberty* article, and I will not repeat them here.

A week or two later I was invited to a lecture at the Nathaniel Branden Institute (an organization devoted to disseminating her thought), and then to discussions alone with her at her apartment. We usually met twice a month, and our discussions often went till 4 or 5 a.m.

It would be impossible to give a brief description of our friendship, but little touches, here and there, may evoke its feeling. As she got to know me she became warmer, less skeptical about controversial things I said. She was obviously pleased to see me, as I was her, and when we said goodbye

in the early morning hours she would stand at the elevator and blow me a kiss, saying not "Good night," as anyone else would do, but "Good premises."

In those days, I was teaching philosophy at Brooklyn College, and one night when I came to see her I was carrying the completed manuscript of "Human Conduct," my book on ethics, ready to deposit it the next morning at the Harcourt Brace offices a few blocks away. At 8 a.m. she prepared a breakfast for me (coffee, eggs, and toast); then I walked to Harcourt and left the manuscript in their hands. I was quite ecstatic as I drove to Brooklyn to meet my 10 o'clock class. When the book came out, some months later, she told me that she thought the chapter on Aristotle's ethics was very good. (I suspect it was the only chapter she read; at any rate it was the only one she ever mentioned to me.)

When Ayn's husband Frank O'Connor was ill for some weeks, I took her out several times — once to a Chinese dinner (I doubt that she really enjoyed it much), and once to the Martha Graham dance troupe. Like me, she didn't care for the music but did enjoy the performance. She was very solicitous of Frank, doing her best to ensure his comfort both before and after our dinner outings, but as always she was eager to discuss philosophy. I confess that I couldn't give as much attention to Aristotle on universals as she could, while I was trying to park my car on Manhattan streets.

One of the things we were discussing during that period was the plot of her novel "Atlas Shrugged." Over a period of weeks we discussed the organization of details, the plotting, the characterization, and, increasingly, various aspects of the underlying philosophy, especially as it came out through speeches by Francisco, remarks by Lillian Rearden, and dialogue with Rearden himself. We spent at least three of our long discussion meetings on various aspects of "Atlas." These discussions, exclusively devoted to her most cherished work, cemented good relations between us and paved the way for future, and more controversy-laden, discussions.

I praised the suspense she achieved in her narrative, actually reading aloud to her certain passages, such as the chapter on Wyatt's torch, and she listened intently to my rather spirited reading. I hadn't fully realized that while she received many comments on "Atlas," most were either uncomprehendingly critical (the magazine critics) or uncomprehendingly flattering (some of her fans). "Intelligent comment" was what she wanted, and what I tried to give her. I think, for example, that she appreciated my praising her for using the word "shrug" only once in the entire novel — when referring to the god who gave the book its name. "Here," she said, taking my paperback copy, full of marginal comments, out of my hands and replacing it with a new, inscribed copy, which I have cherished ever since.

Questions of Principle

"Without property rights, no other rights are possible." Rand repeatedly said this, orally and in print. There were occasions when I questioned it, or merely wanted an explication in a specific context. She held that all property should be privately owned; and when I mentioned national parks, which I thought should be enjoyed by everyone who wished to do so, she responded that scenic parks in Europe were often privately owned and more efficiently run than American national parks. I wasn't sure that being "more efficiently run" was the definitive answer to a question of rights, and with her usual energy she agreed enthusiastically, in an endeavor to "set me straight" (it was still early in our acquaintance).

Her argument went in this way: if I have cultivated the land and grown crops on it and erected buildings where there was only wilderness before, the land is mine; if someone invaded it or forcibly took it from me, this would be a violation of my right to property. Without the right of ownership you could make no plans for it, since these plans would be

When we said goodbye in the early morning hours she would stand at the elevator and blow me a kiss, saying not "Good night," as anyone else would do, but "Good premises."

subject to endless violations by others, stifling your creative enterprise at every step. If you lived in the Soviet Union, you would have no property, except perhaps the clothes on your back, because the government "in the name of the people" would take whatever it (the government) wanted to loot. Emi-

nent domain is the forcible taking of private property by government against the wishes of the owners.

Though usually in agreement with the general principles she enunciated, I was always on the lookout for cases that might refute or constitute exceptions to them. I didn't agree

Rand arrived (intuitively or by a process of reasoning) at general principles, and once they were clear in her mind she resisted any attempt to "play around with" them.

with her ideas about property in the case of roads, since roads, like oceans, are not places where people live but simply their means of transit to other places. Still, she said, roads should be privately owned. If you lived in an area where the government wanted to build a road, perhaps to connect two areas resulting in the saving of many miles of travel and countless dollars by motorists, but some "lone holdout" refused, preferring to spend his remaining years on the property he had occupied for decades, "then offer him a price he can't refuse." But if he is not interested in the money as much as he is in his own comfort, then, said Ayn, it would be a violation of his rights to build such a road.

Well, what if it's a mountainous area where only one road can connect points A and B? Then we do without that road, she said; the eminent domain principle remains secure.

I didn't think to ask her at the time whether a motorist driving his car for miles would need to have the permission of every property owner along the route, or whether some other arrangement could be worked out. And it still didn't seem sensible to me that buildings devoted to government functions, such as courthouses, jails, and halls of legislature, should be privately owned, and possibly subject to eviction for nonpayment of rent.

We never got back to just this point in later discussions, but one evening when I was accompanied to Ayn's apartment by my friend and fellow professor at Brooklyn College, Martin Lean, he put the following question to her: suppose you have a rich neighbor who buys all the land around your land so that you have no way of getting out — what defense do you have if he owns all the property? Maybe you could just fly out of it by helicopter or airplane, but then there should be some law or general agreement about how far above his property you may fly. If I'm allowed to fly 20 feet above him, that would be an annoyance, of course; but planes fly much higher than that — are they then violating his property rights? Or suppose that people burrow underground: how far down must they go to avoid a violation? Is there any rule about this, and if so, what is the justification of the rule?

"Of course you shouldn't be surrounded," Ayn said. "You have to have an easement."

"What if he doesn't want to provide one? Is it a voluntary matter?"

"No, he has to provide it. By law."

This seemed quite sensible to me, but Martin was curious.

Wasn't he being forced to give up a piece of property that was his?

But he was the one who did the surrounding, she reminded us. And there was a decisive tone in her voice that told us that the discussion of the matter was ended.

Martin and I met with her together only twice, but certain differences in approach soon emerged. He and I were both suspicious of general principles because of what we believed were exceptions or qualifiers, and we both tended to emphasize these modifications. She, on the other hand, arrived (intuitively or by a process of reasoning) at general principles, and once they were clear in her mind she resisted any attempt to "play around with" them.

This tendency was apparent in discussions of ethics. "Never deceive others" was for her, or so it seemed, an inviolable general rule, though I had no trouble concocting real and imaginary circumstances (such as emergencies) in which it would not apply. She maintained, for example, that the use of torture was never justified: "The tortured will tell you only what you want to hear, so as to end the torture." But was this the reason for condemning torture? Sometimes the torture does not end until the torturer has good evidence that what was exacted is the truth (not just something pleasant for him to hear). And if an enemy knew the location of a secret weapon that, if used, would destroy an entire city, might torture not be justified to save many thousands of lives? If torture is ever justified, wouldn't it be justified in a case like that? But she denied that there were situations in which the rule against torture might be violated. As the most extreme form of coercion, torture was never to be tolerated.

National Defense

The United States was attacked at Pearl Harbor. Japan declared war on us on Dec. 7, 1941, and Germany did so a day or two later. Their forces were prepared and superior in numbers. With the forces we had that December, we would have lost the war. But, I said, we had an ace in the hole: the military draft. In the ensuing months our military came to number more than 10 million men; even so, we almost lost it. In both Atlantic and Pacific theaters we lost battle after battle; but the legal ability to draft these millions was a principal factor in enabling us to be victorious by 1945. I don't think we could have done it, I said, without a military draft. In the end it was the drafted armies of America, storming the Normandy beaches and Okinawa, that triumphed over the drafted armies of Germany and Japan.

"But the draft is immoral," she said. "It is coerced action, it is slavery. You do not build a moral victory on an immoral base. Not even if the enemy employs that same immoral base."

"But then that enemy will win," I said.

"Yes," she said, "and if a nation cannot summon up enough willing soldiers to achieve victory, then that nation does not deserve to win."

I was nonplussed. How can you speak of a nation, or any group, "deserving to win"? Isn't it individuals who deserve or don't de-

serve? Would a citizen of the United States deserve death or enslavement by Nazis just because the Nazis were more prepared and had more troops? I mentioned to her the people I knew who had volunteered in 1939, vastly outnumbered, and were immensely relieved when drafted armies came to stem the tide, because, they said, "We're all in it together now," and our soldiers shouldn't have to be killed or wounded just because "there aren't enough volunteers."

And so we left it. I thought that the most important goal in the war was the defeat of the Axis; she thought that the most important feature, the one that conferred morality on our cause, was the presence of individual choice. How many such choices, I inquired, would we have had if the Nazis had won, and celebrated their victory by killing all the Jews in America? She was Jewish herself, but we never resolved that issue to our mutual satisfaction.

The Problem of Tenure

It's customary for college professors, after some trial years, to receive tenure from their university — that is, they may not be dismissed except for extreme causes such as "gross immorality" or the endangerment of the nation. She did not believe in tenure. A professor, she thought, should be hired or fired on a yearly (or almost yearly) basis. If he has become a discredit to the university, he should be dismissed.

I defended tenure: if I were to go out into the world and teach Randian philosophy, I said to her, especially while it is comparatively unknown and not easy to reconcile with other academic tenets such as liberalism and the welfare state, I would doubtless be dismissed after the first year, and my new views might never receive a hearing. Why should a "review of merit" have to take place every academic year, anyway? It's not like being a clerk in a supermarket, fairly easily dispensed with. Besides, the deans or presidents who confer tenure could well be incompetent, or worse.

Well, like many other conversations, this one was never concluded. I mentioned quite incidentally a newspaper article in which a professor referred to his daughter as a ripening



This previously unpublished photograph of Ayn Rand and Frank O'Connor was taken by Dr. Hospers in Rand's apartment in late 1961.

biological organism who would do well to have some premarital sexual experience. This so shocked Ayn that she declared to me that a man who referred to his daughter in that way should be dismissed even if he did have tenure. This remark, uttered with considerable indignation, sufficed to silence me, at least for that occasion.

A Telephone Conversation

Before I took a vacation trip to my parental home in Iowa, she asked for my phone number there, and I gave it to her. One day as my father and his sister (my aunt, who had lived with him since my mother's death) and I sat at lunch, the phone rang, and it was Ayn. Among the topics she brought up was religion, which we had never discussed before except momentarily the last time she and I had had a discussion in New York. I had told her that I no longer adhered to the Calvinistic beliefs in which I had been brought up in my parents' home. She wanted assurance that I would tell my family members, as she thought I should have done before, that I no longer believed that the entire Bible was divinely inspired, or that God created Adam and Eve, or that Jesus was the son of God (what did "son" mean if not "biological offspring," I had asked her). "If you say it in the right way they will tolerate what you say," she told me.

I replied that this was simply not true; my father didn't particularly care but other family members would be deeply hurt if they thought I had abandoned a belief that was necessary for my salvation. I saw no point in hurting them unnecessarily, and in any case it would be impossible, after years of indoctrination, to change their beliefs. "Just do not lie to them," she said. I made no promises.

Lunch was long over before I returned to the table. It had been an hour-long conversation. My family wondered why I hadn't told her that I would phone her later. They didn't realize that the person I had on the phone was an internationally famous author, a person to whom one did not say no. I told Ayn this after my return to New York. "At least I taught them a lesson," she said. She did not specify what it was that she had taught them, and I did not ask.

Driving across Brooklyn Bridge on that morning when I turned in the manuscript of "Human Conduct," I had said to myself, "What a lucky bastard you turned out to be. From being a country boy in Iowa you get a scholarship to go to Columbia University; then you get to meet Ayn Rand, and even develop a friendship with her. She makes breakfast for you on the same day that you deliver your manuscript, amounting to two years of your life, to a distinguished publisher. What else can you ask for?"

At the end of "Tess of the D'Urbervilles," Thomas Hardy wrote, "The President of the Immortals had had his sport with Tess." Little did I suspect who or what would have his sport with me. I was unaware of any warning signal in Ayn's behavior, though others had mentioned it as a possibility. But of course I should have been aware.

The Final Chapter

As program chairman for the American Society for Aesthetics, I was empowered to select someone outside the membership to give a talk at the annual national convention, which in 1962 was to meet in Boston. I asked Ayn, and she consented at once, with the proviso that I give the commentary that is usual after such talks. Her address was on "Art and Sense of

Life" — the first time, I believe, that she aired this concept publicly. The audience was sympathetic but not entirely comprehending, never having heard the phrase "sense of life" before.

In academia, a commentator on a speech cannot merely say "Yea, hurrah," but is expected to make criticisms or at least suggest points for further development. I asked whether a work of art could have not only a good or a bad sense of

I was unaware of any warning signal in Ayn's behavior, though others had mentioned it as a possibility. But of course I should have been aware.

life, but *more or less* sense of life, and whether expository textbooks could also have it or only works of art, and how one would endeavor to settle arguments about a novel's sense of life — and so on.

To my surprise, there was anger in her voice when she responded. She apparently took criticism from a friend as an insult, convinced that I had betrayed her. Some members thought I had dealt too gently with her, but she was clearly offended and indignant. She would not speak to me afterward, nor would any of her fans who were gathered around her. I tried to start a conversation with her and others, but apparently the word had got round — I was to be snubbed. Finally, lacking any Randians to converse with, I went to my hotel room and tried to digest the situation.

Only a few hours before, Ayn and a few others who had flown in from New York had sat in the restaurant of this Boston hotel and exchanged remarks on the developing Cuban missile crisis. We were all anxious about the prospect of war in a few days' time. "Don't give in to the Soviets," Ayn had said at dinner.

Now all was suddenly changed; there would be no exchanges, on this or any other topic. I had been subjected to the same treatment she had given others. I still couldn't entirely understand why. If there was a difference of opinion, couldn't we as rational human beings have discussed it with each other? Apparently not; and the sense of disappointment and shock, as well as hurt, stayed with me for a long time. Even now I miss her, and deeply regret that we had no more conversations.

I never saw her again.



A few months later, after I had accepted a visiting professorship at UCLA, a phone call came from Nathaniel Branden: "I want you to speak to a mutual friend." And there was Ayn's voice, clearly audible. She wondered how I was, and whether I ever mentioned her philosophy in my classes. I said yes indeed I did, and she seemed pleased. After a few more questions she returned the receiver to Nathan. And that was the last time I heard her voice. □

Of Meat and Myth

by Lawrence W. Reed

How propaganda turns into literature, truth, and progress: a page from American history.

One hundred years ago, a great and enduring myth was born. Muckraking novelist Upton Sinclair wrote a novel entitled “The Jungle” — a tale of greed and abuse that still reverberates as a case against a free economy. Sinclair’s “jungle” was unregulated enterprise; his example was the meat-packing industry; his purpose was government regulation. The culmination of his work was the passage in 1906 of the Meat Inspection Act, enshrined in history, or at least in history *books*, as a sacred cow (excuse the pun) of the interventionist state.

