Liberty

August 2007 $4.00

9 RINOs and Ron Paul

20th Anniversary!

Twenty Years of Liberty

by R. W. Bradford, Bruce Ramsey, and Stephen Cox

I Have Seen the Future And It Has the Clap

by Bill Merritt

The $2.3 Trillion Pit

by Peter Allen

The Birthplace of American Literature

by Jo Ann Skousen

Also: *Timothy Sandefur* explores the masterworks of Joseph Conrad, *Richard Fields* reaps the benefits of easy money, *Oisín Ó Conail* scrapes away a social institution . . . plus other articles, reviews & humor.

0 74470 80199 3 08

US $4.00 / Canada 5.95

"Where Liberty dwells, there is my country." — Benjamin Franklin

From the Editor

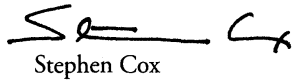
This is the 20th anniversary issue of Liberty magazine.

Lately, I've been vacationing in another world, reliving the days when Liberty was young. Back then, I wrote my articles on a typewriter (whatever that was), and edited other people's by writing pencil marks in the margins. I communicated with headquarters by U.S. mail, or by fax, using a primitive machine that our founder, Bill Bradford, sent to me. Later, Paul Beroza gave me a hand-me-down computer, the kind of thing that wouldn't boot until you fed it a sequence of floppy disks — square, thin, flat objects that you could actually flop. For some reason, I didn't have a computer desk, so the computer sat on the floor, and I sat on the floor in front of it, turning out copy for Liberty.

A lot of things have happened since 1987. Communism collapsed; capitalism kept pumping out better and better ways of doing almost everything; the Clinton regime came in, with its inexhaustible opportunities for satire; the Bush regime followed, offering the same. During those two decades, Liberty played host to hundreds of talented authors and commented on every issue you can imagine, even if you have a terrific imagination.

Liberty also faced more than its share of challenges — and none so terrible as Bill Bradford's death, two years ago. Yet because of Bill's guidance and inspiration, Liberty survived, as he wanted it to. Times change, but Liberty hasn't. Nor has the ideal of liberty. That's what we celebrate this month.

For Liberty,



Stephen Cox

Letters

Make Mine Metal

Thank you for Thomas Nys' thoughtful article on Metallica and philosophy ("Through the Mist and the Madness," available online at libertyunbound.com).

I would like to clarify that Metallica's first album, "Kill 'Em All," was heavily influenced by their former guitarist, Dave Mustaine. After "creative differences," Mustaine went on to found the equally profound Megadeth. Nys refers to lyrics on "Metal Militia" that should be partially credited to Mustaine, and — while Nys laments that Metallica may indeed have sold out — a quick glimpse of the lyrics on Megadeth's newly released album shows that Mustaine still has enough disdain for society for him to remain relevant.

I've always thought the Libertarian Party was missing a great opportunity to capture its most like-minded audience — disaffected youth. Why do these nonconforming libertarians seem to turn into Greens and socialists? Is it because the party that supposedly supports drugs, guns, and prostitutes always seems to be led by stiff white guys in white shirts and neckties?

Maybe if the Libertarian Party scrapped that image (which has had no effect in the last 20 years), put on black concert jerseys, and recruited a true celebrity "front man" like Mustaine, they would avoid irrelevancy in the upcoming presidential elections.

Robert Chatfield
Cape Elizabeth, Maine

Mandatory Market

Gary Jason, addressing the concerns of those opposed to irradiation (Reflections, May), begins a paragraph with the sentence: "The free market is the solution." In the very next sentence

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

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

Subscriptions are $29.50 for eleven issues. Foreign subscriptions are $34.50 for eleven 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, P.O. Box 1181, Port Townsend, WA 98368. It is also available at our website, libertyunbound.com. For information about advertising with *Liberty* or about reprints, email patrick@libertyunbound.com or call (206) 367-0454.

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August 2007
Volume 21, Number 8

Features

Liberty at Twenty

by R. W. Bradford, Bruce Ramsey, and Stephen Cox

Reviews

About Your Subscription

We set out 20 years ago to publish a bimonthly magazine. It was so successful that, in 1999, we made it monthly. After almost nine years of publishing monthly, we believe our readers will be best served if we adjust our publication calendar to allow more timely coverage of election season. Therefore, beginning in 2008, we will combine our January and February issues into a double issue.

Not only has Liberty grown over these two decades; so has the publishing industry itself. Increasingly, online is one way (or the only way) to read your favorite authors. Beginning with this issue, Liberty offers an electronic edition. It can be sent to your email account at the beginning of each month in PDF format instead of your paper subscription (or, for a nominal fee, in addition to it). You'll soon see this option offered on renewal notices. If you'd like to receive Liberty in this alternative format, please call our circulation department.

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he says food outlets and restaurants should be *required* to issue statements on whether they irradiate food and what specific foods they irradiate. They also will be *required* to report all incidents of food poisoning and state which came from irradiated food and which didn't. Exactly how is that a free-market solution?

John D. McGinnis
Altoona, Penn.

Jason responds: We all agree that regulation should be kept to a minimum, so I am sympathetic to Mr. McGinnis' point. However, unless people know whether or not their food has been irradiated, they won't be able to decide for themselves whether the taste is affected, and won't be able to determine whether their case of food poisoning is from non-irradiated food. The law already requires this notification for products sold in grocery stores. I am convinced that after a year or two, it will be a non-issue, at which time we can and should scrap the law.

Bible Belted

What is happening to my beloved Liberty? I had thought Liberty to be a bastion of not only freedom but of rationality too. Until recently. "To Your Tents, O Israel" by David Kopel (April) repeatedly cites the Bible as an authoritative source. This is followed by "To My Fellow Christians" by Lawrence M. Vance (May), which frequently cites the New Testament in support of the author's thesis.

The Bible is a collection of hearsay, superstitions, and tribal myths. It was cobbled together over centuries. The books of the New Testament were selected by ecclesiastical vote centuries after many of them were written. What's so authoritative about this collection of stories? The Bible is a reflection of the era of human ignorance that preceded the enlightenment of science and reason.

Edward Scherrer
Eau Claire, Wisc.

Kopel responds: Most of the stuff in Shakespeare isn't historically accurate, but it too is still worth studying because of the intrinsic interest of the stories, and because of the enormous influence on our culture, including our understandings of government, freedom, and morality.

Vance responds: Edward Scherrer's low opinion of the Bible and distrust of it as an authority is what I consider to be "human ignorance." Many non-Christians throughout history have recognized the worth and authority of the Bible. But whether the Bible is a genuine authority or not is really immaterial. Since Christians consider the Bible to be their authority, it makes no sense to try to talk to them about victimless crimes without appealing to their authority. One can reject the truth of the Bible and yet still appeal to it to prove a point if one's opponent considers it to be the truth. No Bible-believing Christian worth his salt would consider anything without first asking "What saith the Lord?"

A Purifying Flame

Laurence M. Vance gives some very good reasons for Christians not to support the all-intrusive state. Well and good, but he missed one important point: to the extent that government is used to support virtue (moral behavior), it undermines the moral backbone of the citizenry. Governmental force in support of virtue substitutes fear for judgment, furtiveness for forthrightness, and dependence for wisdom.

We've seen it many times in countries that had authoritarian or totalitarian governments; when those authorities collapsed or were overthrown, society collapsed also.

Mr. Vance quotes Mencken; here I quote Mark Twain: "As soon as I found out that you carefully and vigilantly kept yourselves and your children out of temptation, I knew how to proceed. Why, you simple creatures, the weakest of all weak things is a virtue which has not been tested in the fire" ("The Man that Corrupted Hadleyburg," 1899).

Kenneth H. Fleischer
Los Angeles, Calif.

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. Send email to:

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Reflections

Guessing game — I stopped by Borders for just a minute the other day and saw a display for a new book I hadn't heard about: "The Assault on Reason," by former Vice President Al Gore.

I didn't have time to peruse the book in the store, so I really don't know what it's about, or what exactly it's supposed to be. I have, however, formed three hypotheses, based on the title:

1. an autobiography
2. a how-to book
3. a novel, a futuristic political-philosophical thriller. The first sentence, under this hypothesis, would be "Who is Wesley Mouch?"

What else could it be?

— Ross Levatter

Blame America — CNN right-wing talking head Glenn Beck recently claimed on his show that Ron Paul "blames America for 9/11." Of course, Paul has done nothing of the sort. He simply has stated that past American policies created conditions that made an attack more likely.

Why is that such a big deal? Conservatives, including Beck, repeatedly say that past American policies made the 9/11 attack more likely. Only in their case, they single out for blame the American policies of Bill Clinton. For example, they charge that Clinton's "weakness" after the attack on American soldiers in Somalia emboldened bin Laden and encouraged him to undertake 9/11. By making these claims, these conservatives are "blaming America for 9/11" just as much, if not more, than Ron Paul has done. — David T. Beito

Uncoupling — Conservatives continue to detach themselves from the foreign policy of George W. Bush. I was pleased to read in The Wall Street Journal of June 1 a statement by the Journal's best writer, Peggy Noonan. She said, "The beginning of my own sense of separation from the Bush administration came in January 2005, when the president declared that it is now the policy of the United States to eradicate tyranny in the world, and that the survival of American liberty is dependent on the liberty of every other nation. This was at once so utopian and so aggressive that it shocked me."

Good. William F. Buckley has said things like that also. It's important that conservatives embrace a less belligerent foreign policy, and it looks as if some of them will. — Bruce Ramsey

Disorganization — A Dutch television producer promised a reality show in which three patients in need of a kidney would compete for the approval of a single donor. This was later revealed to be a hoax, which left me extremely disappointed. I would have loved to watch a show like that.