A century later, American schoolchildren are still being taught a simplistic and romanticized version of this history. For many young people, “The Jungle” is required reading in high-school classes, where they are led to believe that unscrupulous capitalists were routinely tainting our meat, and that moral crusader Upton Sinclair rallied the public and forced government to shift from pusillanimous bystander to heroic do-gooder, bravely disciplining the marketplace to protect its millions of victims.

But this is a triumph of myth over reality, of ulterior motives over good intentions. Reading “The Jungle” and assuming it’s a credible news source is like watching “The Blair Witch Project” because you think it’s a documentary.

Given the book’s favorable publicity, it’s not surprising that it has duped a lot of people. Ironically, Sinclair himself, as a founder of the Intercollegiate Socialist Society in 1905, was personally suckered by more than a few intellectual charlatans of his day. One of them was fellow “investigative journalist” Lincoln Steffens, best known for returning from the Soviet Union in 1921 and saying, “I have seen the future, and it works.”¹

In any event, there is much about “The Jungle” that

Americans just don’t learn from conventional history texts.

“The Jungle” was, first and foremost, a novel. As is indicated by the fact that the book originally appeared as a serialization in the socialist journal “Appeal to Reason,” it was intended to be a polemic — a diatribe, if you will — not a well-researched and dispassionate documentary. Sinclair relied heavily both on his own imagination and on the hearsay of others. He did not even pretend that he had actually witnessed the horrendous conditions he ascribed to Chicago packinghouses, nor to have verified them, nor to have derived them from any official records.

Sinclair hoped the book would ignite a powerful socialist movement on behalf of America’s workers. The public’s attention focused instead on his fewer than a dozen pages of supposed descriptions of unsanitary conditions in the meat-packing plants. “I aimed at the public’s heart,” he later wrote, “and by accident I hit it in the stomach.”²

Though his novelized and sensational accusations prompted congressional investigations of the industry, the investigators themselves expressed skepticism about Sinclair’s integrity and credibility as a source of information. In July 1906, President Theodore Roosevelt stated his opinion of Sinclair in a letter to journalist William Allen White: “I have an utter contempt for him. He is hysterical, unbalanced,

and untruthful. Three-fourths of the things he said were absolute falsehoods. For some of the remainder there was only a basis of truth."³

Sinclair's fellow writer and philosophical intimate, Jack London, wrote this announcement of "The Jungle," a promo that was approved by Sinclair himself:

Dear Comrades: . . . The book we have been waiting for these many years! It will open countless ears that have been deaf to Socialism. It will make thousands of converts to our cause. It depicts what our country really is, the home of oppression and injustice, a nightmare of misery, an inferno of suffering, a human hell, a jungle of wild beasts.

And take notice and remember, comrades, this book is straight proletarian. It is written by an intellectual proletarian, for the proletarian. It is to be published by a proletarian publishing house. It is to be read by the proletariat. What "Uncle Tom's Cabin" did for the black slaves "The Jungle" has a large chance to do for the white slaves of today.⁴

The fictitious characters of Sinclair's novel tell of men falling into tanks in meat-packing plants and being ground up with animal parts, then made into "Durham's Pure Leaf Lard." Historian Stewart H. Holbrook writes, "The grunts, the groans, the agonized squeals of animals being butchered, the rivers of blood, the steaming masses of intestines, the various stench . . . were displayed along with the corruption of government inspectors"⁵ and, of course, the callous greed of the ruthless packers.

Most Americans would be surprised to know that government meat inspection did not begin in 1906. The inspectors Holbrook cites as being mentioned in Sinclair's book were among *hundreds* employed by federal, state, and local governments for more than a decade. Indeed, Congressman E.D. Crumpacker of Indiana noted in testimony before the House Agriculture Committee in June 1906 that *not even one* of those officials "ever registered any complaint or [gave] any public information with respect to the manner of the slaughtering or preparation of meat or food products."⁶

To Crumpacker and other contemporary skeptics, "Either the Government officials in Chicago (were) woefully derelict in their duty, or the situation over there (had been) outrageously overstated to the country."⁷ If the packing plants

If the packing plants were as bad as alleged in "The Jungle," surely the government inspectors who never said so must be judged as guilty of neglect as the packers were of abuse.

were as bad as alleged in "The Jungle," surely the government inspectors who never said so must be judged as guilty of neglect as the packers were of abuse.

Some 2 million visitors came to tour the stockyards and packinghouses of Chicago every year. Thousands of people worked in both. Why is it that it took a novel written by an anticapitalist ideologue who spent but a few weeks in the

city to unveil the real conditions to the American public?

All the big Chicago packers combined accounted for less than 50% of the meat products produced in the United States, but few if any charges were ever made against the sanitary conditions of the packinghouses of other cities. If the Chicago packers were guilty of anything like the terribly

Sinclair did not even pretend that he had actually witnessed the horrendous conditions he ascribed to Chicago packinghouses, nor to have verified them, nor to have derived them from any official records.

unsanitary conditions suggested by Sinclair, wouldn't they be foolishly exposing themselves to devastating losses of market share?

In this connection, historians with an ideological axe to grind against the market usually ignore an authoritative 1906 report of the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Animal Husbandry. Its investigators provided a point-by-point refutation of the worst of Sinclair's allegations, some of which they labeled as "willful and deliberate misrepresentations of fact," "atrocious exaggeration," and "not at all characteristic."⁸

Instead, some of these same historians dwell on the Neill-Reynolds Report of the same year because it at least tentatively supported Sinclair. It turns out that neither Neill nor Reynolds had any experience in the meat-packing business and spent a grand total of two and a half weeks in the spring of 1906 investigating and preparing what turned out to be a carelessly written report with predetermined conclusions. Gabriel Kolko, a socialist but nonetheless a historian with a respect for facts, dismisses Sinclair as a propagandist and assails Neill and Reynolds as "two inexperienced Washington bureaucrats who freely admitted they knew nothing"⁹ of the meat-packing process. Their own subsequent testimony revealed that they had gone to Chicago with the intention of finding fault with industry practices so as to get a new inspection law passed.¹⁰

According to the popular myth, there were no government inspectors before Congress acted in response to "The Jungle," and the greedy meat packers fought federal inspection all the way. The truth is that not only did government inspection exist, but meat packers themselves supported it and were in the forefront of the effort to extend it so as to ensnare their smaller, unregulated competitors.

When the sensational accusations of "The Jungle" became worldwide news, foreign purchases of American meat were cut in half and the meat packers looked for new regulations to give their markets a calming sense of security. The only congressional hearings on what ultimately became the Meat Inspection Act of 1906 were held by Congressman James Wadsworth's Agriculture Committee between June 6 and 11. A careful reading of the deliberations of the Wadsworth

Why do the worst get to the top?

In 1947, Friedrich von Hayek posed this question. While he explained the economics, he omitted the psychology of those driven to abuse power. Shortly after, Ayn Rand suggested that producers stop playing host to parasites, but also missed identifying the motive force behind the parasitic need to control.

The psychology can be explained by a megalomania usually rooted in alcohol or other drug addiction. Stalin, Hitler, Mao Zedong, Saddam Hussein and Kim Jong Il have all been such addicts. Coincidence? Hardly.

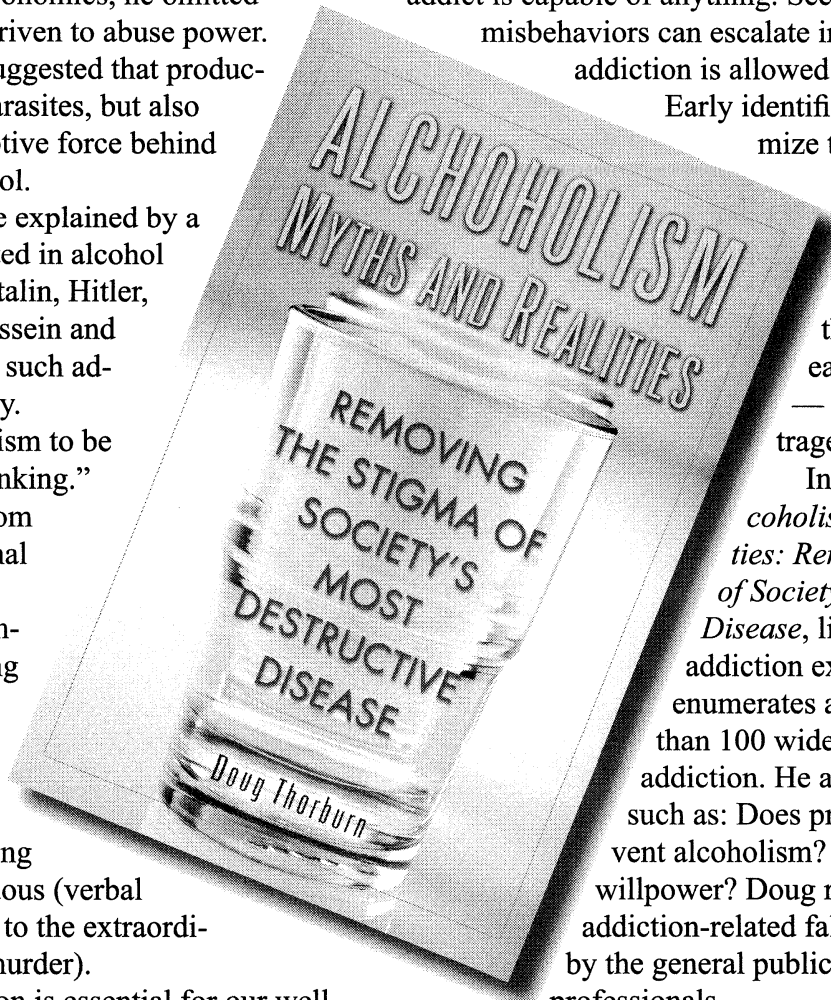
Most consider alcoholism to be a "loss of control over drinking." Yet, this is but one symptom of the disease in its terminal stages. The early stage is characterized by a differential brain chemistry leading the afflicted to develop a god-like sense of self. Resulting misbehaviors include unethical or criminal conduct, ranging from the relatively innocuous (verbal abuse and serial adultery) to the extraordinarily destructive (mass murder).

Understanding addiction is essential for our well-

being, both personally and on a geopolitical scale. The addict is capable of anything. Seemingly innocuous misbehaviors can escalate into tragic ones when addiction is allowed to run unchecked.

Early identification can help minimize the effect it has on our personal and professional lives and, with the right treatment, may get the addict sober far earlier than is common — maybe even before tragedy strikes.

In his latest book, *Alcoholism Myths and Realities: Removing the Stigma of Society's Most Destructive Disease*, libertarian author and addiction expert Doug Thorburn enumerates and dispels more than 100 widespread myths about addiction. He answers questions such as: Does proper parenting prevent alcoholism? Do alcoholics lack willpower? Doug refutes a myriad of addiction-related falsities considered true by the general public and even medical professionals.



Alcoholism Myths and Realities is only \$14.95 at finer bookstores.

For fastest service, call 1-800-482-9424 or visit www.GaltPublishing.com.

Special offer — Get Doug's new book, *Alcoholism Myths and Realities*, along with:

- *Drunks, Drugs & Debts*;
- *How to Spot Hidden Alcoholics*;
- *Get Out of the Way!* — which details how to spot DUIs on the road before it's too late; and
- a two-hour audiotaped presentation on identifying early-stage alcoholism and myths of alcoholism.

All four books and the audiotape, a \$72 value, are yours for **just \$49.95!**

Check out the NEW Thorburn Addiction Report! Discover what Olympian speed-skater Chad Hedrick, Congressman Patrick J. Kennedy and North Korea's despot Kim Jong Il have in common. You can subscribe to future issues at the site FREE! and download the archives.

www.PreventTragedy.com

Yes! Give me the tools to sort reality from myth and *prevent* tragedy.

Great deal. Send me ___ copies of *Alcoholism Myths and Realities* for \$14.95 each. Shipping is FREE!

Best deal! Send me all four of Doug's books, plus his taped presentation, for just \$49.95, with FREE shipping!

I enclose my check or money order payable to Galt Publishing.

Please charge my: Visa MasterCard

Account # _____

Expires _____ Phone # _____

Signature _____

Send my order to:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Send to: Galt Publishing, PO Box 7777,
Northridge, CA 91327. Or fax this coupon to 1-818-363-3111.

committee and the subsequent floor debate leads inexorably to one conclusion: knowing that a new law would allay public fears fanned by "The Jungle," bring smaller rivals under controls, and put a newly laundered government seal of ap-

Meat packers themselves supported government regulation and were in the forefront of the effort to extend it so as to ensnare their smaller, unregulated competitors.

proval on their products, the major meat packers strongly endorsed the proposed act and only quibbled over who should pay for it.

In the end, Americans got a new federal meat inspection law, the big packers got the taxpayers to pick up the entire \$3 million price tag for its implementation, as well as new regulations on the competition, and another myth entered the annals of antimarket dogma.

To his credit, Sinclair actually opposed the law because he saw it for what it really was — a boon for the big meat packers.¹¹ He had been a fool and a sucker who ended up being used by the very industry he hated. But then, there may not have been an industry that he didn't hate.

Sinclair published more than 90 books before he died (at the age of 90) in 1968 — "King Coal," "Oil!," "The Profits of Religion," "The Flivver King," "Money Writes!," "The Moneychangers," "The Goose-Step: A Study of American Education," "The Goslings: A Study of the American Schools," et cetera — but none came anywhere close to the fame of "The Jungle." One ("Dragon's Teeth"), about the Nazi rise to power, earned him a Pulitzer in 1942, but almost all the others were little-noticed and even poorly-written class warfare screeds and shabby "exposés" of one industry or another. Many were commercial flops. Friend and fellow writer Sinclair Lewis took Sinclair to task for his numerous errors in a letter written to him in January 1928:

I did not want to say these unpleasant things, but you have written to me, asking my opinion, and I give it to you, flat. If you would get over two ideas — first that anyone who criticizes you is an evil and capitalist-controlled spy, and second that you have only to spend a few weeks on any subject to become a master of it — you might yet regain your now totally lost position as the leader of American socialistic journalism.¹²

On three occasions, Sinclair's radical socialism led him into electoral politics. Running on the Socialist Party ticket for a congressional seat in New Jersey in 1906, he captured a measly 3% of the vote. He didn't fare much better as the Socialist candidate for governor of California in 1926. In 1934, however, he secured the nomination of the Democratic Party for the California governorship and shook up the political establishment with a program he called EPIC ("End Poverty in California"). With unemployment in excess of 20% and the state seething in discontent, most Californians still couldn't stomach Sinclair's penchant for goofy boondoggles

and snake oil promises. Nonetheless, he garnered a very respectable 38% against the incumbent Republican Frank Merriam.

The EPIC platform is worth a mention, if only to underscore Sinclair's lifelong, unshakeable fascination with crackpot central-planning contrivances. It called for a massive tax increase on corporations and utilities, huge public employment programs (he wanted to put the unemployed to work on farms seized by the state for failure to pay taxes), and the issuance of money-like "scrip" based on goods produced by state-employed workers. He thought the Depression was probably a permanent affliction of capitalism and seemed utterly unaware of the endless state interventions that had brought it on in the first place (see my "Great Myths of the Great Depression" at www.mackinac.org/4013).

Was Upton Sinclair a nincompoop? You decide. This much is clear: early in the 20th century, he cooked up a work of fiction as a device to help in his agitation for an economic system (socialism) that doesn't work and that was already known not to work. For the next six decades he learned little if anything about economics, but he never relented in his support for discredited schemes to put big government in charge of other people's lives.

Myths survive their makers. What you've just read about Sinclair and his myth is not at all "politically correct." But defending the market from historical attack begins with explaining what really happened in our history. Those who persist in the shallow claim that "The Jungle" stands as a compelling indictment of the market should take a look at the history surrounding this honored novel. Upon inspection, there seems to be an unpleasant odor hovering over it. □

A shorter version of this essay was first published in the November 1994 issue of the Foundation for Economic Education's journal, "The Freeman."

Endnotes

1. <http://www.claremont.org/weblog/001462.html>
2. Gabriel Kolko, "The Triumph of Conservatism: A Reinterpretation of American History, 1900–1916" (Quadrangle Books, 1967), p. 103.
3. Roosevelt to William Allen White, July 31, 1906, Elting E. Morison and John M. Blum, eds., "The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt," (Harvard University Press, 1951–54), vol. 5, p. 340.
4. Mark Sullivan, "Our Times: The United States, 1900–1925"; vol. 2: "America Finding Herself" (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1927), p. 473.
5. Stewart H. Holbrook, "The Age of the Moguls" (Doubleday & Company, 1953), pp. 110–111.
6. U.S. House Committee on Agriculture, "Hearings on the So-called 'Beveridge Amendment' to the Agriculture Appropriation Bill," 59th Congress, 1st Session, 1906, p. 194.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 346–350.
9. Kolko, *op. cit.*, p. 105.
10. "Hearings," p. 102.
11. Upton Sinclair, "The Condemned-Meat Industry: A Reply to Mr. J. Ogden Armour," *Everybody's Magazine*, XIV, 1906, pp. 612–613.
12. www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/Jupton.htm

Blue Jeans & Belarus

by Jayant Bhandari

In this former Soviet satellite, the voters know what they want — and they get it, good and hard.

In testimony before the U.S. Senate in January 2005, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice named the nation of Belarus an “outpost of tyranny” along with Iran, North Korea, Cuba, Zimbabwe, and Myanmar — places to which the U.S. must help bring freedom. On another occasion, she called Belarus “the last remaining true dictatorship in the heart of Europe.”

Since achieving its independence in 1991, Belarus has maintained very close relations with Russia. The state retains a stifling control over the economy. Since 1994, President Alexander Lukashenka has held dictatorial power. He won the election of March 19, 2006, an election marred by fraud, with 83% of the votes.

I went to Belarus to witness the aftermath of that event. This is what I saw and heard.



It was almost a foregone conclusion that Lukashenka would win, by hook or by crook. The media in Canada, where I live, had given me the feeling that a revolution was inevitable, and I wanted to see this country, which had stayed in a Soviet-era time capsule, before it was too late. I brought my jeans with me, as I had learned that in Belarus wearing jeans was a nonaggressive way to express opposition.

I grew up in India, where despite a nonviolent facade coercion is a constant feature of life. There I had seen *absolutely everyone* in authority abusing it to the fullest. Most of the industry until not very long ago was under state control. Whether you were in the market for bread or milk, the state could not be avoided. You had to grovel to get anything done, even when you were bleeding to death, sometimes literally. It has taken me years to get over the dreadful dreams at night,

the constant feeling of insecurity, and the clouded mind that refused to see the truth and reality but saw everything from the standpoint of defending and preserving myself, and gaining some self-respect.

Any participation in generating liberty around the world had to be good. But, most importantly, a visit to a totalitarian country offers an extraordinary education in human behavior. Depending on the kind of totalitarianism it suffers, every such society offers a special perspective on this ugliest of human evils.

V for Velarus

According to the western media, Belarus was boiling; people were fighting for democracy and freedom. The country was pervaded by an appearance of brotherhood. TV screens showed countless brave, disciplined youths spending winter nights outside, protesting the regime, in constant terror of the omnipresent and omnipotent KGB. Some said that what was shown in “V for Vendetta” was what Belarus was like. Yet stray thoughts in the corners of my mind told me that I was being caught in rhetoric, refusing to look at the fuller picture, at some of the immutable laws of human nature.

The voices were saying: collective actions in totalitarian societies have different motives from what they seek to present; potency and the state are a contradiction; the more totalitarian

a state is, the more spineless, stupid, mindless, and gullible are its agents; whether it is a democracy or a dictatorship, the state does not exist in isolation from the general population; totalitarianism does not go away with a flip of a switch; the state in whatever form is a reflection of the worldviews of the people: for these reasons political revolutions do not work, and the only hope for something lasting is an *ideological revolution*.

I had met some amazing young people from Belarus while teaching at a camp of the Language of Liberty Institute in Lithuania a couple of years before. The students had great insights about human nature, and an understanding of the

Despite the proud talk, a young person learns that, in such a diseased society, no one gives a damn about anyone else. His conduct is driven by the need to look good rather than to be good.

evils of totalitarianism that people brought up in a free society often lack the ability to comprehend. I developed immense respect for them. I wondered if they represented the general population of Belarus. I meant to find out.

First Impressions

I flew into Minsk on the cold evening of March 26, on an aircraft from Vienna carrying mostly Russian-speaking passengers. The airport was huge and futuristic, like a sophisticated spaceship ready to take off, but the arrival hall was anticlimactic, to say the least: it was dark and devoid of heat. The men in uniform were very different from those smart looking, well-trained officers seen in "V for Vendetta" and other films. They were dull and bored, as you would expect people engaged in mind-dulling bureaucratic work to be. The mystically potent KGB had to be a figment of the imagination of the Western media.

When they looked at my Indian passport and I told them I was a tourist, they had no clue about what to do with me. Why would anybody go to Belarus for something so strange as tourism? In fact, I was not to see any tourist at any point in my visit. One after another, five or six officers looked over my

Keep Belarus Beautiful — Sometimes you see good things in the most unusual places. People everywhere, and especially people in totalitarian countries, tend to lack respect for public property. Yet Belarusians are unusually caring towards the public infrastructure. Quite often, I saw train passengers nicely folding sheets that they had used to sleep on during the night. Once while waiting for a train, I was eating peanuts, and a few scraps of skin fell to the ground. Within no time, an old lady was there with her broom. Quite a few people in Belarus remember where the empty beer bottles and cigarette butts should go. I wonder where this mindset comes from.

passport. They were pacing around, making a show of trying to sort something out. They spoke no English, and I spoke no Russian. Several telephone calls and about an hour later, they allowed me to proceed. Apart from being brain-dead, they were reasonably friendly. No one pointed a gun at me or was even heavy-handed.

Minsk is about 25 miles from the airport. No taxis appeared; only a lone bus waited to take me through the frozen landscape. The whole country was covered in snow; the rivers and lakes were frozen. I saw almost no streetlights or traffic on the road. It was as deserted as the outback of Australia.

The city center created a different impression. Every building was indistinguishable from every other — all products of Stalinist art. The residential buildings were ugly matchbox structures. There were hardly any cars on the roads. Those that were there were in bad shape — most had one or both headlights out. People looked at me wherever I went. I was clearly someone out of the ordinary in Belarus.

National Pride

Belarus has national rivers, national bread, national artists, national animals, national everything. Adding the word "national" adds some kind of mystical value to what Belarusians want to say. Use of the words "Belarus" and "Belarusians" is usually preceded by "our" or "we." If I said that I liked something Belarusian, people often asked with a contemptuous expression if that product did not exist in Canada.

Belarus presents no normal history. Its tourist attractions and parks have statues of Lenin and of indefatigable soldiers who fought during World War II. Immense quantities of concrete and metal have been used to prove this. Belarusians are proud of their army, something that to me has no reason for existence except as an arm of dictatorship. The guns of the Belarusian army, I heard, are world famous. They can fire shots without explosives — a clever mechanical action sends cannon shots tens of miles away.

Because of their pride in having fought the fascists, Stalin is a hero, almost a demigod, for Belarusians. After the war, Germans humbly accepted that their nation did terrible things. Belarusians have not even started that journey. If they talked

Democracy allows society to justify its ugly totalitarian acts.

about "the army," it was projected as a marvel. If they talked about "Lukashenka," the army was the enemy. If they talked abstractly about the free market, they wanted privatization. If they talked concretely about markets, they took pride in Belarusian bread and other state manufactured products. Far too often, I was asked if I found Belarusians special.

Most of the people I met described Americans as idiots. I realized that I should not single Belarusians out for blame for holding views that most of the world holds, including educated Western Europeans; but I found it infuriating that these views were coming from people who were utterly impoverished and weak. I told them that America did not become rich without any reason — there had to be an ideological superiority in that country. Their answer was that material prosperity

was not a reflection of higher human ideals. Most of them, however, would gladly emigrate to the U.S. if they had an opportunity; partly for money, as they confessed, but mostly, it appeared, to enlighten the Americans.

When we talked about world leaders, I found that despite everything, they were very proud of Lukashenka. I heard stories about how the world stood in applause when Lukashenka spoke at some UN meeting. But when I talked favorably about Lukashenka, which I did during my last days there, they said bad things about him.

I was bored and frustrated — not so much for lack of opportunities for distraction, but for the lack of intellectual interaction and challenge. I found it sickening that most discussions proceeded from the sole motive of scoring points.

When I told them I was a tourist, they had no clue about what to do with me. Why would anybody go to Belarus for something so strange as tourism?

Usually, people took positions opposite from mine, then did a turnaround if I agreed to their own point of view. Although a couple of friends provided some sanity, I found in most of my new acquaintances a terrible lack of intellectual honesty, as well as laziness about seeking the truth.

Isolated, I started to become defensive. I started to feel that I had to demonstrate the superiority of Canada and the United States, despite the fact that North America and Belarus were, quite literally, beyond comparison. The marginal utility of staying on in Belarus was close to zero, but my travel arrangements made it hard to leave. So I traveled around, visiting all the major towns and sleeping most nights on the train.

Once I met an old man, a communist fan of Lukashenka. He was so happy that I gave him a patient hearing that he bought me a mega-peg of vodka. Most of the people I met claimed to believe in liberty, but I wondered whether it was liberty that they really wanted. Their obsessive national pride, a pride devoid of essence, was nothing but fodder for a totalitarian state. By the end of my visit, the most respect I had was for that communist old man — he was the least confused.

The Recent Events

I arrived in Minsk soon after the disputed election, but during my stay, I saw no protests; I saw no passion for liberty. I was frustrated to see how ambivalent people could be toward something so fundamental.

This is what I heard about the immediate post-election events. Out of the population of over 10 million, a maximum of 10,000 managed to make it to Minsk city square for a day or two. The popular media did a superb job of making this look out of proportion to the real event.

Among those who attended the protests, as I understood, most were complaining that their lives were not working. It is unlikely that they were asking to take over responsibility for their lives; it is unlikely that they were seeking liberty. Some of them were bored young people, the kind who protest irrespective of what the system is. Quite a few were varying kinds of

power-grabbers, the kind of operators who think they know better about how others should live: socialists, Marxists, communists. Some were apparently paid by the opposition. Some drunks were paid by Lukashenka.

And the truth is that Lukashenka is a popular leader, and would certainly have won, even if he had not manipulated the voting. I spoke with hushed voice about Lukashenka, but the people I talked to found this strange. They openly discussed him with strangers, in public spaces. Not once did I hear anything about the atrocities of the KGB. If the KGB was mentioned at all, it was in generalized terms, with no reference to any sufferer who was known to the people I talked with. I can recount far more experiences of police atrocities in India.

I'm convinced that Lukashenka is an evil, but so what? If, because of western pressure, he leaves the scene, what will happen? Are Belarusians ready for a better leader? Perhaps if he goes they will end up with a worse one. The example of this possibility is in the nation they are closest to: Russia.

People in Belarus think — as people do in poor, totalitarian countries — that the panacea for their problems is some better kind of democracy, some way of looking more western while continuing to demean the West as culturally inferior. Then change can happen, as if by a magic wand. Clearly, it won't. There has to be a revolution in ideas before any fundamental change in politics takes place.

The Fashion Parade

It is my obsession to get to the roots of what makes people and countries either poor or rich. How can some people afford to eat a single meal that costs as much as what other people earn in a year? I do not conform to the fashion of the day; I do not abhor this inequality. But I do want to understand it. I want to understand what it is in the worldviews of those who create abundance that allows them to do so, and what it is in the worldviews of those who create misery, hardship, pain, and suffering that allows them to perform their sinister role.

Belarusians are white, and quite often blond. Some of them look so sleek that on Fifth Avenue in New York they would be unremarkable. But their accommodations are worse than those found in ghettos.

I had a relatively conservative upbringing. I do not think that wearing western clothes is a sign of modernity or a liberal outlook. I do not think that women become modern when they put on close to nothing. This may, instead, be a desperate, almost pathological, plea for affirmation from others — not a sign of liberation at all. I could not understand the need for



"They're demonstrating against the famine, dummy! Don't walk out there eating that ice cream cone!"

such fashionable nakedness when it was freezing in Belarus, even inside the buildings. But as in other Eastern European countries, the streets of Belarus are devoted to the fashion parade. Women try hilariously hard to outdo each other. In dress, as in the nation's politics, cosmetics have taken the place of substance, obscuring the possibility of any increase in real sophistication.

The Belarusian waits for some divine inspiration that will, without effort, lead him to prosperity and fame. The people of this so-called classless society never want to do small things. Individuals compete aggressively simply to look better, spending the little money they have with obscene abandon. They seem intoxicated by western consumerism. Hard work, thrift, wholesome ideas and responsibility, which are the cornerstone of western prosperity, appear to be missing. Lofty talk, the opium of the masses, is what interests them. They meekly follow the West, but at every opportunity demean its achievements.

This paradox is demonstrated when people grow up living by rules, when individualism is subdued. It is in man's nature to express himself creatively, through his hands and his mind. When this way of expression is subdued, as it is in a totalitarian society, it is not destroyed; it shows itself in corrupt forms, and the first is the corruption of the individual. He grows up with a lack of self-confidence; he looks for cues from others. But how can he assert his individuality in this way? If he had gratitude, he would show it for those who taught him. But the weak minds that coercion creates have no capacity for gratitude or humility, only a capacity for arrogance. Despite the proud talk, a young person learns that, in such a diseased society, no one gives a damn about anyone else. His conduct is driven by the need to look good rather than to be good. Generosity and honesty become a farce, with others and even with himself. What you have at the end are muddled minds and a dysfunctional society.

On my last day in Belarus, I was at the state university in Minsk with a bunch of very smart-looking girls. I wanted to know what they thought about gypsies. A few days earlier, I had been warned not to look into the eyes of gypsy women. They are believed to have the power of witches. People are known to have awoken hours after gazing upon those eyes, and found all their money gone. I had not heard such sweepingly racist comments since the time I left India. I asked the girls what they thought about gypsies. They unanimously

The revolution starts here — Many organizations and individuals are doing a superb job of bringing an ideological revolution to Belarus. The Language of Liberty Institute (www.languageofliberty.org) is one such organization. It runs camps to bring together students from former communist countries for English lessons, with an associated aim of imparting a deeper understanding of the free market. One outstanding person associated with this organization is Jaroslav Romanchuk, who is a senior political leader in Belarus. I went to see him in Minsk, and was extremely impressed with how well he was able to preserve his sanity despite the fact that the police had just confiscated his money and computer. He taught me a lesson or two about life.

agreed that gypsy women were witches. That was when I lost my last remnant of respect for Belarusians. They get what they deserve, I thought, and that is Lukashenka.