The hoaxers claim their purpose was to bring attention to the massive donor shortage worldwide. I think they unwittingly brought attention to another issue: the need to allow organs to be bought and sold.

If this were a real commercial venture, one of those contestants would have gotten a kidney. Instead, all three are still on waiting lists. And here I sit, with two perfectly good kidneys, wishing I had the money to buy a sailboat. — Tim Slagle

Beam us up — California's attorney general, Jerry Brown, was interviewed by Wolf Blitzer on CNN June 10. Brown was freshly returned from Washington, D.C., where he had traveled (shockingly, not by walking) to speak to Congress about "America's addiction to gasoline." (For all you young readers of Liberty: I agree that one should just say no to smoking and snorting gasoline. It's plain dangerous.) Spewing dubious statistics, Brown indicated that we could not afford the kind of travel Americans typically pursue when so much is dependent on "foreign" oil.

The solution of offering immediate amnesty for all immigrating oil did not occur to him, and would most likely not get past Congress in any case. Instead, Brown offered the typical laundry list of mandates, including the development of alternative energy vehicles and cars with much higher fuel efficiency.

I'm surprised the man once known as Governor Moonbeam didn't simply demand the development of Star Trek transport-

ers. This would certainly solve the energy crisis. Why not just pass a law demanding it, as Congress so often does for other types of motors? — Ross Levatter

The first step — A tentative first step in the revival of nuclear power in America occurs in June when the Tennessee Valley Authority reopens the Browns Ferry 1 nuclear reactor.

Browns Ferry 1 was closed over 20 years ago after a major fire caused safety concerns. It has taken five years to refurbish the plant, which involved among other things putting in 6 miles of pipes and 150 miles of cabling. The cost was $1.8 billion. The result is a plant that will eventually have a power level of 1,200 megawatts, roughly the level to provide lighting for 650,000 homes.

The cost was nearly as much as to build a nuclear power plant from scratch. But the first wave of "new" plants will probably be, like Browns Ferry 1, defunct plants. This is because new plants have to overcome numerous regulatory and licensing hurdles, whereas defunct plants have already gotten the required permits and licenses. For that reason, the TVA is now looking at another of its old mothballed plants, Watts Bar 2, construction on which was discontinued in 1988. And a consortium of power companies, NuStart Energy, is looking at the TVA's unfinished Bellefonte plant to open two nuclear reactors.

The Department of Energy estimates that 50 new reactors will be needed over the next 20 years to keep up with demand, and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission expects to get nearly 30 "fast-track" construction and operating license applications over the next two years. Of course, if legislation is passed that dramatically limits fossil fuel use (say, to "cure" global warming), then those estimates are likely to be way too low.

Besides the regulatory and fiscal impediments to rapidly opening nuclear plants, there is likely going to be a shortage of skilled workers. Nuclear plants require specially trained welders, electricians, and other construction trades to build, as well as trained technicians to run.

Here we confront one of the biggest ironies of American history. The very people who profess concern for blue-collar workers, and who lament the disappearance of well paid working-class jobs, namely, modern liberals, are complicit in the disappearance of many of those jobs. After all, modern lib-

Word Watch

by Stephen Cox

In one of the old "Seinfeld" shows, Kramer says something about someone not being a "*happy camper*," and Seinfeld replies with appropriate sarcasm, " 'Happy camper'! We don't hear that expression enough!"

Liberty's 20th anniversary is a good occasion to think about how *the more things change, the more they remain the same.* There's something reassuring about a cliche, isn't there? But sometimes, you've just got to admit that *familiarity breeds contempt.*

I suppose there are some cliches that we can never get rid of. The rich are always *idle* (except, unfortunately, Senator Kennedy), the middle class is always *conventional, staid,* or positively *smug,* probably because it's always *rising;* while the class beneath it is always busy *working,* though apparently never getting anything done. Mothers tend to be *loving,* fathers *distant,* and children *innocent,* which is good, because children are *our hope for the future.* (Yeah, sure. Not the ones who sit next to me in restaurants.) Criminals are always *alleged*; murderers are always *vicious*; congressional votes are always *going down to the wire*; gas prices are always *going through the roof*; activists are always being *outraged*; sickness and war are always *devastating*; people with AIDS or cancer always die *after a lengthy illness*; former movie stars are always *faded,* until they *pass away* and become the objects of *heartfelt tributes* to a *dying breed.*

I know we *can't get along without* cliches, but I sometimes wonder whether we shouldn't *give it a good try.* We could spend an hour or so trying to do that. During that hour, there would be a lot less conversation, and television coverage would be severely limited, but at least we could spend 60 minutes without hearing anybody talking about crime *in this country,* health care *in this country,* or *the future of this great country.* We'd be in *another country,* a less *great* but more literate one.

Everyone has a phrase that he'd do almost anything to get rid of. Barbara Branden tells me that she has been pushed to the limit of her endurance by people's perpetual use of the word *proactive.* She points out that the *pro* "adds nothing whatever to 'active,' except that it supposedly sounds more impressive — and it has spread like a plague." Unfortunately, cliches, unlike plagues, take at least a generation to go away. Some of them never do.

And how many people actually visualize what they're saying when they use a cliche — when they mention *having an axe to grind*; exacting *a pound of flesh*; being *up in arms,* being subjected to *nitpicking* (now there's a disgusting expression), *dumping the baby out with the bathwater, preaching to the choir, having a tough row to hoe, carrying a torch,* or *weasling out* on something? How many nice Unitarian schoolteachers complain that their students *brown-nose* or otherwise *suck up to them?* I mean, how repulsive can you be? But that's a cliche, so you can use it in church, or the faculty lounge.

To make matters worse, we live in the day of instant cliches. After the 9/11 attacks, one Ward Churchill, a professor of something or other at the University of Colorado, became famous for having written an anti-American screed called "'Some People Push Back': On the Justice of Roosting Chickens." "Push back" was an obscure, far-Left expression for "attacking innocent people without admitting that you're the one responsible for the attack." Suddenly this weird bit of agitprop was rushing through America's linguistic bloodstream. Soon it appeared in every context in which political inanity was useful. Consider a report (Jan. 10, 2007) by Terence Hunt, AP White House Correspondent, on a speech by President Bush, than whom no one is more different from Ward Churchill:

"In a prime-time address to the nation, Bush pushed back

erals are almost always advocates of environmentalism, and it is precisely that movement which killed the American nuclear power industry back in the 1970s. — Gary Jason

Pondering a heap — A libertarian blog considered the argument, raised by antisecessionists, that a region can't secede without paying back some common liability to the nation. The most obvious one is the national debt.

The blogger asked the reader to accept that argument for a moment, and apply it to the individual. Would we ban an individual from moving out of his country because he hadn't paid his share of the national debt? No. It would be barbaric to do that. East Germany used an argument like that for why it wouldn't let citizens cross the barbed wire. And so, if we would not apply that to an individual, logically we cannot apply it to a region. Therefore, a region can secede, irrespective of any liability to the country it is a part of.

And I thought: here is an argument wholly uninterested in consequences — such consequences as what the liability is, how big it is, who was supposed to pay it, and who will have to pay it now. Such arguments absolve libertarians from having to think about any of that stuff. The principle is all that matters — though it occurs to me that if your principle allows you to get away with all that, maybe you have the wrong one.

The argument also implies that quantity doesn't matter. If one person can do a thing, 5 million can. But life isn't like that. One dog defecates on your lawn and you are annoyed; 5 million do it, and you are inundated. Your problem is of a different quality. Quantity becomes a quality.

And yes, I know, there is the problem of drawing a line. The philosophers ask how many grains of sand it takes to make a heap, and I do not have the answer. But the fact is, there are grains and there are heaps, and they are not the same.

— Bruce Ramsey

The wealth shall set you free — In honor of Liberty's 20th anniversary, I would like to share a dilemma about liberty.

Libertarian economists (I don't know which descriptor is decisive — "libertarian" or "economist") say that a free and prosperous society depends on free exchange. Exchanges are free ("voluntary") if there is no coercion, no threat of force.

against the Democrats' calls to end the unpopular war [in Iraq]. He said that 'to step back now would force a collapse of the Iraqi government, tear that country apart and result in mass killings on an unimaginable scale.'" Odd image: Bush *pushed back* against those who want to *step back*. Well, at least it fills up space.

That's one important role for cliches. If you're stumped for words, you can always talk about *pushing the envelope, thinking outside the box, going for the gold,* or even *doing the right thing.* Given enough cliches, you can always *hit a home run.* Peter Rickgauer reports from Princeton about a radio interview in which somebody actually said, "It *seemed like a great idea,* so we thought we'd *run it up the flagpole,* see *what kind of traction it got.* Since then, it's *moved forward.*" The speaker forgot to add the possibility that it wouldn't *prove to bear fruit* — that it would *die on the vine, wear out its welcome, go down to defeat,* or *alienate middle-class voters.* Still, he *showed himself a force to be reckoned with.*

Of course, this is media language, a lingo that's as ritualistic as anything you'll ever hear in church. In film ads, the New York Times never praises a movie; it *raves* about it. (Strange, considering the fact that the real raving and slavering in the Times is occasioned by politics, not movies.) In news stories, eccentric people are always *fiercely independent*; young children are always *toddlers* or *tots;* politicians who got on the wrong side of the editorial staff are *ambitious, controversial,* and *potentially divisive*; politicians who got on its right side are *forceful* and *dynamic, arousing passions* and *stimulating debate.* They may be *newcomers to the political scene* who have *fresh ideas* for *positive change,* or they may be *seasoned statesmen, ultimate Washington insiders* who *command the attention of the public* and are *respected on both sides of the aisle.* In any event, they are *setting the nation's agenda.*

The *mainstream media* have their cliches, and *as it turns out,* the Net has them too — like a dog has fleas. On the deep Net, the personal net, where *real people make their unique personal contributions,* women usually can't say much of anything without adding "*I feel for you [insert first name].*" Men are still more cliche-driven. I can't imagine an all-male internet exchange that didn't include frequent repetitions of *awesome* and *go for it!* Both genders succumb to the *smiley face* and the *frowny face,* but males, sadly, seem to have no genetic protection against *lol.* In every case, brain cells are dying. If you can't think of a synonym for *lol,* I feel sorry for you; you're in the last stage of semantic degeneration. The same goes for *feel for you.* If you have to *go that low,* it's time for you to *get a life.* Unless *it's too late for you.*

A cliche, unlike a human brain, can endure *unremitting exploitation.* On May 13, MSNBC showed videos of a savage beating delivered by a young carjacker to a man in his 90s. The victim's reaction? "The victim said that the assailant 'needs to *turn his life around.*'"

This bit of *wit and wisdom* originates in one of the great storehouses of contemporary cliches, the improve-your-life-movement. Its major contributors are: (1) the literature of Alcoholics Anonymous and other self-reclamation programs (e.g., *get with the program, she's not following the program, he needs to get on the program,* and so forth); (2) traditional advice of an Epicurean nature (*you only live once, you can't take it with you, take time to smell the flowers*); (3) and mantras of sovereign self-expiation, the sort of statements that come readily to the lips of politicians and other petty criminals who, when *caught red-handed,* proclaim that *what's past is past* and it's *time to put this behind us* and *move on with our lives.* If you don't agree, you should obviously *get hold of yourself, come to terms with yourself,* and *get a life.* (I'm sorry to repeat that phrase, but what's a cliche if you can't repeat it?)

Well, I have a life, thank you; and I'm not moving on with it. I'm staying right here, until these other people *put their own house in order.* And if there's more than one bunch of them, and there's some kind of *internal dissension* (as there always is in the self-improvement industry), then I say, *"a plague on both your houses!"* I have *other things to do* besides *play their silly game.*

Three hundred years ago, Alexander Pope satirized the empty counsel of people who ask the "stars to give / The mighty blessing, *while we live, to live!*" It's true, there's a big difference between living and merely breathing, but if I had to spend my life paying attention to people who prate about the importance of *taking responsibility for your life* and *living life to the fullest,* I think I'd have to *give up the ghost.*

Really.

End of story. Even if a party to the trade is poor or has so few opportunities that the very best choice is still miserable, that exchange falls into the "voluntary" or "free" column.

Many liberal Democrats (and other ideological adversaries) disagree. If you have few alternatives, they say, you are "unfree." Being poor is as bad as coercion. If you are poor, the wealth of others should be redistributed to you.

Such a position is not tenable for a libertarian, for many reasons, theoretical and consequential.

But the problem for me is that the corollary of this despised position holds true. Wealth does bring freedom.

Wealth (and most Americans are extremely wealthy compared to most of the world) overcomes many problems. We can get around many governmental coercions; we can pay the fees, the taxes; we can avoid regulation by moving elsewhere; we can hire lawyers to ease the regulations. And the wealthier we are, the more we can create barriers against the pain that Leviathan can inflict.

Not entirely, of course. Wealthy innovators such as Michael Milken have gone to jail. And, by the way, we didn't create all our wealth. We are "fellow travelers" in a highly productive society that enables our modest efforts to result in far more output than those of people who live in poorer societies. We benefit from the creators of the past.

But that point aside, doesn't wealth give us freedom?

— Jane S. Shaw

Lone swordsman — Oswald did it, all by himself: that is the conclusion drawn by Vincent Bugliosi, who proclaims that his new tome ("Reclaiming History: The Assassination of President John F. Kennedy," Norton, 1,632 pages) "settles all questions about the assassination once and for all." According to the author, "No reasonable, rational person — and let's italicize those words — can possibly read this book and not be satisfied beyond all reasonable doubt that Oswald killed Kennedy and acted alone" (Buffalo News, June 4, 2007).

Bugliosi will not win any prize for modesty, but his conclusion is probably correct. The evidence is overwhelming that it was Oswald, and Oswald alone, who did it.

The case that conspirators in the military-industrial complex had anything to do with the crime is especially weak. What motive could they possibly have had? The military-industrial complex never had a more dynamic and vigorous champion than JFK. He was their Lancelot. — David T. Beito

Dwarf-tossing and truth — The front page of the website of the California Virtual Academies, an online alternative to traditional public schools in California, boasts: "Pluto has been demoted to a 'dwarf planet,' and the K12 science lessons have already been updated!"

A link takes me to a fuller explanation. There are snapshots of two graphic lessons, one from before Pluto's demotion and one after. In the second picture, Pluto is erased from the virtual textbook, as it is undoubtedly being erased from the newest print runs of paper textbooks. The reclassification of Pluto, the page glibly says, "changes lessons about our solar system — the old textbooks are now wrong!" It's that simple: the books were right, and now the books are wrong.

I thought of Winston Smith at his desk in the Ministry of Truth, altering historical newspaper clippings according to what the state decided was true. The purpose is not nefarious, as in Minitrue, but just as creepy. Altering lessons in such binary fashion implicitly says to a child: experts have decided that reality has changed. What was a planet, no longer is. We will call it a "dwarf" and take it out of your textbook, and the truth changes, and there's nothing more to say.

Of course textbooks should be updated to reflect the best information available (if they are to be used at all — another question entirely), but worthwhile education can't be boiled down to conceptions of truth that flip like transistors, switching from one to zero and back again with shifts in expert consensus.

If kids are to learn to think, they must be taught what a definition is: an arbitrary construct, a tool. The definition of a planet is harmless, but misused definitions can be powerful weapons. If the government tells you something is "a privilege, not a right," you might be easily convinced, if you weren't trained as a child to think about definitions and symbols and the use of metaphor.

Those two virtual-textbook depictions of the solar system, one with Pluto and one without, reminded me of Neil Postman's discussion, in his excellent book "The End of Education," of the importance of definition, question, and metaphor in pedagogy. Postman cautioned that, if they are not taught to think about *how* as well as *what* they learn, "students come to believe that definitions are *not* invented; that they are not even human creations; that, in fact, they are — how shall I say it? — part of the natural world, like clouds, trees, and stars." And planets, and things of greater consequence. — Patrick Quealy

Changing of the guard — General Peter Pace is out as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Defense Secretary Gates' refusal to nominate Pace for a second two-year term is a slap in the face for the Marine general, notwithstanding Gates' effusive praise when announcing the forced retirement. It is clear that Pace very much wanted to be renominated.

General Pace is unquestionably a brave man. In 1968, he served as a platoon leader during the fighting for Hue in South Vietnam, some of the most intense close combat ever engaged in by U.S. troops. Courage alone, however, does not make a great leader. During the past six years, the first four of them as vice chairman of the JCS, Pace was intimately involved in formulating and implementing the Bush administration's defense policies — above all, the Bush war policy in Iraq. That alone is enough to justify Gates' decision to let Pace fade away.

In addition to presiding over the evisceration of America's ground forces in Iraq, Pace further hurt his cause by some recent PR missteps. His comment that homosexuality is "immoral" and his refusal to apologize for that remark did nothing for the morale of the 5–10% of the force that is gay or bisexual. His letter to the judge who presided over the Scooter Libby trial, urging leniency for a convicted felon, was inappropriate for a serving officer. I have never accepted the canard perpetuated by a few Army officers and noncoms to the effect that the Marines, while brave, are in general rather stupid. But Pace's actions give me pause.

Pace's successor will be Admiral Michael Mullen. Mullen has no investment in Bush's Iraq policy, and has made all the right noises about the Iraqis being required to show political progress if U.S. support is to continue. On the other hand, he has a master's degree from Harvard Business School. One of the great follies of the post-World War II era is the idea that

military leaders ought to be skilled in management. Wars, even successful ones, are messy and very expensive. That's why, whenever possible, they should be avoided. When wars do have to be fought, however, we require at the top leaders, fighters — not managers. The application of systems analysis and academic management principles is one of the reasons why the Vietnam War was fought the way it was, and turned out the way it did. We don't need more of that.

The other question about Mullen, and it may be an unfair one, concerns the very fact of his rise to the top. Bad civilian leadership tends to promote mediocre military leaders. The most outstanding officer of the Bush era, General John Abizaid, was sent into early retirement for opposing, on principle, Bush's escalation of the Iraq war. On the other hand, Secretary Gates is the ablest person of cabinet rank that Bush has employed. (Compared to Donald Rumsfeld, Gates looks like George C. Marshall.) So perhaps Gates has chosen wisely. I certainly hope so, considering the problems looming ahead. Iraq shows no real improvement under the surge, Iran's intransigence is increasing as it approaches its goal of acquiring a nuclear weapon, Turkey seems poised to invade Kurdistan, and North Korea is, well, North Korea. I don't envy Admiral Mullen.

It's out with the old and in with the new as far as the U.S. armed forces are concerned. What difference that will make, if any, remains to be seen. — Jon Harrison

Thompson for beard! — The National Restaurant Association is a popular audience for Republican presidents and presidential candidates, since the association does a lot of lobbying on behalf of small businessmen. Recently I got to see Fred Thompson speak in front of the NRA convention in downtown Chicago.