Alas, what I experienced in Belarus was nothing new to me. In this "last dictatorship in Europe," a person from "the biggest democracy in the world" felt at home.

Democracy and Totalitarianism

Democracy is to the West what Islam is to the Middle East.* In each place, it is taboo for people to challenge their religion. Instead, they will do anything to force-feed it to others.

The GNI per capita of Belarus is \$2,120. Russia's is \$3,210. India's is \$620.[†] The World Bank's GDP ranking shows that some of the poorest countries in the world are not (ex-)communist but democratic.

If Belarus were the first country I had visited after I left India, I would have called it a developed country. It is far less totalitarian than India. Consequently, the people are nicer,

Belarus has national rivers, national bread, national artists, national animals, national everything. Adding the word "national" adds some kind of mystical value to what Belarusians want to say.

friendlier, and much more honest. They are far less superstitious, and far more reliable. Public servants are less heavy-handed and more respectful to the citizens. Public spaces are much better organized than they are in democratic India.

Not only has democracy failed to bring prosperity and freedom to the developing world, it has sustained poverty and maintained the heavy-handed regimes of insecure leaders. Worse, it habitually cloaks the wolf in sheep's clothing, making it difficult to call the democrats "totalitarians," even when they behave as such.

Democracy allows society to justify its ugly totalitarian acts. The West has failed to learn that by forcing democracy, which did not lie in the natural order of the developing countries' growth, it has created many trouble-spots: Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq, and so forth. In many places, after providing an initial catharsis, democracy is attacking liberty with a vengeance: in Iran, in Bolivia, in the rest of the less-developed Americas. And while the media has grown tired of reporting it, immeasurable human tragedies continue to happen under African dictators, who started their journeys as democratically elected leaders.

Interestingly, the western governments have vehemently opposed the recent democratic developments in Palestine. And they have very quietly stopped talking about the need to make Pakistan democratic. In the West, where politicians

*Although repetitive, "Democracy: The God That Failed," by Hans-Hermann Hoppe (Transaction Publishers, 2001), provides an excellent discourse on the flaws of democracy.

[†]GNI per capita 2004, World Development Indicators database, World Bank, July 15, 2005.

have not killed the golden goose, democracy may look benevolent. In poor countries, where the masses are uneducated and superstitious and have grown up with muddled minds, democracies are certain to be led by spineless, insecure, pathetic leaders.

Democracy can be a consequence of liberty, but not vice versa.* Even in a liberated society, democracy has an assertive element of authoritarianism. Those who participate in democracy are groups of special interests, who operate with a clear intention of stealing the fruits of others' efforts by legitimizing theft. The state has an inherent tendency to grow and has everywhere in the world failed to limit itself to maintaining the rule of law.

Challenging the Individual

One day, coming out of a theater in Minsk, I saw a huge, well-lit cube-shaped building. I asked my companion what it was. It was the Stalinist palace of Lukashenka. I joked about the possibility of using Mr. bin Laden's services to take care of it. Of course, symbols are symbols. You can destroy one, and another comes into being. My friend quickly responded that even he would not blow up that building. He had not gone to any of the protest meetings, he said; it was not his fight.

He was correct. The revolution can only take place in the hearts and minds of people. When that happens, you can be sure that the worst of the dictators will vanish in no time.

I never wore my jeans in Belarus. The place turned out to be too distant for me. In a way, my interest in it was academic. I would be dishonest if I said anything else. It wasn't my fight. I don't think it's right for Westerners to get involved in others' internal affairs.

The economy of Belarus is currently growing at about 8% a year. There is no significant civil conflict. The people are in touch with the rest of Europe. Lukashenka makes travel difficult, but he does not stop it. The internet is uncensored. I have no doubt that if the pace of liberalization is artificially hastened, the economy will be hijacked by pseudo-capitalists, as in Russia. That would delay development of a truly free

*Fred McMahon, "First Build the Institutions for Democracy in Iraq," Fraser Institute Forum, May 2003.

Reflections, from page 12

high school diplomas is to convey information to potential employers that a graduate has mastered crucial verbal and quantitative skills at the 12th-grade level. But like any other pricing mechanism or currency, this one can be rendered useless by inflation. The whole reason the exit exam was mandated in the first place is precisely that rampant grade inflation made possession of a high school diploma increasingly less informative about whether a graduate had mastered the core competencies. Stories of students who had graduated yet were unable to read their diplomas were dramatic illustrations of the general problem.

Since the judge, either because he's blinded by compassion or is himself a product of grade-inflated schools, has commanded that all high school graduates get diplomas, I suggest that we color-code the documents.

A red diploma would be given to any student who graduated from high school but couldn't pass the exit exam. It might also be given a different name, perhaps a "certificate of mere

market, but I do not think that there are any shortcuts.

Perhaps most of the growth is taking place because Belarus is making more money from oil, which is becoming more expensive. And perhaps, as I hear, it is becoming increasingly difficult to open a business in Belarus. I do not know whether that is true. But I believe strongly that Western governments should stay out of Belarusian affairs.

Liberty is what the human spirit seeks and is to me the ultimate ideal for every human being. The conscious expression of liberty can be short-circuited by emotional insecurities and cultural conditioning but Western pressure cannot restore the connection. Neither can democracy nor a Western cultural facade. They merely create confusions of ideas and corrupt the process of evolution.

Each of us and each society has to evolve at an individual pace. So far, Western governments have mostly refrained from actively involving themselves in the internal affairs of Belarus, and they are well advised to keep it that way. Any attempt to

Apart from being brain-dead, the officers were reasonably friendly. No one pointed a gun at me or was even heavy-handed.

forcefully hasten the process of democracy in Belarus from outside will only kill the possibility of generating intellectual discourse within that society and maintaining true liberty. An animal that is fed in a zoo loses its capacity to hunt.

If we really want to help Belarus, it can only be through helping individual Belarusians participate in an ideological revolution. This will mean challenging the individual, his beliefs, and his mental constructs. In the end, it will mean challenging the culture of Belarus. But the least we can do is not to support the Belarusians as they try to transfer all blame for their problems onto their government. Alas, this might be too much for the new breed of multiculturalist and politically correct youth of the West. □

course completion." This would inform potential employers that the student has done enough to graduate — mainly, has "passed" enough classes without killing any teachers or burning any schools — but cannot read, write, or compute at the severely minimal level that is required by the existing exam.

Those who graduate and pass the exit exam would be given yellow certificates, which would still be called "diplomas." These would enable employers to tell at a glance that an applicant possessed a certain level of educational attainment. They would have the additional benefit of allowing any student who, despite this attainment, still cannot read his diploma to figure out what it means by simply observing the color code.

Then let the market decide. For some jobs — say, purely manual labor or working in a government bureaucracy — a red diploma might be all an employer would require. For most other jobs, the prospective employer would likely require a yellow one. The difference would show up in the wages paid. (Yellow diploma jobs would obviously pay higher wages.)

continued on page 45

Portland Derailed

by Randal O'Toole

Portland's leaders divert millions of tax dollars from schools and fire departments, spend millions more on jails they can't afford to use, and waste billions on foolish transportation projects. Even the voters are beginning to notice.

For years, my hometown of Portland, Oregon has been held up as a shining example of government planning. The region's urban-growth boundary is creating a denser, more compact community. Light-rail and streetcar lines give people alternatives to driving. Downtown businesses are thriving. City officials, planners, and reporters from all over the world visit Portland to find out how they can improve their cities.

Critics such as myself point out, however, that people don't really want to live in the high-density communities Portland is building. Nor is light rail getting a significant number of commuters off the road; instead, highway congestion is rapidly increasing. And Portland's downtown, like many downtowns across the country, is doing well because of local entrepreneurs, not because of government planning.

It was never very clear that Portland residents solidly supported the region's plans. Planning advocates persuaded voters to create Metro, a powerful regional planning agency, by telling them it would keep Portland from becoming like Los Angeles. But almost as soon as it was created, Metro planners admitted in an internal document that their real goal was to "replicate" Los Angeles in Portland — that is, to make it so congested that some people would stop driving. In fact, Portland's entire planning process was driven by a probably futile goal of reducing per capita driving by 10%.

Polls showed that the region's residents were split about 50–50 over whether the region should "build up" (i.e., increase the density of existing neighborhoods) or "build out" (i.e., spread more low-density development across the landscape). If residents realized that all of the cities, towns, and unincorporated urban areas in Oregon — all the way down to the remote town of Greenhorn, whose official population is zero — covered only about 1% of the state, even fewer would

have been enthusiastic about the growth boundaries.

Although the voters were ambivalent, the region's leaders were not. Mayors, city councilors, county commissioners, editorial writers, and other opinion leaders solidly believed in the region's planning programs. But that consensus is disintegrating in a miasma of sex scandals, embarrassing cost overruns, and growing fiscal crises in Portland's schools, fire and police departments, and other traditional public services.

The story goes back to the mid-1970s, when Portland Mayor Neil Goldschmidt, who was elected on a reform platform, convinced the city council to cancel a planned interstate highway that was going to connect downtown Portland with its eastern suburbs. Federal law at that time allowed cities that cancelled such freeways to use the funds for transit capital improvements instead. But the freeway money would buy far more buses than the region's transit agency, known as Tri-Met, could afford to operate.

The situation called for a transit project with high capital costs, but also with operating costs not significantly greater than buses. Goldschmidt decided on light rail, a sort of updated streetcar. The cost of building the rail line would easily consume all of the freeway dollars (and, as it turned out, much more). In other words, Portland decided to build light rail not because it was efficient but precisely because it was expensive.

For imposing this boondoggle on the city of Portland, Goldschmidt was rewarded by being appointed Secretary of Transportation by President Jimmy Carter — just as Denver's Mayor Peña would later be elevated to the same office for inflicting a massively expensive airport on that city. After Carter left office, Goldschmidt came home and in 1986 was elected governor of Oregon. Though he was popular, he mysteriously left office after one term.

Meanwhile, Portland drew an urban-growth boundary around itself and its suburbs in 1979. About a third of the land inside the boundary was vacant, which was supposed to be enough to allow for two decades of growth. Planners promised to expand the boundary as the land was developed so as not to slow growth.

Oregon's system of urban-growth boundaries around every incorporated city — including Greenhorn — imposed severe burdens on rural landowners who were subjected to increasingly restrictive rules designed to prevent urban sprawl. To prevent "lawyers, doctors, and others not really farming" from becoming "hobby farmers," planners put 95% of the state off limits to home construction unless people owned 160 acres and actually earned \$40,000 to \$80,000 a year farming those acres. While rural residents were outraged by these restrictions of their property rights, they only made up about 30% of the state's residents and their efforts to overturn the rules in the legislature and at the ballot box always failed.

In 1989, a powerful planning advocacy group called 1000 Friends of Oregon decided to take the next step. Portland was growing rapidly, and rather than expand urban-growth boundaries to accommodate the state's rising population, the group promoted a "zero option" policy of keeping the bound-size of lots for new homes to only 6,000 square feet.

The only problem was that few people wanted to live that way. Prices for single-family homes with yards were rapidly rising, but developers told Portland's city council that there was no market for high-density housing. Existing apartments and condominiums had long saturated the demand for dense housing, and while single-family housing prices were rapidly climbing, multi-family rental rates were flat.

Portland solved this problem with a variety of subsidies. Along light-rail lines, property taxes for high-density developments were waived for ten years. In urban renewal districts, tax-increment financing diverted property taxes from schools and other services into subsidies for developers (see "The TIF That Is Eating Portland," July). While cities charged impact fees for low-density development, they made numerous and costly infrastructure improvements for high-density developers free of charge. Other developments received direct grants or were built on formerly public land that had

aries where they were and redeveloping cities and neighborhoods inside the boundaries to higher densities. The group argued that higher densities would reduce people's need to drive and thus actually reduce congestion.

In fact, the group's own numbers showed that every 1% increase in density resulted in much less than a 1% drop in per capita driving, so higher densities would increase congestion. Nevertheless, the group wanted to put all of the region's capital funds into transit, not highways.

By 1993, growth had filled most of the vacant land inside the boundary, and builders reported that the cost of an acre of land suitable for residential use had increased from \$20,000 to nearly \$200,000. They asked the legislature to require Metro to expand the boundary to make room for new development. But Metro, with the help of 1000 Friends, convinced the legislature to allow for increased densities inside the boundary instead.

Metro gave population targets to the two dozen cities and three counties inside Portland's boundary and required them to rezone existing neighborhoods to higher densities to meet those targets. The city councils were mostly happy to do so because they anticipated that higher densities would mean higher tax revenues. Nearly all of the neighborhoods targeted for redevelopment fiercely resisted the rezoning, but only one — which happened to be the neighborhood where I lived at the time — succeeded in preventing it.

Metro planners observed that about two-thirds of the region's residents lived in single-family homes and that the lot size of new homes averaged 9,000 square feet. Planners said their goal was to reduce the share of families who lived in single-family homes to only 60% and to reduce the average

Global Access Telecom — Your Telecom Agency

...is your telecom helper! We are an *independent* telecom agency, representing dozens of telecom carriers, including: ATT/SBC; Access One; Airespring; Allegiance/XO; American Telesis; Ameritech; Bell South; Broadwing; Covad; Cox; Focal; Global Crossing; Global Touch Telecom; Mpower; Pae Tec; Raindance; Telepacific; Verizon; Qwest; and many others. We will help your business choose the most cost-effective solution to whatever your telecom needs are: long distance, local, data, or teleconferencing. We are an impartial consultant for you, and you pay NO fees to us! Sample packages:

→ Simple switched long distance for small business: 2.9¢/min nationally, less than 5¢/min most of Europe, Latin America and Asia;

→ DIA T1s for only \$299;

→ IP DS3 (full 45 Mbps) only \$2299;

→ For telemarketing companies and other high-volume telecom users: new VOIP T1 handles your local, long distance, AND high-speed computer internet access all on one circuit, with UNLIMITED calling for a flat rate of \$565 for a 5 line set-up (\$40 per line for every additional line up to 24 lines)—this is a FLAT, ALL-INCLUSIVE RATE. No line charges, no loop charges, usage charges, and equipment free, installation free...

**Call Gary Jason at 888-231-8183 for details or further information.
Fax: 888-252-9256 email: gary@globalaccesstelecom.com**

been sold to developers at well below market value.

Soon, four- and five-story "New Urban" developments mushroomed up all over the city. Streets once dominated by single-family detached homes soon saw the rise of narrow, connected townhouses. Old warehouses near downtown Portland were turned into trendy, but heavily subsidized, lofts.

Most absurd was the construction of hundreds of "skinny houses," 15-foot-wide homes on 25-foot-wide lots. The urban-growth boundary continued to push up land prices so that, by 2005, planners were elated to report that, even without subsidies, developers were tearing down suburban homes on quarter-acre lots and replacing them with four skinny houses.

Densification and subsidies to high-density housing led to a dramatic drop in public support for Metro's plans. It was one thing to deny property rights to a few rural landowners; quite another to impose undesired changes on dozens of urban neighborhoods.