Thompson got a standing ovation when he walked in. I think there was a lot of hope in the room — if not for a new Reagan, at least a Gingrich. Someone who could orchestrate the victory of conservative ideals that they've been waiting for since 1994. A prophet to lead the GOP out of the quagmire of Washington politics.

But those looking for someone to fill the shoes of Ronald Reagan had best look elsewhere. Thompson botched it from joke one: an old chestnut about how he would remind his friends from Texas that there would be no Texas if there hadn't been a Tennessee. The Texan response: well, there were all these signs up that said "This way to Texas." So everybody from Tennessee who could read ended up in Texas.

He also pulled out the hack lines about how Washington, D.C., was like Hollywood for ugly people (that one got the biggest laugh of the day) and how he was tired of phony people and make-believe, so he moved out of Washington and went to Hollywood.

Thompson then stumbled through the rest of his speech, which was nothing more than a string of anecdotes about his various careers. It was obviously scripted, and he could barely deliver the punchlines.

His delivery was off, and the stories seemed chosen at random. He stuttered and ummed a lot as he flipped through his note cards, trying to find something funny. In the end, he attempted in vain to tie everything up with a philosophy about always going through the open doors, never realizing what was on the other side.

Throughout, there was no fire, no passion, no talk about the kind of changes he'd like to see in America, no vision or inspiration. Just funny little stories about how unlikely it was that a boy from Lancaster, Tenn., would become so famous.

He got a second standing ovation when he was finished — initiated by the NRA board that had paid his honorarium. The rest of the crowd followed suit, since it was a good excuse to bolt for the door.

Next up was Q & A, the best part of his appearance: he really excels in the Town Hall format. Most interesting was his response to a question about Indian casinos. He thought for a minute, and said, "I don't really know anything about that topic, and I'm not going to soft-shoe up here." It was his biggest applause line of the day.

But on the whole, Thompson came off as weak, and his speech contrived. He needs both a speechwriter and a speech coach if he has any intention of taking this "campaign" further. How are we ever going to get permanent tax breaks, Social Security reform, and a dismantling of the New Deal, if he can't even win over a roomful of entrepreneurs?

This convention of 75,000 people hosted some of the wealthiest small businessmen and CEOs in America, all potential donors who are begging for someone to stop the taxation and overregulation, and lead this country back to its Founders' intentions. He should have come loaded for bear, with his best stump speech. If that was it, there will be no Fred Thompson candidacy.

I can't believe he really wants the nomination — I figure he's shooting for Veep. He'd make a nice conservative beard for Giuliani. — Tim Slagle

The beginning of a beautiful antagonism — Twenty years ago, Liberty began publication. Ronald Reagan was president, a man whom nonlibertarians thought of as a libertarian, pushing the line that government was the

problem, not the solution. Most libertarians were influenced by Ayn Rand and Murray Rothbard, the former only recently deceased, the latter among the living (and among Liberty's writers). Although the U.S. managed to invade Granada and a few other equally dangerous countries, it was generally a time of peace. Libertarians frequently saw Republicans as allies.

Today, the president is George W. Bush, a man whom no one regards as a libertarian, pushing the line that in all areas of life, the government is there to help, like it or not. Few libertarians are influenced by Rand and Rothbard, both of whom left the scene long ago. The U.S. has managed to invade and simultaneously fight wars in two countries, each farther away even than Granada. It is *not* a time of peace. Rather, it is a time of perpetual war. Libertarians no longer see Republicans as allies.

As at the beginning, so it is at the present time: both in 1987 and now, politicians routinely call for less government — "waste" is especially abhorred — while moving to hasten government's growth in all directions. Then, many libertarians were looked on as naive because they opposed aggressive action in response to the "Soviet threat." Now the Soviet Union is gone, and even some libertarians view other libertarians as naive because they give little credence to the "Islamofascist" threat.

In 1987, America hadn't been attacked in over 45 years, the continental United States (excluding the South in the Civil War) in over 170 years. And libertarians warned that an interventionist foreign policy (installing the Shah in Iran, backing Saddam in Iraq, aiding the Israeli occupation) might be dangerous to Americans, especially those who valued low taxes and civil liberties. In 2007, it has been only six years since our country has been attacked. And now even many libertarians see futile crusades as a matter of national urgency.

Government has grown in every one of the last 20 years. We now routinely go abroad in search of monsters to destroy. Every president elected during Liberty's existence has subsequently been widely recognized to have been much worse than his predecessor. We have no reason to believe this trend will stop.

So Liberty will never lack material on which to report: policies to lampoon, programs to oppose, and wars to debate the wisdom of.

Government's gift to Liberty: a full-employment policy.

Happy 20th. — Ross Levatter

Facts: tax max jacks — A special report from the Tax Foundation gives us some unpleasant news: the combined state and local tax burden has hit a new record high. State and local taxes now consume 11% of all national income, beating the earlier 2005 record high of 10.9%.

This figure is important to keep in mind when comparing national tax rates. While America's national income tax is lower than that of many of its competitors — a point oft made by devotees of big government and massive income redistribution schemes — the gap narrows considerably when you add in state and local taxes.

Leading the pack as top tax takers are Vermont (14.1%), Maine (14%), New York (13.8%), Rhode Island (12.7%), and — perhaps surprisingly — Ohio (12.4%). Claiming the title as low tax environments are Alabama (8.8%), Delaware (8.8%), Tennessee (8.5%), New Hampshire (8.0%), and — the winner is — Alaska (6.6%). The tax burden by region (from highest to lowest) is: the mid-Atlantic, the Great Lakes, New England, the Far West, the Plains, the Rocky Mountains, the Southeast, and the Southwest. This explains a lot about the interior population flow, with middle-class families fleeing high-tax regions for lower tax ones. The complete study* makes interesting reading. — Gary Jason

Rebel leader — Peggy Noonan was an excellent speechwriter for President Reagan; although the writing she has done under her own name has not been inspiring. Both rhetorically and intellectually, however, she is probably the Republican Party insider who best represents the attitudes of the vast majority of Republican voters, many blue-collar Democrats, and probably most so-called independents. In my opinion, she never represented them better than she did on June 1, in the article in the Wall Street Journal in which she declared her independence from the Bush regime.

Jefferson's Declaration of Independence argues that the king "has abdicated Government here"; that he has in fact summoned enemies to attack his people. Noonan argues the same about Bush: he has abdicated leadership of his supporters, has in fact turned viciously against them.

Noonan traces her disaffection to "January 2005, when the president declared that it is now the policy of the United States to eradicate tyranny in the world . . . This was at once so utopian and so aggressive that it shocked me." More revelations of intellectual and practical incompetence followed quickly: the New Orleans debacle, the deepening failure in Iraq, ridiculous levels of government spending. (She didn't include Bush's absurd about-face on global warming, because that came a day or so after her article.)

But what really did it was Bush's attack on his own voters over the immigration issue — the coordinated accusations by Bush and his friends that people who oppose his pro-illegals immigration bill are "bigots" and "chauvinists" who "don't want to do what is right for America" and who would like to see "mass deportation" or even the killing of illegal immigrants.

This is really vicious stuff. It's the kind of slander that Bush and his party have long complained about, when it's been directed at them by the loony Left. I can't think of any other administration that has attacked its own party activists in terms like these.

Noonan confesses that she does "not understand such squandering" of a political inheritance. Her best attempt to explain it is by reference to a White House staffed with people whose values are radically different from those of the party base, and to these people's feckless desire to be applauded by history for their Intransigent Fight for Human Progress. She also refers to a White House that has "turned to name calling" because it has no ability to argue except by means of "a call to emotions."

More evidence for this thesis would be furnished on June 6–7, when Bush's cronies in the Senate raged and stormed against their colleagues' perverse refusal to rush through an immigration bill crafted by Edward Kennedy, long the Republicans' principal target of abuse — except when he's been in league with the masterminds at the White House. With polls showing that neither Republicans nor Democrats nor independents favored the bill, which was as full of lies and tricks as a two-

*http://taxfoundation.org/press/printer/22321.html

bit magic act, and with hardcore Republicans practically rioting in the streets to prevent its passage, Republican politicians hadn't even the excuse of bowing to the public's wishes when they insisted that the bill go through. They bowed to their own wishes.

And now, if you will, picture George Bush. He, like Clinton, lusts for legacy. He thinks that the only way he can get it is to ally himself with people like Senator Kennedy and Senator Reid and Representative Pelosi, cadres who would cheerfully throw him out of office and drag him before a firing squad if they could figure out a way to do it. He knows this. (At least I hope he's not the last one to know.) But he'd rather side with his political assassins than with his own party. This is an unprecedented event in American politics.

So I think Peggy Noonan is right. I also think that what's happening on the Republican side is what happened on the Democratic side, some years before. The Democratic leadership lost its intellectual standing in the mid-1960s, when it began to advocate policies that were not only wrong but also detested by most of the American people, including Democrats. As its hold began to slip, the party leadership resorted more and more to name-calling, starting with the idea that Goldwater and Reagan were racists. The Republican leadership now replicates the process. It doesn't have an idea in its head, and pretty soon it won't have any voters, either, unless Republicans follow Noonan's lead and declare independence from their self-serving and insulting leaders. — Stephen Cox

The curse of the carbon foot — The Economist for the week of May 19 contains an article explaining that "several British food companies and retailers plan to add 'carbon footprint' labels showing the quantity (in grams) of carbon-dioxide emissions associated with making and transporting foods and other goods." This is supposed to let consumers know how much each of their purchases is destroying the planet.

Having been raised Catholic, I can appreciate a bit of guilt conveniently printed on the label of every product, without need for recourse to the confessional. However, as the article laments, carbon footprinting is not easy to implement. "How far down the supply chain do you go?" The Economist asks, noting that the labels might "include carbon dioxide produced in the manufacturing but not, say, that from employees commuting to work."

Smart people are devoting their time (of which they must have a great deal) to this endeavor. And it is being written about in a free-market paper of record without any apparent sarcasm. Somebody hold me. — Patrick Quealy

A new race to the bottom — The results of the May 10–13, 2007, Gallup poll are fascinating. The new Democrat-controlled Congress actually has an approval rating below that of President Bush! Only 29% of Americans now approve of the job Congress is doing, compared to 33% who approve of the job Bush is doing. At this rate, by the next election, nobody will support any branch of government.

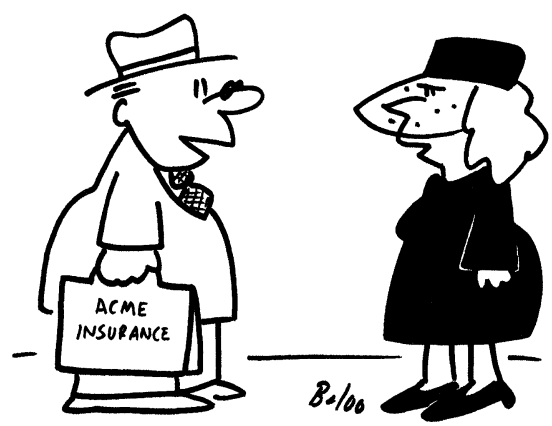
We can speculate about the causes of the decline in the public's view of Congress. My own view is that, simply put, the public was once again disappointed. The Dems promised to eliminate corruption, stop pork-barrel spending ("earmarks"), control spending in general, usher in an era of bipartisanship, and end the war. So far they've done none of those things.

Early on, the Dem leadership entertained the idea of putting committees in the hands of chairmen with ethically challenged pasts, such as Reps. Murtha and Hastings, backing down only in the face of negative publicity. They shoved through a passel of bills absolutely denying the minority any say — indeed, shouting down opposition questions. And they made clear that they would have endless investigations, with endless subpoenas, all hoping to find exploitable dirt on their opposition. Bipartisanship was essentially killed on Day One — Grandma Pelosi talked more with Syria's Assad than with any of the Republicans in Congress.

The recently unveiled Democrat-crafted budget shows no fiscal restraint whatsoever. The proposed $2.9 trillion budget has a huge $23 billion increase in education and health care. The present deficit of $214 billion will rise to $252 billion in 2008. The Democrats project a surplus by 2012, but that is figuring in about $200 billion in tax increases over five years, as they allow the Bush tax cuts to expire. And it assumes that permitting the income tax and capital gains tax rates to go back to Clintonian levels will not lower the nation's economic growth rate, a highly dubious proposition. Most conspicuous for its absence: any hint of dealing with the looming Medicare and Social Security disasters.

As to ending a war that most of the Dems argue is immoral and illegal, they have yet to vote to end the funding. They appear to fear the consequences of simply ending the war and taking part of the blame for the aftermath. So they have repeatedly tried to placate their core by enacting a timetable for withdrawal. They will keep the troops there, but — hoping to do maximal damage to Bush — continue attempting to restrict those troops and advertise their view that the troops are engaged in a pointless struggle. (This is aptly named the "slow-bleed" strategy.) The cynicism of all this is breathtaking, and belies any professed support of the soldiers slogging it out.

As to the grotesque comedy of it all, I would say "you can't write this stuff," but that's not true. Charles Schultz wrote this comedy routine a long time ago. Charlie Brown always tries to



"Are you your husband's beneficiary?"

"Yes, *finally*."

kick the football, but Lucy always yanks it away at the last second, after promising not to do so. The American voter always votes for fiscal reform, which the politicians always promise but yank away in the end. — Gary Jason

Hung out to dry — Paul Wolfowitz has been driven in disgrace from the presidency of the World Bank. This is very satisfying for Wolfowitz-haters like me. It's so good to a see an arrogant SOB receive his comeuppance. Unfortunately, he will not share the fate of the man that I admit Wolfowitz did help bring down — Saddam Hussein. I say unfortunately because so many people — innocent Iraqis as well as American soldiers — have died horrible deaths because of Wolfowitz's desire to remove the Iraqi dictator. As bad a man as Saddam was, his death was not worth the life of a single American trooper. As for the Iraqi people, under Saddam life (and death) at least had a strong degree of predictability. For the Iraqi of today, death may strike from anywhere at any time.

Easy money — As best as I can remember the free lunches started in the spring of 2004. I received a call from a telemarketer at Chase Bank, where I had a credit card that I seldom if ever used. The friendly banker inquired as to whether I would like to roll over any high interest credit card balances to Chase at 0% interest for one year. I replied that I had no high interest balances to roll over. He then suggested wiring cash directly to my bank account. He indicated my credit limit was $25,000 (which agreed with my records) and that he could wire $24,900 immediately. My only cost would be the 3% balance transfer fee which was capped at $75.

I knew that the going rate for an FDIC insured CD at my local credit union was about 5%. I quickly did the math and determined that this offer represented a free lunch netting me $1,175. After determining that this was not a scam designed to obtain my banking information (the telemarketer already knew my credit card number, my SSN, and my bank account number from previous payments), I agreed.

The $24,900 arrived as promised. I put it in a CD that would mature before the 0% interest expired and made the monthly payments for one year. I thought of those monthly payments as a form of forced saving. At the end of the year my net worth had increased by $1,175 plus the monthly payments as a result of the beneficence of one of the largest banks in the world. I began opening all those envelopes from banks offering 0% interest. I found that MBNA, Bank of America, HSBC, Citibank, RBS, Juniper, and Barclays were all equally generous about lending their depositors' money to me at 0%. I now have over $100,000 of other people's money working for me for free.

The obvious question is why highly profitable capitalist banking institutions would be so eager to lend me money for nothing. I can think of two reasons.

The most obvious would be that they are counting on lack of financial sophistication on my part. They're betting that I will take the cash advance and then foolishly use the card to buy lunch at Denny's. They would then apply all payments to the 0% balance and charge me interest on my retail purchases. Or they could hope that I squander the cash advance on wine, women, and song, and be unable to make the balloon payment at the end of the 0% period, which would, in some cases, trigger usurious interest payments retroactively. Or they could count on my making a late payment triggering their high credit card rates on the entire balance. (Thanks to the U.S. Postal Service that did almost happen. I got a monthly statement from RBC showing the previous payment credited to my account but charging me a late fee and interest anyway. When I called to complain they said the payment had arrived one day late. I had to threaten to pay my balance in full and close the account before they relented and removed the late fee and restored the 0% status.)

The second reason money center banks would be willing to make low or no interest unsecured loans is because they have more money to loan than they have creditworthy borrowers. A quick check of Federal Reserve figures reveals that M2, the money supply consisting of cash, traveler's checks, demand deposits, savings accounts, small-time deposits, and retail money market funds, rose from $6,064.2 billion in January of 2004 when my little personal carry trade operation began to $7,081.4 billion in January of this year. That's a 16.8% increase or a 5.6% annualized increase. Meanwhile Gross Domestic Product, GDP, measured in constant dollars by the Bureau of Economic Research, increased an average of 3.5% per year. 5.6% money growth minus 3.5% economic growth = 2.1% looking for a home. Think of me as altruistically taking in my small portion of that homeless money.

Of course this analysis is very much oversimplified. I'm ignoring M3 because the government no longer reports it. I'm not adjusting for the flow of funds into eurodollars, into the Chinese Central Bank, and into stock markets all over the globe. But the larger point remains. Alan Greenspan and Ben Bernanke have been creating way more money than is needed to fund ordinary commercial transactions in constant dollars. The first stop for newly created money is the money center banks. I'm happy to help relieve them of their burden.

The larger economic implications of a monetary policy that is so easy that it inspires major banks to make over $100,000 in unsecured loans to the likes of people like me is less benign. That same easy money availability has induced financial institutions to make those 0% down, negative amortization, variable-rate mortgage loans that are now going bad as home resale prices go down. It has postponed the day of reckoning for people who use the 0% marketing pitches of new credit cards to increase their onerous debt loads even more.

Coincidentally, Barclays Bank has announced bad debt amounting to £2.15 billion, and HSBC and RBS are expected to follow suit as more of their customers go bankrupt. The free lunch buffet looks like it may soon close. In terms of Austrian economic analysis, easy money has been funding a speculative economic boom that, when it does eventually burst, will be more devastating to more people than would otherwise be the case. And we all know what politicians do when people need financial help. They try to "help." They usually muck it up. And in the process a little more of our liberty is eroded. — Richard Fields

While Wolfowitz is unquestionably less deserving of a noose than Saddam, his execution might serve to give future harebrained policy-makers pause before they commit this nation to another bloody folly like Iraq. Of course, there will be no noose for Wolfowitz. (May not one dream, though?)

At least we may rest assured that Wolfowitz's public career is finished. He will while away the rest of his active life in some obscure business or academic post, no doubt writing articles and books justifying his past behavior.

The World Bank, however, goes on. Here we have an institution staffed by a team of international bureaucrats whose arrogance rivals even that of their soon-to-be ex-president. They receive enormous salaries for dispensing money to inefficient and corrupt governments in the "developing" world — money, moreover, that is extracted involuntarily from the American taxpayer (among others).