Planners hoped the Metro planning system would offer them plausible deniability. Metro set density targets for the cities, and the cities imposed those targets on the neighborhoods. When people complained to the cities, city officials replied that they had no choice: Metro was making them do it. When people complained to Metro, Metro replied that the cities asked for the high-density targets because they wanted to increase their tax bases. With everyone pointing fingers at someone else, planners assumed that voters would be unable to stop the plans.

Yet voters found other ways to challenge the process. Angry over densification, one Portland suburb recalled its mayor and most of its city council from office. Metro was briefly stunned, but planners relaxed when no other city followed suit.

Instead, voters turned to light rail, which they recognized was as much a land-use planning tool as a transportation mode. As Metro's top transportation planner once told an out-of-state newspaper, light rail "is not worth the cost if you are just looking at transit. It's a way to develop your community at higher densities." This led to a steady drop in voter support for rail transit.

In 1990, before Metro, 75% of the region's voters approved a property-tax increase to build a light-rail line from downtown to western suburbs. In 1994, only 65% of the region's voters approved another tax increase to build a light-rail line

Portland decided to build light rail not because it was efficient but precisely because it was expensive.

from Vancouver, Wash., north of Portland, to suburbs south of the city. This vote, however, was conditional upon getting matching funds from the states of Oregon and Washington.

In 1995, Vancouver voters rejected a tax to pay their share of funding. In 1996, when Oregon voters also rejected a proposal to fund their share of the light rail, the measure received support from only 55% of Portland-area voters.

In 1998, the region's leaders asked voters to use the property tax they had already approved to build light rail without the state matching funds. But 53% of the voters said no. In just eight years, support for light rail had dropped from 75% to 47%, in large part because of public opposition to the densification associated with rail. Rail advocates were not helped by a steady stream of news reports indicating that the rail lines were popular with drug dealers and burglars.

Urban dissatisfaction with planning gave rural activists another opportunity to challenge the state's planning system. In 2000, Oregonians in Action, a group representing

The urban-growth boundary pushed land prices so high that developers were tearing down suburban homes on quarter-acre lots and replacing them with four 15-foot-wide "skinny houses."

rural interests, put Measure 7 on the ballot, requiring cities and counties to either compensate anyone whose property values had been reduced by planning restrictions or to waive those restrictions for that property. Some 53% of Oregon voters agreed with the group that such compensation was only fair. Measure 7 would never have passed before Portland embarked on its density campaign.

In 2002, Oregonians in Action put another measure on the ballot that would prohibit Metro from forcing higher densities on any more neighborhoods. Metro responded with its own measure, which allowed densification only after 2015. This measure passed overwhelmingly, which led both sides to declare victory.

In reality, support for planning was continuing to erode. When Measure 7 was thrown out on a technicality, Oregonians in Action put it back on the ballot, with the technical problem fixed, in 2004. Planning advocates spent \$5 opposing this new Measure 37 for every dollar Oregonians in Action could muster in its support. Groups like 1000 Friends of Oregon frantically warned that Measure 37 would destroy Oregon's planning system, but this simply gave residents of dense urban neighborhoods one more reason to vote for it. Voter support for property rights increased from 53% in 2000 to 61% in 2004. Measure 37 was supported by a majority of voters in every county in the Portland area, and all but one of Oregon's 36 counties.

Despite voter dissatisfaction, Portland political leaders, editorial writers, and other members of the region's elite continued to support planning. Despite not getting the property tax increase it counted on, Portland built two new light-rail lines. One to the airport was built by means of a suspicious no-bid contract awarded to the Bechtel Corporation, with local funding coming from airport landing fees. Another was built from downtown Portland towards Vancouver using federal funds appropriated by members of Congress, who reasoned that, if Portland admitted light rail was a failure, they would have a harder time directing light-rail monies to cities

in their states and districts. Neither of Portland's new lines carry many passengers; in fact, the line aiming at Vancouver carries fewer riders than the bus lines it replaced.

The consensus among Portland's elite began to unravel in 2004, even before the Measure 37 vote. In May of that year, Portland's left-leaning Willamette Week newspaper revealed that Neil Goldschmidt, father of the light rail lines and much else about Portland's planning, had a three-year relationship with his children's babysitter when he was mayor of the city, beginning when she was 14. This revelation of statutory rape won Willamette Week a Pulitzer Prize and sent shockwaves throughout the city.

Among other things, this solved the mystery of why Goldschmidt was a one-term governor. During his term in office, the woman, who had ended up on drugs and in various other troubles, asked Goldschmidt for a \$200,000 trust fund, which he provided. He then stepped out of the public limelight for fear the relationship might be made public.

While the news did not cause the consensus to immediately fall apart, it did make it more respectable for people to criticize the planning cabal. Suddenly, instead of writing about Portland as a light-rail utopia, the region's newspapers were writing about Goldschmidt's "light-rail mafia." Goldschmidt, it turned out, had arranged (and profited by) Bechtel's no-bid contract for the airport line.

Goldschmidt also helped his friend Tom Walsh, a home-builder, get the job of running Portland's transit agency. While there, Walsh promoted federal, state, and local subsidies for transit-oriented developments. Not coincidentally, many of these subsidized developments were built by Walsh Construction Company.

In the mid-1990s, Goldschmidt worked as a consultant for Homer Williams, another builder of transit-oriented developments, including Portland's famous Pearl District. Goldschmidt helped Williams steer millions of dollars of federal money to the Pearl District, which consists of hundreds of expensive condominiums that pay practically no property taxes thanks to other tax breaks. Williams bristles at the idea that Portland is "unfriendly" to business; after all, with the help of Goldschmidt and numerous subsidies, his business has thrived.

Everyone affiliated with Goldschmidt, and by extension with light rail, was now suspect — especially if they were among the dozens of Oregonians that Willamette Week found had known about the statutory rape before its public revela-

Metro planners admitted in an internal document that their real goal was to "replicate" Los Angeles in Portland — to make it so congested that some people would stop driving.

tion. The Oregonian lost credibility when it tried to downplay Goldschmidt's deeds as "an affair"; the Willamette Week later learned that Oregonian reporters had known of the scandal but the paper elected not to publish.

The Goldschmidt scandal nearly killed Portland's grandest high-density housing project yet. The wealthy owners of a former scrapyard on the Willamette River waterfront south of downtown, Goldschmidt clients, wanted to put in a housing development. Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU), on whose board Goldschmidt sat, was located on a hill above the waterfront and needed new office space. Goldschmidt proposed a series of 20-story office and apartment buildings

Williams bristles at the idea that Portland is "unfriendly" to business; after all, with the help of Goldschmidt and numerous subsidies, his business has thrived.

on the waterfront, many of which would be built by Goldschmidt client Homer Williams, each connected to the hospital by an aerial tramway that could quickly transport doctors and patients between the hospital and clinics below.

Residents of the area furiously protested that their views would be blocked by the high rises and aerial tram. In 1998, Goldschmidt personally lobbied Portland's mayor to ignore the protests and support the tram and the development. The city, always eager for density, agreed to put up a whopping quarter of a billion dollars in tax-increment financing for the \$2 billion project.

By 2006, however, the South Waterfront (or "So What" project, as its detractors called it) had become a major embarrassment. The costs of streets and other improvements needed for the project turned out to be more than double the original estimates. Most important, the cost of the controversial tram had increased from \$15 million to \$55 million, and most people expected it to go higher.

It turned out that the tram's original cost estimate had been made by OHSU and city planners who had no real idea of what it cost to build a tram. By the time they presented their estimate to the city council, they already knew it was way too low, but they didn't bother to tell the council, which approved the plan. When costs started rising, OHSU agreed to pay for part of the cost overrun, but demanded that the city pay a share of the overrun as well. Three members of Portland's five-member council vowed to vote against the tram, but at the last minute one of them switched his vote, so tram construction continues.

The tram scandal, and Goldschmidt's involvement, crystallized opposition to Portland's entire planning system. While fiscal conservatives represented by the Cascade Policy Institute have always opposed the plans, they are too few in number to make much of a difference in the city of Portland. Instead, opposition is coming from the public employees' unions and other liberals. They see that, between property tax waivers and tax-increment financing, the taxes from hundreds of millions of dollars worth of property that would ordinarily go to schools, libraries, and fire and police departments are instead diverted to trams, rail transit, and high-density hous-

ing subsidies.

Because planning-induced housing shortages have so driven up Portland housing costs that families with children are fleeing to more affordable suburbs, the Portland Public School District is closing four to six schools every year. Yet the district still projects a \$57 million shortfall in its 2007 budget. Portland's mayor proposed a citywide income tax to cover the shortfall, but early polling revealed intense opposition driven by the tram scandal. As Portland blogger (and Lewis & Clark Law School professor) Jack Bogdanski told the mayor, "If you want to save the schools, first you'll have to kill the tram."

Meanwhile, Multnomah County (which contains 95% of Portland) spent \$58 million building a new jail in 2004, including \$600,000 or "1% for art." But the county doesn't have enough money to open the jail, forcing the sheriff to give early release to 5,000 prisoners a year. Still, the county has plenty of money to subsidize high-density housing projects.

Opponents realize the tram is only the tip of the iceberg. Also under fire is a plan to run light rail through the downtown Fifth and Sixth Avenue bus malls. Closing the mall to autos in the late 1970s immediately killed many of the businesses on those streets. Other downtown businesses have told the city they support light rail as long as it is not on their streets. Since the businesses on Fifth and Sixth Avenues are already gone, those are the only streets where a new rail line would not generate downtown opposition. The problem is that there is no room for both the existing buses and rail, so hundreds of buses will have to be rerouted to other streets, thus destroying the mall's sole advantage of providing a central place for people to transfer from one bus to another.

Enough Portlanders are questioning planners' love for density that last October the city council rejected a previously routine request for a ten-year tax waiver on a high-density housing project in the SoWhat District. The council then put a moratorium on further high-density tax waivers.

More Portlanders are also attacking the region's "traffic calming" (read: congestion-building) program, which removes lanes from major boulevards and puts barriers in streets to slow down traffic. This is part of Portland's program to make the city more "pedestrian-friendly," but many of the proposed changes actually make streets more dangerous, not

to mention waste people's time. As blogger Bogdanski says, "You'll come for the tram . . . you'll stay because there's no way to get out of here in a car with all the traffic."

All of these controversies are providing normally left-leaning Portlanders with valuable lessons about political economy. "You have a bunch of politicians making decisions about private businesses but they don't face any business consequences," says writer Bill McDonald. "The marketplace does not apply to them, so they are free to inflict their visions, no matter how awful they turn out to be."

Voters had an opportunity to decide these issues in a May 2006 city commission election that focused on the tram controversy, but the decision was mixed. Commissioner Eric Sten, who had opposed the aerial tram, managed to hold off a challenge from a Goldschmidt associate. But Commissioner Dan Saltzman, the one who switched his vote on the tram at the last minute, also survived a challenge from an anti-tram activist.

Still, rumblings from the business community suggest that the battle is not over. Business leaders were shocked in 2000 when Columbia Sportswear, the largest company headquartered in Portland, moved out of town. The rapidly growing company had picked an inner-city site for a new headquarters and received tentative approval from the city. But it was stymied when Tri-Met, the region's transit agency, told Columbia that the company could not have any surface parking next to the headquarters because it was near a light-rail station.

In fact, there was no light-rail station nearby, only a plan to build one. What plan? The plan the voters rejected in 1998. Yet Tri-Met said the parking rule was "non-negotiable." The company president, Tim Boyle, simply packed up and moved to the suburbs, meanwhile blasting the city for its "anti-business climate."

Other business leaders are concerned about the region's growing congestion. Metro's plans call for alleviating congestion only in industrial areas, but it turns out that freight is delivered throughout the region. The Portland Business Alliance commissioned a study that found many area companies are "prisoners of congestion" that would cost them close to \$1 billion a year by 2020.

"It used to be our trucks could make six to ten deliveries a day in the Portland area," reports the representative of a building supply company. "But over the past three years, that dropped to only five to eight deliveries a day because of increased congestion. The only way to keep our customers stocked was to buy two more trucks and hire two more drivers."

It is clear that the "comprehensive plans" that Metro wrote are far less comprehensive than promised. In their single-minded effort to reduce per capita driving, planners ignored the effects of congestion on businesses, the effects of light rail on crime, and the effects of tax waivers and tax-increment financing on schools and other public services, among many other things.

The only question left is whether Portlanders can repair the damage planners have done to their region. The next time you hear a reporter or city official talk about how wonderful Portland is and how they want to do the same in your city, tell them the truth: Portlanders are revolting against those visionary plans and the whole system is imploding. □



"Oh, he's quite a district attorney, all right — three of the *jurors* confessed."

Reviews

"The Da Vinci Code," directed by Ron Howard. Columbia Pictures, 2006, 149 minutes.

Jesus' Baby Mama Drama

Eric Kenning

"I have to get to a library fast!" isn't a line you often hear in Hollywood thrillers. It sums up the combination of pulp esotericism (ANCIENT MYSTERIES REVEALED!) and formulaic suspense that turned Dan Brown's *"The Da Vinci Code"* into a perfect cultural storm and turns the movie version by director Ron Howard into a mad, occasionally exhilarating rush to nowhere in particular. In what isn't its only anticlimax, Tom Hanks' character, Professor Robert Langdon, never actually gets to a library (which he does in the book). At least Humphrey Bogart, who had to get to a bookstore fast in *"The Big Sleep,"* actually made it to one and had a tryst with the sexy (when she took off her glasses and undid her hair) bookstore clerk besides. There are no trysts, no sexual sparks, between Hanks and his co-star, the fetching French actress Audrey Tautou, or between anyone and anyone in the movie, including Jesus and Mary Magdalene, despite the plot-engine suggestion that they were a 1st-century item. But the movie isn't trying to generate sexual sparks, just pseudo-intellectual ones — it works by creating the impression that it's giving you something to think about while not giving you any time to think, much less get to a library.

What made the book unique among thrillers and, with 40 million copies sold worldwide, the publishing equivalent of breaking into Fort Knox, was not, of course, the contrived plot in which cardboard characters make hairbreadth escapes from villainous clichés while on an unbelievable quest for something preposterous. It was the cramming into its 400-plus pages large heaps of theological and historical exposition, conjecture, legend, and flapdoodle.

To read the novel is to learn a great many facts, several of them true. And to be coaxed into feeling that you're in on a really big ancient conspiracy, solving puzzles and cracking codes and seeing through the subterfuges of the oldest institution on earth, the Roman Catholic church, along the way. Pagan symbolism incorporated into Christian images and holy days, early controversies about the divinity of Christ, Church councils, weird heresies, unheard-of gospels, the sacred feminine, the ambiguous story of Mary Magdalene, the demoting of women in the early church, cryptic details in the paintings of Leonardo da Vinci . . . all this was news to many of the book's readers, and some of it was news to scholars working in the fields.

Much of this material is just about as interesting when conveyed in Brown's breathless, if not exactly deathless, prose as it is when Elaine Pagels or one of his

other scholarly sources is talking about it. The problem is that the revelations that set the plot in motion, such as the existence of a venerable secret society called the Priory of Sion that included Leonardo da Vinci and Isaac Newton, the premise that the medieval Knights Templar had been created to protect its secrets, Mary Magdalene's flight to France and the birth of her child there, and a royal line of descendants, were all derived from a hoax perpetrated in the 1950s by a Frenchman named Pierre Plantard and a 1980s "nonfiction" best-seller, *"Holy Blood, Holy Grail,"* written by an unholy trinity of Englishmen.