The bank's record of success is exceedingly slim. According to U.S. Treasury Secretary Henry Paulsen, the bank performs vital functions. This is nonsense, and Paulsen (I think) knows it. Had the bank never come into existence, our world would be not one whit different from what it is today, with the exception that a few thousand overpaid functionaries would be out looking for honest work.

Ding-dong, the wicked bank president is (metaphorically speaking) dead. However, the bank lives on, and nary a voice is raised (even on the Right) against it. Had Wolfowitz's forced departure only brought about a reassessment of the bank's usefulness, then the man would at last have performed a real public service. — Jon Harrison

Tariff wars — In April, negotiators reached agreement on the U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement. The agreement offers substantial benefits for America. Car tariffs will be eliminated on both sides, allowing consumers in both countries cheaper vehicles. Major agricultural products that we produce in abundance (including cotton, feed corn, soybeans, and wheat) become tariff-free immediately, with many others (such as bread, fruits, and sweet corn) becoming tariff-free within five years. And the Korean market for beef will be reopened.

Even more importantly, South Korea will open up its major service sectors to U.S. access. In the telecom and financial sectors, American companies will be able to own 100% of Korean ones. American banks will be free to open branches in Korea. Legal protection of intellectual property will be increased, and a new system of international arbitration will be set up to resolve business disputes.

The agreement is flawed by the remaining protectionist measures on both sides. The Koreans refused to allow rice to become tariff-free, for example, while we retained many "anti-dumping" regulations and agricultural subsidies. But the agreement, if approved by Congress, will still improve mutual trade enormously.

Of the numerous free trade agreements negotiated over the last decade, the U.S.-Korea pact will arguably be the most important. First, South Korea is a major economic power. It is the eleventh largest economy in the world, with a GDP of over a trillion dollars yearly. Even now, we are South Korea's second biggest trade partner, and it is our seventh largest one. If Congress approves the agreement, trade will grow apace.

Second, the treaty represents a tremendous gamble on the part of the Koreans. They negotiated a free trade agreement with us before doing so with their closer neighbors (China, Japan, Russia, Taiwan, and so on). This is a major statement about the importance of America in Asia, and a congressional snub would send an ugly message about our growing protectionism and isolationism.

If Bush — wounded as he is politically — can succeed in getting this agreement through, it will continue the momentum for international free trade, which had been slowed by the stalling of the Doha Round. Moreover, a victory with this agreement will almost surely lead to similar agreements between Korea, Japan, and China, which will in turn almost surely lead to a reduction in tensions in that troubled region.

The fight will come from the usual suspects: special interest groups that profit from denying American consumers their right to free choice. American automakers are opposed to the agreement because they didn't get the car import quotas they wanted. The AFL-CIO opposes all free trade agreements, and has indicated it will fight this one bitterly.

The agreement will survive if Bush can keep the Republicans in line, and get some of the more open-minded Democrats to vote for it in defiance of union demands. This is dicey — the unions and other protectionists have a more powerful voice in the Democratic Party today than they had a few years ago. In particular, the head of the trade subcommittee of the House Ways and Means Committee is Rep. Sander Levin, a Democrat from Michigan and the favorite mouthpiece of Big Labor. His unwavering opposition to the Korean deal is assured.

It may well come down to Rep. Charlie Rangel of New York, who in the past has been open to free trade agreements, if enough concessions (in the form of additional monies for worker training and unemployment insurance) are proffered. While he is under pressure from the protectionist wing of his party, there may be a personal angle that will rescue the agreement. Rangel won a Purple Heart and a Bronze Star for his service in the Korean War. He may want to see that sacrifice validated by an agreement that cements a relationship between Korea, a democracy established with the blood of 54,000 young Americans, and the country from which they came.

— Gary Jason

Mailing it in — Having written that the United States Postal Service is driving itself into threatened bankruptcy (and thus a demand for yet greater subsidy from public funds) by raising its rates in the face of competition from both UPS and email, I'm reluctantly pleased to report that on May 14 they did it again. Not only has the USPS increased rates yet further; it also announced more complications in determining prices. This will surely usher in its extinction. When I asked the week before in my lower Manhattan (SoHo) post office for a flier with the new rates, the clerk behind a continuous clear bulletproof partition (resembling those in liquor stores in slum neighborhoods) advised me to find them on the internet, which would be reasonable — if I were dealing with a private company.

When I recently airmailed a letter to Sweden at the old rates, it came back, stamped "insufficient address" and "do not remail in this envelope," with a further stamped demand for additional postage. Apparently the USPS clerk failed to recognize not only the country code but also the name of the capital city. Since nothing on my envelope specified how much additional postage was required, I went from usps.com to the

link for "International Mail Services," which said nothing about new rates.

Another letter, addressed to NYPL, 5th Avenue & 42nd Street, New York NY 10036, likewise came back marked "insufficient address." The clerk to whom I showed it at my SoHo post office handwrote into the address "New York Public Library." I then added, "Look for the huge building with the lions in the front." (Wish I were making this up.)

From the other side of our country, Steve Cox reports that in his local post office, "there are and have been *no* postings of the new rates, on walls or bulletin boards, so one has to stand in line and confer with a clerk who doesn't speak English, then ask for another clerk, to make sure one got it right." May I suggest that a central difference between his clerks and mine is that mine speak English, often as their mother tongue, even if they aren't always comprehensible.

My hunch is that these latest changes were instituted to make customers go more often to the local post office, where the lines have long been interminable, even for common mailings, thus prompting a demand for more postal employees, even at a time of decreasing revenue! Am I alone in smelling a conspiracy initiated by the postal workers' union? When the post office offered to sell first-class, postage-guaranteed-forever stamps, did it assume that the bargain really would have a short life? Much as unions sabotaged the American automobile industry, so they will kill mail delivery, in this case with government support. Perhaps once the USPS goes under, as it surely will if these self-defeating practices continue, the union will be demanding government benefits comparable to those awarded veterans of a war that was lost. How neat!

Legislators beware. — Richard Kostelanetz

Paradise restored — The vagaries of municipal government will beat your favorite sitcom in giggle power — every time. Take a major component of civic responsibility: our city streets. To my way of thinking, streets are a proper concern of city government, totally unlike libraries and buses, which, freed from the constraints of profit, are bungled beyond repair.

Streets, to my simple mind, are to facilitate the use of vehicles, which cannot traverse muddy meadows or forest trails or rocky canyons. We build streets to ease the paths of powered vehicles. This is the first lesson taught in Civic Planning 102. It's even taught at great universities like the University of California at Berkeley, where there's a deadly prejudice against cars, trucks, and motorcycles propelled by the fearsome, fuming, foulsome internal combustion engine. A UC physics lab is working feverishly on a windmill-propelled family vehicle that resembles a four-masted schooner and moves at six miles an hour in a howling gale. ("Meet you at Starbucks in eight hours, unless the wind stops.")

But the point is that, theoretically, streets promote the rapid passage of all kinds of motorized vehicles. So it is assumed, even at UC. Yet if this is true, why are the slowskies, all over the U.S., building asphalt barriers in the streets that resemble the barricades of the Paris Commune in 1870? Speed bumps, they're called. Their primary and only purpose is to impede the flow of traffic. This is a concept opposed to the concept of "street." And don't dare offer safety as a rationale. Bouncing over one of these fortifications, considering the damage done to axles and springs and suspension coils and brake systems, is *not* safe. (Have you seen the latest study proving that speed bumps prevent accidents? I haven't either, because there ain't any. It's one of those "seems like . . ." theories.)

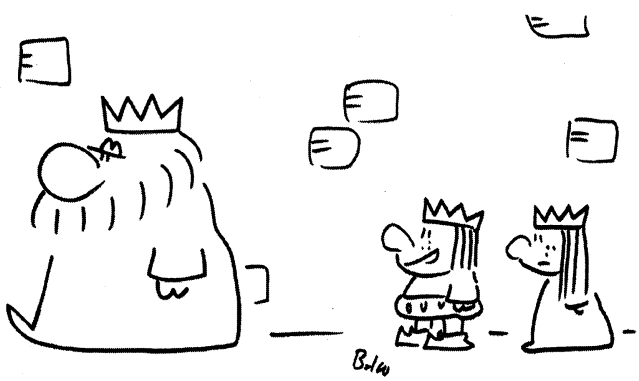
Talk about the law of unintended consequences! I just collided with four of these auto traps, and now I'm approaching a lighted intersection, but the four collisions have wounded my braking system and I run over four little schoolgirls on their way to first grade. I mash their furry puppy, too. That's safe?

And it's worse than that. Where there's government there's corruption. It's rumored that the speed bump crew canvasses the neighborhood selling tickets for the Speed-bump Builders' Ball. "Uh, Mr. Roberts, if we could just sell 40 tickets on your block: maybe instead of these 16 obstructions we could simply accept your oath that you will follow the existing speed limits on Sylvanpath Lane."

Have you noticed that they never blockade the streets in the neighborhoods of the city council? I've never seen a mayor's street with a single speed bump.

And here's the supreme irony. Mother Nature, during her cycle of seasons, efficiently contracts and expands the roadway, such that it's full of free potholes, which the city, of course, is too busy to repair. (Too many speed bumps to build.) These immense craters are great traffic impeders — axle-shaking, spring-cracking, frame-rattling holes. And completely without cost to us taxpayers! But no, that's not good enough for my muni-gov. They rush to spend a hundred thousand or so on more impediments. Why not just sprinkle inexpensive tacks in the street?

Or, even cheaper, let Nature take back her own. Let her reclaim her streets, boulevards, and lanes with oaks, willows, birches, maples, and all the tough spikey undergrowth that turns asphalt and concrete into wilderness. How safe we'll be then! — Ted Roberts



"Dad's not all bad — he'll be a great previous administration to blame things on."

Check the union label (or else) — As expected, the Democrat-controlled U.S. House of Representatives has passed an act that will eliminate secret ballots in unionization elections, a right that was guaranteed by the 1935 Wagner Act. Under this new act — which bears the Orwellian title "The Employee Free Choice Act" — union organizers need to do

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Ron Paul In the Spotlight

by Bruce Ramsey

If it walks like a Republican and talks like a Republican, it must be Ron Paul, because it sure isn't one of the other guys.

Three months ago, Liberty said of Rep. Ron Paul, R-Texas, "We like Dr. Paul, but about the best he could do is be noticed for one idea" — an exit from Iraq — and it was an idea also championed by another putative candidate for president, Sen. Chuck Hagel.

Since then, Sen. Hagel has sat on his hands and Paul has jumped in. Now it is Paul who shines and Hagel who fades out.

After the debate among ten Republican presidential contenders May 15, an Indianan called into C-SPAN and said, "Ron Paul is just head and shoulders above everybody else there." Exclaimed a caller from Louisiana, "The rest of them are just a bunch of puppets." Said a caller from Arkansas, "I feel sorry for the Republicans who have to sit there and actually take in Rudy Giuliani and McCain's insanity. Ron Paul was the only one that actually made sense."

Paul had been explaining the motives of the 9/11 terrorists: "Have you ever read the reasons they attacked us? They attack us because we've been over there; we've been bombing Iraq for 10 years. . . . Right now we're building an embassy in Iraq that's bigger than the Vatican. We're building 14 permanent bases. What would we say here if China was doing this in our country or in the Gulf of Mexico? We would be objecting. We need to look at what we do from the perspective of what would happen if somebody else did it to us."

The Fox News guy was taken aback. "Are you suggesting we *invited* the 9/11 attack, sir?"

"I'm suggesting that we listen to the people who attacked us and the reason they did it," Paul said, carefully not saying that America had "invited" it.

Giuliani burst in: "That's an extraordinary statement, as someone who lived through the attack of September 11, that we invited the attack because we were attacking Iraq. I don't think I've heard that before, and I've heard some pretty absurd explanations for September 11th."

Giuliani's supporters cheered, and the frontrunner (who must have heard Paul's thesis before) twisted the knife: "And I would ask the congressman to withdraw that comment and tell us that he didn't really mean that."

Paul did not back down. "I believe very sincerely that the CIA is correct when they teach and talk about blowback," he said. "If we think that we can do what we want around the world and not incite hatred, then we have a problem. They don't come here to attack us because we're rich and we're free. They come and they attack us because we're over there."

Lew Rockwell, at the libertarian webpage LewRockwell.com, called this "one of the great moments in the history of modern American politics," and surely it was.

The war supporters were furious. When Paul went on

Hannity & Colmes after the debate, Sean Hannity lit into him: "What have we done to cause the attack? What did America do to *cause* the attack on 9/11?"

Having his loyalty questioned on national television again, Paul was feeling pretty beat up, but he gave the same answer. Then came the online polls, which showed he had public support. Then the emails and viewer calls. Then the pundits.

From the Right, Patrick Buchanan noted that Paul was the only candidate among the ten who had voted against the war resolution in 2002. Said Pat: "Have not the last five years vindicated him?" From the Left, Alexander Cockburn credited Paul with "an intrusion of rational thought" in "a hotbed of stupidity."

Some of the comments were junk. Juan Williams of the Beltway Boys referred to "Ron Paul's conspiracy theory . . . on why we were attacked during 9/11," and Paul Krugman of the New York Times said that every candidate except John McCain had endorsed torture — which Paul had also condemned. Objectivist Robert Tracinski preposterously said on RealClearPolitics that Paul's embrace of "the basic antiwar argument of the Left" showed "why Ayn Rand was right to dismiss Libertarians as 'hippies of the Right.'"

Into the hullabaloo I added my voice as a regional newspaper columnist, opining on May 30 that Paul was right about the war and that Republicans should listen to him. This was posted in several places and I received more than 90 emails, 73% agreeing with Paul. Many of the Paul supporters were sore at me because I had also written, "There is no way this libertarian medical doctor from Texas is going to win the Republican nomination."

That statement won no points with Paul supporters. Wrote one reader to me: "How would you know? What are your credentials? Where's your objective data? As a journalist, you already know you taint an election and help to destroy democracy in America when you pretend to already know who is going to win."

Others had said it. In fact it was a recurring thing. Justin Webb of the BBC had said, "Paul will not win." Cathy Young of the Boston Globe had written on the Reason web page, "Paul has no chance." Columnist Bruce Bartlett had said Paul could not win.

Why do columnists say stuff like this? It is because they need to retain their credibility. If they don't say it, they will be branded as fantasists and shills — and rightly so. Paul was doing great in the unscientific internet polls, but in the scientific poll conducted June 1 for the Washington Post he was at 1%, tied for seventh place with Sam Brownback, Duncan Hunter, Tom Tancredo, and Tommy Thompson. In the June 7 poll for Fox News, he was at 2%. At 2% you are not going to win.

Giuliani's supporters cheered, and the frontrunner twisted the knife. Paul did not back down.

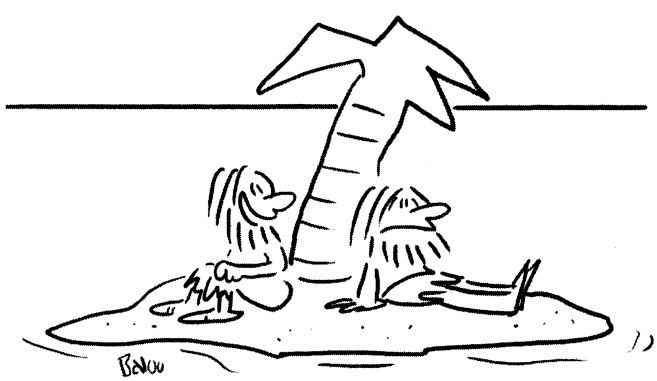
Fans, of course, may believe. If we journalists would just *say* Paul might win, then other people might say it, and it might be so. But it is a fanciful vision, which blogger Timothy Virkkala labeled "a mass domino cascade of copycat preference falsification." I am not quite sure what that entails, but I am not going to do it.

Immediate victory is not the only sort. Eugene McCarthy did not win the Democratic Party's nomination in 1968, but he launched its antiwar faction, which took over the party four years later.

What Paul can hope for — and it would be a very big thing — is to lead a group willing to identify itself as Republican and opposed to a foreign policy of preemptive war. When a figure as mainstream as Peggy Noonan writes (in the Wall Street Journal, June 1) that Bush's foreign policy is too "utopian and aggressive" for her, you sense an opening.

But there is a problem. Paul is not merely a foreign-policy Eisenhower. He is a foreign-policy Robert Taft — an America Firster. Paul's noninterventionism goes beyond foreign-policy "realism." When asked about that by Charles Davis on behalf of LewRockwell.com, Paul said, "I'm talking about where we are and which way we move. The realists now all of a sudden look like reasonable people compared to the radical neoconservatives." The realists are often wrong, Paul said, but "at least half the time they may be right."

Paul's more radical stand against world management sounds foreign to most conservatives, and not a little bit leftist. And some of Paul's support is coming from the Left. I had a pro-Paul email from a reader describing himself as "a card-carrying, if completely unideological, lefty." In describing a "meetup" in Nebraska, Paul supporter Laura Ebke wrote that the organizer was a "pro-life green Catholic Democrat." Some of Paul's media admirers have been on the Left as well, including Rosie O'Donnell, who chatted him up on her show; Bill Maher, who called Paul his "new hero"; and political comedian Jon Stewart. Paul won applause from Stewart's



"Don't worry, Herb — sooner or later, the United States will invade to make us hold democratic elections."

audience for saying America shouldn't spread freedom "with guns," but when he started talking about free-market medicine the audience was silent. Paul has a position on the war that appeals to the Left, but he is not a leftist and most of his positions will never appeal to them. He will convert a few, and that is a net gain, but most of his admirers on the Left will not become Republicans.

Paul's base is on the Right. His politics are libertarian — at his May 19 fundraiser in Austin he said, "The sole purpose of political activity, as far as I'm concerned, should be protection of individual liberty." But his message comes with a strong conservative flavor — and he is running as a "real conservative," which keeps him in the Republican tent. And he does appeal to them. The envelope of a Paul fundraising letter sent in early June says, "Time for a real conservative!" The four-page letter inside uses "conservative" 13 times, all on the first page or the last, and "libertarian" not once. It uses the term "truly pro-American foreign policy" rather than "noninterventionist," and it does not mention that he is for withdrawal from Iraq. It does mention that he is for the Constitution, that he would withdraw from the United Nations and resist the push to a "New World Order" and a "North American Union." It also says he considers illegal immigration "an invasion." It all sounds as if it were aimed at the readers of The New American.