The movie eliminates all but a few shreds of the book's real (if sometimes distorted) history, leaving the counterfeit currency. But it has to be said that it serves up its fast-food fabulism in a rich sauce of authentic locations and stunning architecture, plus competent acting that puts some flesh on the two-dimensional characters of the book. (It made \$224 million worldwide on its first weekend, setting records in Italy and Spain.)

If you aren't one of the 40 million-plus initiates who have read the book, the plot of both book and movie begins with the murder of an elderly curator at the Louvre. After having been fatally wounded by a gunshot, he somehow has time to undress, draw cryptic symbols and write coded messages with a

marker on and around his naked body while arranging it in the spread-eagled posture of da Vinci's universal man. He was to have met Robert Langdon, "Professor of Religious Symbology" at Harvard, that night, and the tenacious

The screenwriter wasn't about to tamper with a text sacred to millions (the Dan Brown novel, that is, not the Bible).

police captain assigned to the case has reason to think the American professor committed the murder. The captain is a member of Opus Dei, the conservative Catholic lay organization. It turns out that members of Opus Dei, including a fanatically devout albino monk named Silas, are involved with a suave Portuguese bishop and a mysterious "Teacher" in an elaborate plot to track down and kill the leadership of the clandestine Priory of Sion, which is harboring the secret that would overturn two millennia of history and threaten the existence of the church.

Langdon is saved from imminent arrest at the Louvre by the intervention of a police cryptologist, Sophie Neveu, who turns out to have been raised by the murdered curator. Together they flee, with both cops and Silas in pursuit, first to a bank to obtain a cryptex (a cyl-

inder containing documents that can be opened only by knowing the right code) kept by the Priory in a safe deposit box, then to visit an eccentric aristocratic Englishman named Sir Leigh Teabing at his estate outside Paris, where, armed with books and audiovisual devices, he runs through a two-minute drill about the Council of Nicaea, the Crusades, witch hunts, da Vinci's "Last Supper," and the ancient legend of the Holy Grail, and then on to London, pursuers still pursuing, to solve the Grail mysteries once and for all.

Playing Langdon, the unlikely professorial hero, Hanks strikes a balance between a somewhat unconvincing aura of scholarly knowledge plus flashes of Sherlock Holmes-caliber deductive brilliance and his more typical wry, modest, not-sure-what-he's-getting-into persona. Tautou, as Sophie, who in the novel gets to solve many of the puzzles, has little to do here but look puzzled, though she also drives a vehicle backward through Paris traffic and sidewalk cafes with a supernatural dexterity that might descend directly from the miracles of the New Testament, except that Jesus didn't have a smart car.

The veteran French actor Jean Reno is very good indeed as Bezu Fache, the tenacious Paris police captain whose traps Langdon and Neveu keep escaping. Ian McKellen gives the somber movie a lift into something momentarily close to comedy-of-manners levity as Sir Leigh. And as the albino ascetic Silas, Paul Bettany doesn't have much to do but grimace and flagellate himself, but he does get to speak Latin with the scheming bishop (Alfred Molina), and he's convincingly pale.

The screenwriter, Akiva Goldsman, who won an Oscar collaborating with Howard on "A Beautiful Mind," wasn't about to tamper with a text sacred to millions (the Dan Brown novel, that is, not the Bible). The movie just speed-dials the book at every point. The narrow escapes are as implausible as the conspiratorial history, but they all go by so fast that they hardly matter, and you can actually enjoy yourself, and the ecclesiastical architecture,

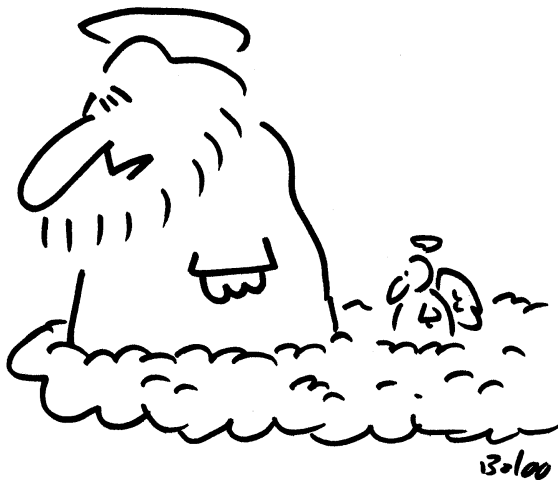
on your way to a conclusion that is (in both book and movie) placid and anticlimactic, given the apocalyptic tremors that preceded it.

As for heresy, the movie is a bit of a disappointment. A gnostic gospel or two is quoted, but the imaginative, paradox-loving heresy itself doesn't get into the screen version. The film doesn't really earn burning at the stake or other forms of theological refutation. It does imply that Jesus was only a man, "an extraordinary teacher," as Langdon puts it, but a mortal man. But the point is blurred amid all the nonsense, and it simply isn't worth protesting, as some Christian groups have done, or hedging, as Goldsman and Howard have done by having Hanks deliver a little speech: "Why is it always human or divine? Maybe human is divine . . . What really matters is what you believe," etc. Nobody is going to walk into this movie an orthodox Christian and walk out an Arian or gnostic or monophysite.

Maybe Jesus was married during those unaccounted-for years before he began his ministry. Any devout Jewish man of the time would have been. Maybe Mary Magdalene, who wasn't a redeemed prostitute (a fable made up in the 6th century), was among Jesus' closest disciples, and the early church was uncomfortable with that fact and almost wrote her out of the story. But I wouldn't bet the farm, or Dan Brown's royalties, on her making her way from

At least Humphrey Bogart, who had to get to a bookstore fast in "The Big Sleep," actually made it to one, and had a tryst with the sexy bookstore clerk besides.

Jerusalem to France with a bun in the oven, or on the royal and conspiratorial consequences thereof. The basic premise of the book and the movie is such hokum that you can't take even their seriousness seriously. And this isn't to knock hokum. It has its place, and its place is Hollywood (though unfortunately, despite the best efforts of the major studios, religion and politics still



"Science versus religion?"

dominate the hokum field). You need a large infusion of hokum to make your escapist formulas work, and mainstream movies are always going to be about escape, which includes escape from the coercive hokum of religion and politics. You might as well relax and en-

joy "The Da Vinci Code" for what it is, and for what it isn't. It isn't the gospel truth, not even the Gnostic gospel truth. It's a couple of hours of release from the truth, from reality. It's Dan Brown multiplied by Hollywood. It's extravagant nonsense on expensive stilts. □

is an odd moment when the editor juxtaposes the prayers of the passengers with the prayers of the terrorists, almost as though Greengrass wants to say that

"United 93," directed by Paul Greengrass. Universal Pictures, 2006, 111 minutes.

"Too soon" is itself insensitive, implying that those who suffered losses on September 11, 2001, will someday manage to get over it.

Let's Roll

Jo Ann Skousen

"Too soon!" some moviegoers complained when previews for "United 93" began making the rounds. "Too exploitative!" said others when the movie opened. "They ought to be ashamed!" still others said, about those of us who went to see it.

I suspect that none of these self-righteous critics had actually seen the movie. The film is neither exploitative nor shameful. "Too soon" is itself insensitive, implying that those who suffered losses on September 11, 2001, will someday manage to get over it. And I have no patience with people who criticize a film they haven't seen. Stay home if you want, but keep your ungrounded opinions to yourself.

What sets this film apart from the typical disaster film is that it is part movie, part documentary. Unlike James Cameron, who created a fictional love story for his telling of "Titanic," the writers of "United 93" avoided creating stock characters to enhance the drama. The film is based on firsthand accounts given by ground personnel and actual phone calls made from the plane. I was impressed by the fact that no single passenger or crew member is made to stand out as a hero, and no big actors are used in the cast. Except for the flight at-

tendants, no names are even mentioned during the flight. These are strangers on a plane, united by a horrifying fate and a determination not to go down without a fight. They share cell phones, give comfort, and come up with a plan to protect the nation's capitol. It's a story that needs no fictional enhancement.

Another unique aspect of this film is that the main air traffic controllers and military personnel are played by themselves, recreating what they did, said, and felt that day. It was a risky decision by the casting director that pays off powerfully in the film. Yes, a couple of them are a little stilted in the opening scenes, before the first airplane disappears from the air controller's screen. But once the towers are hit, these first-time actors seem to step back in time, reliving their reactions and emotions with an honesty that may have been impossible for anyone else to achieve. Ask them if the film is exploitative. It seemed more cathartic to me.

At times this movie is hard to watch. The passengers' phone calls to their family and friends are overwhelmingly poignant, delivered with an honesty and simplicity that avoids melodrama even when the topic is horrifyingly sad. Some of the crew and passengers were brutally killed as the attack began, and that is portrayed on the screen. There

the God who sends terrorists on suicide murder missions is interchangeable with the God who comforts the dying. The scene is artistically interesting but emotionally disturbing and confusing.

But while it may be hard to watch, "United 93" is definitely worth watching. It's a powerful film, bringing powerful memories back to the surface. We don't need an Oliver Stone conspiracy theory, or a Jack and Rose love story, or even the sight of a gigantic rogue wave to evoke emotions. The tender, desperate goodbye of a daughter to her mother was enough for me. □

Nathaniel Branden, Ph.D.
Peter Breggin, M.D.
Susan Love Brown, Ph.D.
Marshall Fritz
Sharon Presley, Ph.D.

Authority and Autonomy in the Family

A One Day Conference

August 19, 2006

8:00 A.M. - 10:00 P.M.

Santa Clara University
Santa Clara, CA

Sponsored by:
Association of Libertarian Feminists
Civil Society Institute
Resources for Independent Thinking

For more information and
reservations: Call: (925) 228-
0565 or visit our web site:
www.autonomyinthefamily.org

"Battlestar Galactica," by Jeffrey A. Carver, based on a screenplay by Ronald A. Moore and Christopher Eric James. Tor, 2005, 320 pages.

"The Cylons' Secret," by Craig Shaw Gardner. Tor, 2006, 302 pages.

The Cylons' Makeover

Timothy Sandefur

There is no substitute for good writing. Nowhere is that more true than in science fiction, which, like free verse poetry, attracts a thousand incompetent scribblers for every Whitman. This is because it looks so easy when it's done well. But it isn't easy. Science fiction requires a writer to combine his already heavy burden — creating believable, interesting characters and gripping plots — with the added danger of becoming intoxicated by the wildness of the premise. The bookshelves are littered with the remains of those who tried to climb this peak, became disoriented, and fell into obscurity or plain blandness.

Along with "Firefly," the SciFi Channel's remake of "Battlestar Galactica" is the most exciting thing to happen to science fiction in a decade. It's original, dramatic, searching, profound, and solidly acted. It proves the continuing vitality of the science fiction artform, and it reveals the preoccupations of today's generation of writers.

Beginning in 2003, former "Star Trek" writer Ronald Moore "reimagined" the classic 1970s "Battlestar" devised by Glen Larson, which had tapped the enormous popularity of "Star Wars" through sophisticated special effects and an imagined universe of great diversity. Larson produced a novel based on his pilot screenplay, which easily ranks among the worst novels ever published, and the series

suffered from weaknesses that brought it to an early demise. Although "Battlestar" was accompanied by a massive merchandising campaign, and was one of the most expensive shows ever produced, it lasted for only two seasons.

Yet it remained a cult classic, largely because of its unique premise: a distant race of humans are chased from their home worlds after losing a war with the Cylons, scary-looking robots who (in the original) were the soldiers of a hostile race of alien reptiles. The remaining humans gathered together in an armada of ships and headed for the refuge of Earth, the planet of their ancestry, even though they do not know where Earth is, or if it exists at all. Larson's original scheme featured many references to ancient cultures, thanks to the popular 1970s SF premise that Earth had been colonized by ancient spacemen. Led by Commander Adama (Lorne Greene), the human fleet struggled to survive through its hopeless search. Although this premise was much darker than that offered by other SF shows, Universal Studios ensured that it would be safe for younger viewers by insisting that Larson minimize human casualties and make the Cylons as clumsy as clowns. The result was corny and stagnant.

Moore's remake is far more compelling. To heighten the drama, he abandoned much of the original's futuristic look, choosing instead a world of heavy, sometimes primitive detail. There are no aliens, no laser guns, not even face-to-face communications. The sappiest

elements of the original are gone, and the Cylons are no longer bumbling polished tin men — now they look like humans — or proxies for space-age lizards. Moore's Cylons are not aliens, but descendants of manmade machines, who have somehow adopted a monotheistic religion they believe superior to the polytheism of their human parents.

Humanity is reduced to only 50,000 individuals, overwhelmingly outnumbered by virtually indestructible enemies. And while Adama was once the military dictator of all humanity, Moore's version adds a civilian president of questionable legitimacy, whose conflicts with Adama (now played by Edward James Olmos) lend the show some of its most compelling moments. This "Battlestar" is paranoid, claustrophobic, and ambiguous. Combined with great acting, Moore's writing has found energy in Larson's premise that the first series was never able to exploit.

Carver's novelization follows Moore's pilot screenplay very closely, but fails to capture its force. This is because novelizations are supposed to add to the film experience by mixing in some original ideas and exploring elements that the novel is uniquely qualified to reveal: the inner worlds of the characters. Vonda McIntyre's outstanding novelization of "Star Trek IV" is an example: McIntyre adds her own inventions to the screenplay, fleshing out moments that are left unclear in the film, and making the book an experi-

Humanity is reduced to only 50,000 individuals, overwhelmingly outnumbered by virtually indestructible enemies.

ence in itself. Carver, on the other hand, parrots the screenplay to such a degree as to even follow the film's editing. This disrupts the narrative flow without adding anything to the experience. For example, in one battle scene, combat pilot Kara "Starbuck" Thrace tries to stop a Cylon fighter which is racing toward the *Galactica*:

As she swung herself around, trying and failing to turn fast enough

to shoot at a Cylon passing close by overhead, she nevertheless got a good look at its underside. The exposed rack of missiles she saw sent chills down her spine . . .

In the command center, Dualla turned and called a warning to the commander. "Radiological alarm!" A beeper was sounding the same warning.

Beside Adama, Tigh stood close and said in a quiet, steely voice, "He's got nukes."

In quick succession, three missiles streaked away from the Cylon. Kara saw it and reacted in fury . . .

It's true that in the film, the director chose to cut away from Starbuck's observation, to the bridge of the *Galactica*, and then back to Starbuck. But there's no reason for Carver to do the same, and the whole incident suffers when he does. The tension would have been heightened by continuing the battle from her point of view, and then later switching the focus to the command center.

These flaws aside, Carver's book is a competent retelling of an excellent story. The same cannot be said of Craig Shaw Gardner's "The Cylons' Secret." Gardner, a hack writer known for novelizations of such films as "Batman" and the second and third "Back to The Future" films, seems to have little or no familiarity with the modern "Battlestar Galactica." His Cylons, for example, shoot lasers — which Moore specifically excluded from his story, explaining in an interview that "We just felt that [lasers] had been done to death, it wasn't as interesting, and it wasn't realistic" — and the *Galactica* now sports an *Enterprise*-like bridge viewscreen which Moore also chose not to include on his show. Along with these errors of inclusion are errors of exclusion: there is no reference to the Cylons' religion — which is perhaps their most striking characteristic. Without it, the Cylons are boring robots. The other characters also lack the compelling realism that Moore's drama has painstakingly developed. The novel could easily be made into a "Star Trek" novel, using a search-and-replace feature to substitute Captain Kirk for Adama and Spock for Colonel Tigh. Aside from some references to Tigh's alcoholism, and the weird use of Tom Zarek as a major player in a story that has nothing whatever to do with the character depicted on the show, there is

little to bind the novel to the universe that Moore and his fellow writers have created.

While Gardner fails to mention the Cylons' god, his novel features at least three deities *ex machinae*: for instance, in

The Cylons' secret, like Victoria's, is simply laid out for all to see — when the real fun ought to be the unveiling.

one scene, a character who's been lost in the woods is easily tracked down by the suddenly-revealed fact that she has homing devices implanted in her shoes. The characters deliver lines like "No one gets the better of Nadu!" and "Death to Cylons!" There are dozens of single-sentence paragraphs such as "Tom Zarek would find a way." And in one climactic moment, the identity of a mysterious spaceship is revealed, not by the characters, but by the narrator himself, who spends four or five paragraphs telling us all that we need to know. The Cylons' secret, like Victoria's, is simply laid out for all to see — when the real fun ought to be the unveiling.

The story lacks any foreshadowing, so that we're told only on page 251 that Tigh has been on board a Cylon ship similar to one that has just been revealed. And on page 278, when Adama hears an allegedly scary voice, he suddenly "knew who was speaking, even

though he hadn't seen him in close to thirty years." The reader, of course, has never seen him *at all*, or even heard of him before now, and certainly has no reason to care about, or identify with, this character and his plight. Had Tigh mentioned his purportedly horrifying experience on the Cylon ship, or had Adama ever mentioned his buddy Chief Nedder, at, say, page 50 or 100, these later revelations might be more believable. As it is, the story has the washed-out feeling of a joke told by my grandmother, who forgets to tell the setup until after telling the punch line.

In fact, even the punch line gets lost sometimes. The story opens on a pirate ship called the *Lightning*, commanded by the mad Captain Nadu, whose combative temperament and B-movie appearance wrestle with Gardner for mastery over the book. Eventually, the character overcomes the writer's feeble attempts to be serious, and at the climax of the novel he barges in to attack the Cylons, crying fiercely, "You never expected this, you Cylon scum!" And then, he and his ship simply disappear. They are not destroyed, they do not flee — they are simply never mentioned again in the book; they abruptly cease to exist in the writer's imagination. It hardly matters by this time, since the reader has long ago stopped caring.

Writing bad science fiction is enormously easy; I myself have done it many times. Nor is it particularly blameworthy. There is an audience for low-quality paperbacks that can be read and tossed in a day. But it's upsetting to see something as powerful

Calling All Economists!

Since the Left depends entirely on the assumption that taking from the rich to give to the poor reduces inequality, it would be utterly demolished by the opposite-most conclusion, that it didn't reduce but increased inequality.

That is the "new idea," with the gold coin prize for refuting it, regularly offered here, and apparently beneath the notice of the Chicago and Austrian Schools.

In fact, Walter Block had agreed and Murray Rothbard disagreed with it. Rothbard had also disagreed with his own reason for disagreeing with it, and with Larry White, Tom Hazlett, and David Friedman's reason for disagreeing with it. Leonard Read agreed with it, Henry Hazlitt allowed that "it may be right," Jack High thought it "interesting and provocative," Israel Kirzner "found it written with keen intelligence," and Arthur Laffer that it "provides keen insight into the weaknesses of redistributionist policies."

But, that was all behind closed doors, never out in the open. So, it wasn't beneath their notice, but unfit for public consumption. For the "new idea," and threat to their authority, you're not supposed to know about, see intinc.org.

and sincere as the new "Battlestar Galactica" subjected to such treatment. Moore's work on the show is largely motivated by his intense dislike for the clichés the genre has developed in the wake of "Star Trek's" incarnations. And his focus, like that of such science fiction masters as John Varley and Robert Heinlein, is resolutely on the people, and not on the gadgets. "We wanted the audience to see this story and these events through the prism of their own world rather than dress it up in 'other-worldly' designs," Moore explained in a 2003 interview. "This goes to the heart of the entire approach — to make this feel real and true by building a reality close to our own rather than create a fantasy world. It's anti-escapism being married to a genre that typically lives and dies by its escapist trappings and you could call that both risk-taking and adventurous."

The show has backed up this promise with an intensity and sophistication rarely seen in any literary genre today. In the finale episode of season two, for example, it is revealed that the noble President Roslin has tried to steal an election with fraudulent ballots. Adama reprimands her, and informs the traitor

Gaius Baltar that he has actually won the election. It would be easy, in such circumstances, for Moore to depict Roslin as the bad guy, and to write a sappy and predictable paean to the values of

The viewer is left with the tough and inescapable choice between values that lies at the heart of tragedy.

democracy. Instead, the consequences of the election are harsh in the extreme — including the possible enslavement of the few humans left. The viewer is left with the tough and inescapable choice between values that lies at the heart of tragedy. But Gardner's work

mars all this effort with a juvenile storyline and a watery, unserious style.

Libertarian science fiction writer L. Neil Smith has written that "science fiction is the only *literature* of ideas remaining in our civilization, and it's revealing that whenever writers from other fields, non-fiction or so-called 'mainstream,' decide it's time to say something really important — George Orwell, Aldous Huxley, B.F. Skinner, Margaret Atwood — they turn, almost reflexively, to science fiction." Ronald Moore has important things to say, or at least important questions to ask, and he has chosen to do so in a serious, but immensely entertaining way. Now that Peter David — the well-respected writer of such novels as "Imzadi" — has been announced as the author of the third "Battlestar" novel ("The Long, Dark Winter," due in September), there is hope that the show will receive the sort of respect that it deserves. □

"Poseidon," directed by Wolfgang Petersen. Warner Bros., 2006, 99 minutes.

Blood in the Water

Travis Stewart

Let's get one thing straight: "Poseidon" is not a remake of the 1972 film "The Poseidon Adventure." The only thing the two movies have in common is the portrayal of a luxury liner capsizing, compelling a group of passengers to make a dangerous climb to the upturned hull. If that is all that constitutes a remake, then all westerns are a remake of "Gunfight at the OK Corral."

The other thing I must confess is that your reviewer is biased. I am a member of that rabid cult of "Poseidon Adventure" freaks who watch the film on an annual basis, with the reverence and

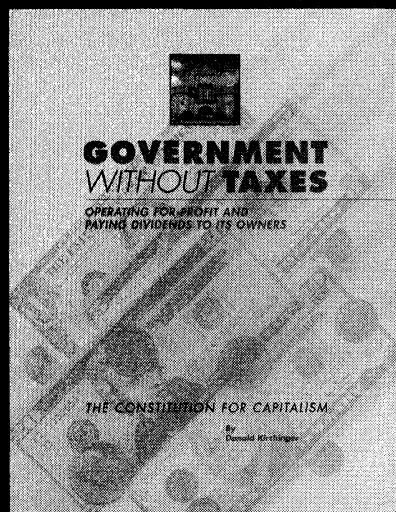
regularity that some bestow on Christmas (make that New Year's Eve).

Most of the critics who've trashed Wolfgang Petersen's mislabeled remake have been fairly (or unfairly) dismissive of the original: an unfortunate lapse, because in every area where "Poseidon" fails, "The Poseidon Adventure" succeeds. There is no better way to talk about the poverty of contemporary Hollywood filmmaking — or of American culture in general — than to look at how low this ship has sunk in the intervening 34 years.

First, while it may be pulp, the film, like a lot of science fiction, or the work of Ayn Rand (here comes the hate mail), is pulp that contains ideas.

**EVERY SOLUTION
STARTS WITH AN IDEA.**

Every Idea is Launched through a Plan.



Introducing:

THE IDEA, PLAN AND SOLUTION!

Please visit: www.atlantistgovernment.com

That's the quality that I think inspires such irrational devotion from its followers. A powerful metaphor is at work. A group of ordinary people are thrust into the unknown. Everything they've ever known has literally been turned upside-down. Either they can stay where they are, cling to the past, and die . . . or they can make the difficult and painful climb up to life, which "always matters very much." The terrain of their many-layered journey resembles Dante's *Inferno* in reverse.

Furthermore, they are led by a vaguely mephistophelean preacher (Gene Hackman) who spouts Christian heresies that most libertarians would recognize as equal parts Walt Whitman, Ayn Rand, and Friedrich Nietzsche. "Don't pray to God," he says at one point, "Pray to that part of God within you." Unlike a Catholic priest (Arthur O'Connell) who elects to remain behind to die with the dead, the wounded, and the weak-willed majority, Hackman's credo is a variation of Poor Richard's: "The Lord Helps Those Who Help Themselves."

What makes him very American, and what makes the film inspirational, is that Hackman's preacher (unlike, say, a Rand character) doesn't just want to save his own neck. He makes it a point of pride — a mania, really — to convince as many people as possible to join him. Then he proceeds to kick their asses, morally, spiritually, and physically; in a word, *inspiring* them to save

The main characters are no more important to us than the hundreds of extras who are ritually drowned, crushed, shattered, burned, and electrocuted in this mildly violent ballet of death.

themselves. It is a victory of reason over blind faith and a most generous, humane application of "selfishness." Hackman's character is a Christ-like anti-Christ, whose greatest sorrow is the loss of a fat old lady (Shelley Winters) whom he helped transform from

a whining lump into the highest type of heroine. In retrospect, I'm certain that the philosophy of this Darwinian preacher character, whispered into my impressionable 6-year-old ear during a Saturday matinee, was my first step on the journey to libertarianism.

Notes on Contributors

David T. Beito is associate professor of history at the University of Alabama, and author of *Taxpayers in Revolt* and *From Mutual Aid to the Welfare State*.

Jayant Bhandari works as a business analyst in Vancouver, and writes about collectivism and Indian society.

Stephen Cox is a professor of literature at the University of California San Diego and the author of *The Woman and the Dynamo: Isabel Paterson and the Idea of America*.

Andrew Ferguson is managing editor of *Liberty*.

Thomas Giesberg has degrees in economics and business administration, and lives in Texas.

Jon Harrison lives and writes in Vermont.

John Hospers is the author of *Introduction to Philosophical Analysis*, *Meaning and Truth in the Arts*, *Human Conduct*, and other works; and is the former editor of *The Personalist* and *The Monist*. He was the presidential nominee of the Libertarian Party in 1972 and wrote the party's Statement of Principles.

Carl Isackson is a contractor and baseball fan residing in the San Francisco Bay area.

Gary Jason is a writer, businessman, and philosophy instructor living in San Clemente, Calif.

Eric Kenning is a freelance writer living in New York.

So: the original "Poseidon Adventure" is an inspirational, emotionally affecting suspense picture. Now let's look at "Poseidon." As we know from "Das Boot" and "The Perfect Storm," Wolfgang Petersen is an expert at photographing sinking tubs and the people

Richard Kostelanetz has written many books about contemporary art and literature.

Ross Levatter is a physician in Phoenix.

Tibor R. Machan is Professor of Free Enterprise and Business Ethics at Chapman University. His most recent book is *Objectivity — Recovering Determinate Reality in Philosophy, Science, and Everyday Life*.

Randal O'Toole is senior economist with the Thoreau Institute.

Bruce Ramsey is a journalist in Seattle.

Mark Rand is an assistant editor of *Liberty*.

Lawrence W. Reed is president of the Mackinac Center for Public Policy in Midland, Mich. — www.mackinac.org.

Ralph R. Reiland is the B. Kenneth Simon professor of free enterprise at Robert Morris University.

Timothy Sandefur is a staff attorney at the Pacific Legal Foundation and the author of *Cornerstone of Liberty: Property Rights in 21st Century America*.

Jo Ann Skousen is a writer and critic who lives in New York.

Tim Slagle is a standup comedian living in Chicago. His website is timslagle.com.

Travis Stewart is a playwright, performer, and cultural critic in New York City.

who drown in them. Unlike those more successful outings, however, this time Petersen forgot to put any people on the boat.

If you made a silent movie about rats trapped in an upside down model sailboat (say, Stuart Little's) and the rats managed to scramble somehow to the top of the boat, the results would be ex-

Modern Hollywood repeatedly makes the mistake of thinking we want to root for invulnerable people, and I hope to God they're wrong because the technical name for that philosophy is fascism.

actly like "Poseidon." It is as though Petersen decided to take the last five minutes of "A Perfect Storm" and expand it to two hours. Petersen may have done his science homework; a capsized ocean liner may only have minutes before it goes down. That would be all very well and good in a documentary. But a fiction film needs air pockets if we're to form any attachment to the characters . . . and we ought to form attachments to the characters if the film is going to have any meaning . . . and a film should have meaning, shouldn't it?

"Poseidon" is a large-screen video game, less important to us than the accompanying popcorn. We neither know nor care anything about the little band of anonymous ciphers who inhabit this story beyond their names and occupational and familial titles. They are no more important to us than the hundreds of extras who are ritually drowned, crushed, shattered, burned, and electrocuted in this mildly violent ballet of death.

And the little we know, we don't like. Josh Lucas is a cynical gambler and former Navy SEAL who resembles a catalog model. Kurt Russell is a former mayor of New York and former New York fireman with a really good tan. Emmy Rossum is his pretty daughter who resembles a fashion model. There's another six or eight like this but it hardly matters; none of them are

members of the human race as you or I know it. The original film was about a group of highly imperfect people, people you might not peg as survivors or team players, summoning the strength and the character to go on. They were played by such sex symbols as Shelley Winters, Jack Albertson, Red Buttons, and Ernest Borgnine ("Marty," for God's sake). Along the way, you got to know these vulnerable people, like them, and consequently, root for them.

Modern Hollywood repeatedly makes the mistake of thinking we want to root for invulnerable people, and I hope to God they're wrong because the technical name for that philosophy is fascism. The modern hero is a vigilante on steroids dispatching dozens of bad guys with an AK-47 (or, in the case of "Poseidon," Josh Lucas leaping 100 feet through a burning oil slick into the water beneath, in order to rig a special rescue device with a fire hose). But in my book, if the hero is Superman, the stakes are zero.

And why on earth is Kurt Russell a former New York mayor? It is as though the creators, perceiving that they could not write any characters we

could like, opted to replace them with symbolic shorthand for concepts with high Q factor. It scans more like a football playbook than what you would call a script.

Contrary to popular belief, you need a script. Without one, all sorts of moral questions go unasked. Stay or go? Live or die? Help the hopeless or save myself? At one point in "Poseidon," Richard Dreyfuss, as a gay millionaire, is forced to shake off a man who is clinging to his legs for dear life over a burning precipice. Once accomplished, this action, which would be traumatic for any person with a conscience, is never referred to in the film again.

This is not good. In these treacherous times, the cinema — all culture — has a role to play in helping us process new realities, and in helping us as citizens of a nominally democratic nation to think and decide the questions of the day, questions with life-and-death implications for all of us. In light of this, the question on everyone's lips should not be, "Are we ready for 'Flight 93?'" (we undoubtedly are), but "Are we still able to stomach 'Poseidon?'" Me, I was puking over the rail. □

"The Poseidon Adventure," directed by Ronald Neame. 20th Century Fox, 1972 (DVD re-release, 2006), 117 minutes.

The Water and The Blood

Jo Ann Skousen

"The Poseidon Adventure" (1972) was one of the best of the disaster flicks made in the 1970s. So why make it over again? "Poseidon, the remake," may have the advantage of computer-generated special effects, but it misses the point thematically. The original epic was not merely about a ship turned upside down; it was an allegory about the journey through life.

Gene Hackman plays a liberal minister whose faith has been challenged by secular skepticism. When their world turns upside down (literally), a small band of survivors turn to him as their leader. They begin their journey, symbolically, by climbing a giant Christmas tree that had decorated the ship's ballroom. As they follow the minister toward what had been the bottom of the ship, they pass a doctor leading people in the opposite direction. He urges them to come with him. The refu-

gees must choose to follow the man of science in the direction that seems logically correct (the top of the ship) or the man of faith in the direction that seems to make no sense at all: the bottom. Paul tells us that this is the essence of faith: "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence [test] of things not seen." Faith is the opposite of knowledge not because it isn't true, but because it isn't yet proved. It has survival value: by inspiring hope, it motivates one to continue trying. This — and here I take my own direction from Travis Stewart's interesting review of the new "Poseidon" and the old — is not a Christian heresy; it's mainstream Christianity.

As the minister leads his congregation toward safety, he comes to a final test. Safety is on the other side of the wall, but the group cannot reach it because the way is blocked by deadly

steam. The spigot that could turn off the steam is visible, but it hangs over an abyss. One might be able to reach it, and even close the vent, but there is no way to return. Hackman looks up to heaven and pleads in agony, "How much more do you want from me?" Then, knowing there is no other way, he leaps toward the spigot, catches on, and turns. The steam scorches his hands, but he doesn't let go until he is finished. Blood trickles down his wrists, subtly confirming that in this allegory, he is intended to be a figure of Christ. The steam vent closes; the minister drops away into the brimstone below; and his disciples find their way to safety. The allegory is completed by the leader's heroic act.

The new "Poseidon" contains a similar act of sacrifice, but it is more reminiscent of Bruce Willis in "Armageddon" than of Christ in the Garden

of Gethsemane. I miss films that can be viewed on many levels, as (for example) both escapist entertainment and signifi-

The refugees must choose to follow the man of science in the direction that seems logically correct, or the man of faith in the direction that seems to make no sense at all.

cant allegory. The original "Poseidon" proved that such films are possible; the new "Poseidon" willfully denies that proof. □

Reflections, from page 31

Students could decide for themselves about the extra effort needed to pass the exit exam. Pay your penny and take your choice: do the work and get a higher-paying job, or refuse to improve your skills and accept a lower income. Just don't snivel, or sue over a simple test.

This color-coding could be taken farther. The current high school exit exam is actually geared to the 10th-grade level; truth be told, it should be characterized as being set at the 9th-grade level, or even (in math) at the 8th-grade level. Perhaps we ought to structure the exam so it can discriminate between those who have reached the ostensible grade level for graduation (which is the 12th grade, of course) and those whose education really stands at a lower grade. We could give the authentically 12th-grade students a green or "grade level" diploma. This traffic-light color scheme would be maximally informative to employers and parents, and to the students themselves. Perhaps even judges who are mentally disabled by compassionate emotions could grasp the rudiments of the system.

— Gary Jason

How to berate with statistics — Fascism and communism are two sides of the same coin. Under one system, corporations become the government; in the other, the government becomes the corporations.

Both are pretty ugly, and anyone who supports one over the other is seriously delusional.

Do you think that the victims of the Ukrainian genocide were relieved to know that they were being starved for something more noble than fascism? Do you think the Cambodians being slaughtered in the killing fields comforted themselves by saying "Well, at least we control the means of production!"?

It always cracks me up when I hear some kid in a Che T-shirt railing against the "fascist" United States, bringing up some Chomskyite statistic such as: "Cuba has a lower infant mortality rate than America."

That's because the Cuban government compiles that statistic, kid. If you search a little deeper, you'll find that Cuba also has a 100% literacy rate, a well-fed population that vigorously supports their beloved leader, and no crime whatsoever. In fact, the prisons have all been closed because they were completely empty. The medical facilities rival the best in the world, the workers are all happy, and the GNP is higher than it has ever been. That's why the Yanquis

want to get rid of Fidel, because they are embarrassed about the great successes of communism in Cuba.

— Tim Slagle

The exception — Because so many free market pundits have lined up behind George Bush's foreign policy, I was pleasantly surprised to read that John Stossel holds to a different view.

"I'm a libertarian," Stossel declared at recent gathering of the Fraser Institute in Canada. "I hold beliefs conservatives abhor." He added that he does not object to gay marriage and thinks that sending troops to Iraq "wasn't a good idea."

— David Beito



"Can I call you back, dear? — I'm right in the middle of something."

Baltimore

The thin blue line separating society from chaos, from the *Baltimore Sun*:

Upon leaving a baseball game at Camden Yards, Joshua Kelly and Llara Brook missed the turn to I-95 and, after several more wrong turns, were relieved to see a police cruiser. They pulled over to ask Officer Natalie Preston for directions.

Preston replied, "You found your own way in here, you can find your own way out." She then prevented the couple from asking another policeman further up the road for directions, and arrested them for trespassing.

After Kelly and Brook were released without being charged, they found their car unlocked in the impound lot, with \$500 in merchandise missing.

East Manatee, Fla.

The battle between man and nature rages on, as reported in the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*:

When an alligator came through the doggie-door of her home and attacked her golden retriever, Candy Frey grabbed a shotgun and blazed away. The alligator escaped with a flesh wound. The neighbors heard shots and called police, who promptly cited Frey for hunting without a license.

Amsterdam

The making of a party platform, detailed by Dutch paper *Algemeen Dagblad*:

The Charity, Freedom, and Diversity (NVD) party announced its impending official registration, proclaiming: "We are going to shake The Hague awake!"

The party said it wanted to cut the legal age for sexual relations to 12 and eventually scrap the limit altogether. It also supports allowing pornography to be broadcast on daytime television, with only violent pornography limited to the late evening.

The NVD also said everybody should be allowed to go naked in public and promotes legalizing all soft and hard drugs and free train travel for all.

Clarkston, Idaho

Tip-off from an anonymous ursine informant, from the *Lewiston Tribune*:

Kim and Gladys Bedwell are behind bars after a bear chase led police to an alleged pot-growing operation in their backyard.

A black bear being chased by law enforcement officers jumped a fence and landed in the Bedwells' backyard. During the commotion, Kim Bedwell allegedly tried to stash some freshly uprooted marijuana plants under a vehicle in his garage. After he was spotted by police and told to stop, he allegedly ran out of his garage and tossed a plant over a fence.

Clarkston police officer Scott Wohl was pursuing the bear when a large marijuana plant sailed over the fence and landed on him, police said.

Vladivostok, Russia

Culinary note, in *Asia Times Online*:

Cafe Pyongyang, a front company designed to funnel money to the cash-strapped North Korean dictatorship, has become one of Vladivostok's most popular eateries. It is so popular, in fact, that there are plans to build a new restaurant in the shape of a North Korean peasant's hut, similar to the one where the late leader Kim Il Sung was born in 1912. Here, gracefully clothed North Korean women serve up traditional Korean fare, while patrons sing popular Korean tunes.

Quito, Ecuador

Free enterprise, South American-style, noted by the *Wall Street Journal*:

Ecuadorian officials said the cancellation of U.S.-based Occidental Petroleum Corp.'s contract and the seizure of the company's assets didn't mean the Andean nation is nationalizing its oil industry.

Denton, Texas

A plot against our nation's currency foiled, in the *Plano Star-Courier*:

Secret Service agents threatened evangelist Darrel Rudus with arrest for counterfeiting and seized 8,300 gospel tracts designed as "million-dollar bills."

When reached for comment, Rudus offered his opinion that it was impossible to counterfeit something that wasn't real.

Little Rock, Ark.

Extension of the "living Constitution" doctrine, reported in the *Fort Smith Times-Record*:

Following upon the adoption of a statewide workplace smoking ban, Arkansas state Rep. Bob Mathis addressed his fellow lawmakers on the risks to children born to smokers, questioning whether it was constitutional for a mother to smoke while pregnant.

Fairfax, Va.

Creation of the world's largest plastic cup, from the *Washington Post*:

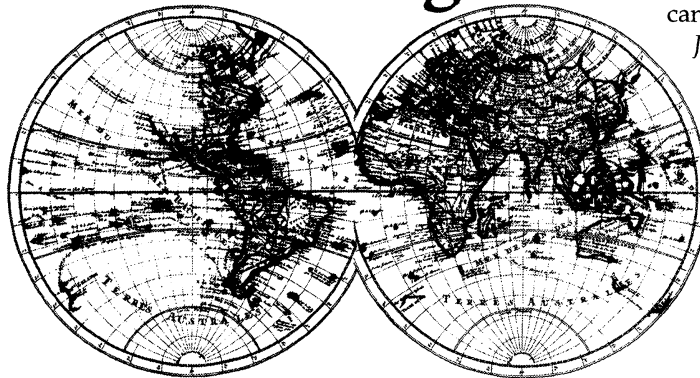
The Bush administration, hoping to someday broaden the government's knowledge of illegal drug use, is probing the mysteries of Fairfax's sewage for a clearer picture. The county has agreed to participate in a White House pilot program to analyze wastewater from communities throughout the Potomac River Basin for the urinary byproducts of cocaine.

U.S.A.

Erratum corrected by the conscientious editors at *Newsweek*:

In the article "Cut, Thrust, and Christ," we misquoted Jerry Falwell as using the words "assault ministry." In fact, Falwell was referring to "a salt ministry," a reference to Matthew 5:13 where Jesus says "ye are the salt of the earth."

Terra Incognita



Special thanks to Russell Garrard, John Wenders, and Philip Todd for contributions to Terra Incognita.

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

Announcing Mark Skousen's controversial new book.... CLASH OF THE TITANS

"You're all a bunch of socialists!"

— Ludwig von Mises (Vienna)

"We are friends and foes!"

— Milton Friedman (Chicago)

Austrian and Chicago economists have battled Keynesians, Marxists and socialists alike, but they often fight each other as well. What are the differences between the Austrian and Chicago schools, and why do free-market economists disagree so much?

After years of research and interviews in both camps, Columbia Professor Mark Skousen has uncovered the strengths and weaknesses of each, and determines who's right and who's wrong at the end of each chapter by declaring either "Advantage, Vienna" or "Advantage, Chicago." He ends with a chapter on how they could reconcile on major issues.

Chapters from *Vienna and Chicago, Friends or Foes?*

1. Introduction: A Tale of Two Schools
2. Old and New Vienna: The Rise, Fall, and Rebirth of the Austrian School
3. The Imperialist Chicago School
4. Methodenstreit: Should a Theory be Empirically Tested?
5. Gold vs. Fiat Money: What is the Ideal Monetary Standard?
6. Macroeconomics, the Great Depression, and the Business Cycle
7. Antitrust, Public Choice and Political Economy: What is the Proper Role of Government?
8. Who Are the Great Economists?
9. Faith and Reason in Capitalism
10. The Future of Free-Market Economics: How Far is Vienna from Chicago?

How to Order this Book

Vienna and Chicago is a 320-page quality paperback available now from the publisher Capital Press (www.regnery.com), Laissez Faire Books (www.lfb.com), Amazon, or directly from the author (see below). The book normally retails for \$24.95, but Liberty subscribers pay only \$20.

Yes, please send me _____ copies of *Vienna and Chicago, Friends or Foes?* for \$20 plus \$3 shipping and handling (for foreign orders, pay \$20 plus \$10 for airmail). Make checks payable to Skousen Publishing Co., and mail to address below.

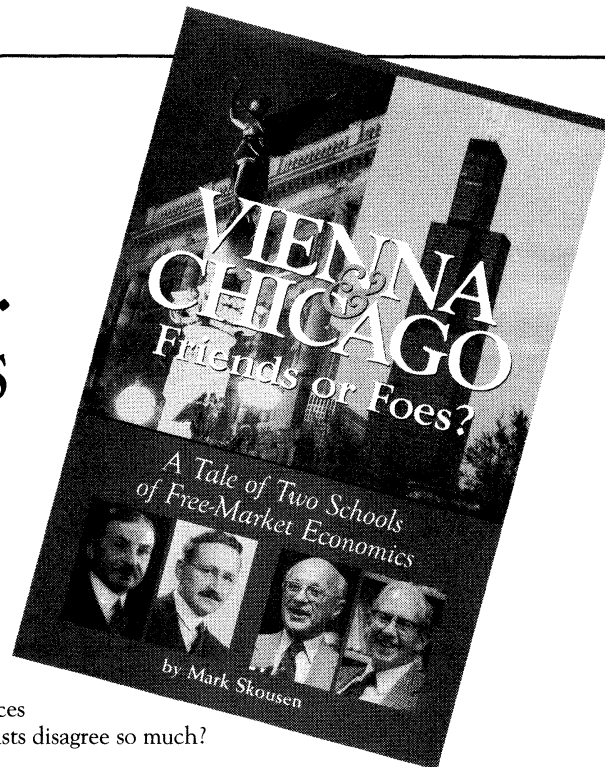
Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email address _____

**FOR CREDIT CARD ORDERS, PLEASE CALL
EAGLE PUBLISHING AT 1-800-211-7661.
SKOUSEN PUBLISHING CO.
P.O. BOX 229, IRVINGTON, NY 10533
www.markskousen.com**



Highlights....

- Whose methodology is more controversial—Mises or Friedman?
- A debate that the Austrians have clearly won.
- Why Chicago economists have won more Nobel Prizes than the Austrians.
- Why did Israel Kirzner call George Stigler's essay on politics "bizarre, disturbing, unfortunate, and an affront to common sense"?
- Emotional fights at the Mont Pelerin Society, Foundation for Economic Education, and other freedom organizations.
- Why Friedman and Mises admire Adam Smith, and Murray Rothbard despises him.
- Why some Austrians call Friedman a "Keynesian" and "a statist" while Friedman calls Mises and Ayn Rand "intolerant" and "extremist."
- Major differences between Mises and Hayek..... and between Stigler and Friedman.
- The "fortress" mentality: Why the Mises Institute doesn't advertise, or appear on TV.
- Amazing similarities between Austrians and Marxists, and between Chicagoans and Keynesians.
- Why Mises refused to use graphs and charts in his books.
- How Friedman shocked the audience when asked "Who is the better economist, Keynes or Mises?"
- Why Austrians are usually pessimists and Chicagoans optimists.
- Powerful contributions by the "new" generation of Austrian and Chicago economists.....

From the Chicago school: "This tale is thorough, thoughtful, even-handed, and highly readable. All economists, of whatever school, will find it both instructive and entertaining." —*Milton Friedman*

From the Austrian school: "In his upbeat tale of two schools, Skousen gives us a delightful blend of theory, history, and political science, and shows that there is much common ground and scope for development." —*Roger W. Garrison*

From an anonymous reviewer: "A novel approach. Skousen sells neither school short and takes a non-doctrinaire view. He spices up his narrative with materials from personal correspondence and one-on-one discussions. No one other than Skousen could have written this book. Advantage, Skousen!"



The City wants to condemn my home.

And bulldoze it and my neighbors' properties, not for public use,
but for private economic development.

I am fighting for my rights.

And I am fighting for your rights, too.

I am IJ.

*Susette Kelo
New London, Connecticut*

www.ij.org

*Institute for Justice
Property rights litigation*