Paul offers a mix of conservative and libertarian positions, including many that overlap. He is opposed to abortion and for overturning *Roe* v. *Wade;* he is for local-option prayer in public schools. He favors Bill Clinton's "don't ask, don't tell" policy on gays in the military. He voted no on the Patriot Act and the Military Commissions Act, and he voted yes on attacking Afghanistan and favors hunting down Osama bin Laden. He is against birthright citizenship and amnesty for illegals but says immigration would be okay "in a truly free economy." He is against a national ID card and for the right of *habeas corpus*. He is for currency backed by gold and silver. He is opposed to trade deals like NAFTA for reasons of national sovereignty. He would oppose military intervention

Paul has a position on the war that appeals to the Left, but he is not a leftist and most of his positions will never appeal to them.

to protect South Korea from North Korea or Taiwan from China, and he does not think Iran poses a threat to the United States. ("They talk belligerently," he said to Tucker Carlson.)

Some of these things have been mentioned in recent coverage, but most people are not interested in them (and they would be, if they thought he might be president). Paul has been in the spotlight for one reason only: because he intelligently challenges Republican orthodoxy on 9/11 and Iraq. And that is worth doing. Particularly it is worth doing from the dais of the Republican Party. Paul's grab for the spotlight would not work if he were the Libertarian Party's presidential nominee, as he was in 1988. The national media don't care about that party, because Americans won't vote for it. In the Republican race Paul is still "something of a long shot," as his campaign spokesman admits, but it allows him to harass the frontrunners and let everyone know that horse manure will not go undetected.

Paul has been in the spotlight for one reason only: because he intelligently challenges Republican orthodoxy on 9/11 and Iraq. And that is worth doing.

Look at the hay he made from the headbutting with Rudy. Shortly afterward, he called a press conference with Michael Scheuer, who once led the CIA's team on Osama bin Laden, and the two "assigned" Giuliani some books to read. They were Scheuer's "Imperial Hubris, Why the West Is Losing the War on Terror"; Chalmers Johnson's "Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire"; Robert Pape's "Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism"; and the federal government's own 9/11 Commission Report.

The idea wasn't that Rudy would read them, but that the public would. And some might; some might also get interested in Paul's libertarian worldview. Wrote David Beito, professor of history at the University of Alabama, "Generally I have pooh-poohed the view that electoral politics can 'educate' the public in libertarian principles. The Paul campaign is changing my mind."

The Paul campaign has also assembled a cadre of political street fighters. His chairman, Kent Snyder, who talked him into the race, has been an associate since the LP run. For nine years he ran Paul's Liberty Committee, from which Paul recently had to divorce himself, on account of new House ethics rules. Campaign manager Lew Moore was chief of staff for former Rep. Jack Metcalf, R-Wash., a right-wing populist who famously opposed the Federal Reserve as a greenbacker. Paul spokesman Jesse Benton was press secretary for Grover Norquist's group, Americans for Tax Reform.

Paul's supporters have beaten all their rivals on the internet. After the third Republican debate June 5, when WorldNet Daily had logged 2,478 votes on who won, Paul was ahead with 43.5%, followed by Tom Tancredo at 22.8%. The poll was not scientific, but it was *there*. "We're more blogged about and more searched-for than all the other Republican candidates combined," says Jesse Benton.

What will come of it we do not know. But it exists. It grows. It makes a noise. Somebody needed to make that noise, and Dr. Ron Paul is doing it. ❑

I Have Seen the Future, And It Has the Clap

by Bill Merritt

In The Villages, Florida, the turtles may be sexually frustrated, but the residents have all the action they can handle.

I always assumed that, if I lived long enough, someday I'd be 61. For a long time it seemed like a destination so remote that it was more like thinking about spending the night at that Hilton-in-Orbit they feature in "2001: A Space Odyssey," than anything that might ever happen in real life. Besides, I secretly knew that, if I actually did make it to 61, I'd still be 25, and no harm done.

So, it came as a shock to fly down to Orlando and visit a couple of army buddies I hadn't seen in 35 years.

The shocking part wasn't how old *they* had become. Getting old is pretty much God's plan for everybody but me. It wasn't even much of a shock to see their gorgeous young wives somehow transmogrified into the sort of old ladies whose houses we used to TP on Hallowe'en. What did come as a shock was that, when my buddies looked at me, their mouths fell open, and . . . "My God, man, what *happened* to you?" tumbled out.

Another shock was my first good look at Central Florida since I was a kid. My memories are of beautiful, rolling, ranchland. Of dark, silvery lakes and soft pastures, of lush grass set off by ancient live oaks dripping Spanish moss almost to the ground. Now, the place is . . . well, it's as if America had been leaking old people into Florida for so long that Miami Beach filled up. Then Boca Raton and Palm Beach and those places with names like Frost Proof and Shady Rest and Winter Haven and Sunny Isles until, finally, the tide of retirement communities rose all the way to Orlando.

It was the retirement communities that I was least prepared for, and not entirely because they didn't fit what I remembered Central Florida looked like. In some ways, they fitted just fine. Retirement communities, like good architecture everywhere, are informed by regional traditions in building. When the action was in Southern Florida, sensitive developers honored local custom by putting retirees into trailer parks. Now that the cutting-edge retirement communities are in the Orlando area, the vernacular is, well, Walt Disney World. But instead of signs saying how tall you have to be to go on this ride, people tell you that you ought to be at least 55 years old. Which puts me squat in the juicy middle of the demographic that the retirement communities are aimed at — and seeing them as I drove past made me suspicious that I might be catching glimpses into my own bleak, sanitized future.

Right now, the retirement community you most want to drive past, the one with the most houses, the most old people, the most golf courses, and far and away the longest wall to

keep young people out, is The Villages. The wall, of course, is what The Villages is all about. It is the defining feature that separates the people cocooned inside The Villages from the young people, and the dirt, and the unexpected shocks that those of us on the wrong side of the wall have to endure. But like all such barriers against reality, the wall is a vain hope. With its guard houses and red and white striped gates, it is more like those butterflies that disguise themselves to look like the other kind of butterflies, who taste bad, than it's like an actual, working defense against outside troubles. As protective coloration, though, it functions very well.

When you think about it, it's just about impossible to cordon off 38 square miles any place in America without capturing a county road or two in the process, and The Villages may have set some kind of record in this regard. When they built their wall, they captured three different roads in four separate counties.

If you're like me, you would have thought that four separate sheriffs would have come knocking the very next morning, and those roads would have been opened back up at gunpoint. But thinking that kind of thought just goes to show that neither you nor I know as much as we should about the places where we are likely to spend our reclining years. These lawmen are Central Florida sheriffs working for Central Florida counties, and Central Florida has way too many old people for any county official to risk offending — especially the kind of county official who has to run for reelection. So the county officials did what libertarians could only dream of county officials doing. They tried to *give* the roads to The Villages. But The Villages turned them down flat — for the common-sense economic reason that, if The Villages actually owned the roads, then The Villages would have to pay to maintain the roads. And nobody in The Villages wanted any part of that.

In the end, the counties and The Villages worked out a compromise: the counties kept the roads and the repair bills, and The Villages kept the guard houses and the red and white striped gates. Only, now, the gates can't really keep anybody out. The best they can do is just look like they can keep you out.

If you are under a mature (i.e., old) age, the gates will open for you as smoothly and automatically as for any legitimate The Villager, and you can drive right on through without getting your tires shot off. But, of course, you have to know you

When my buddies looked at me, their mouths fell open, and "My God, man, what happened to you?" tumbled out.

won't get your tires shot off. Nothing about the gates themselves will tip you to this fact and, now that we are living in times when it has turned into a federal offense just to try to use the bathroom in the first-class section of an airplane, most of us are never going to chance discovering such a fact on our own.

But if you do happen to discover it, the first thing you will see when you get inside is golf courses. Forty-three golf courses, which means you have to keep a lookout for golf carts in the road. Many of them are personalized. Some

Maybe one reason why people retire to The Villages is that the lifestyle seems so familiar to the one they had back home: paying taxes and fees, without much return in benefits.

fly flags. Some are pimped to look like Tonka-Toy dump trucks, or Mercedeses, or to look like that talking movie-star Volkswagen named Herbie. All are individualized magic carpets that whisk The Villagers about on personal business, and most don't seem to have anything to do with playing golf — because only 44% of the 60,000 current residents of The Villages choose to spend what little time they have left on golf. The rest have other things on their minds. What exactly those other things would be isn't mentioned to outsiders, although it seems to have been uncovered by a reporter from Local 6 News last spring.

But I'm getting ahead of my story. If you don't mind golf carts driving in slow motion in front of you with their turn signals on, you can spend days riding around The Villages unmolested by the sight of a young mother, or a child's bicycle, or an animal that's not on a leash, or a weed, or girls with pigtails skipping rope, or Boy Scouts trying to help old ladies across the street, or a paint color that's not pastel and not approved by the architectural committee, or any other thing that might grate upon your senses, including, most especially, Jimmy Brown the newsboy, who would be out on two counts. It's not just his age that would disqualify him from being a The Villager. No newsboy could go the freight on the taxes.

Somehow, The Villages has gotten Florida to certify it as its own taxing authority. Buy a house in The Villages, and you start paying something like $3,500 a year to the developer, or whoever it is that The Villagers pays these taxes to — and these taxes will be on top of the taxes you still have to pay to the county and the state. And they are taxes, mind you, not dues. Dues are another payment entirely — a payment along the lines (if memory serves) of $250 a month.

But at least paying these dues lets you . . . well, it's hard to see what, exactly, paying these dues does let you do, because everything you might want to do seems to come with a special fee. To get into the woodshop, for example, you have to pay *another* $250, plus a yearly maintenance fee. As the salesman explained when I tried to pin him down on what it actually costs to live in The Villages, "At The Villages, you don't buy a house. At The Villages, you buy a lifestyle." A lifestyle, apparently, of paying taxes and fees without getting a great deal

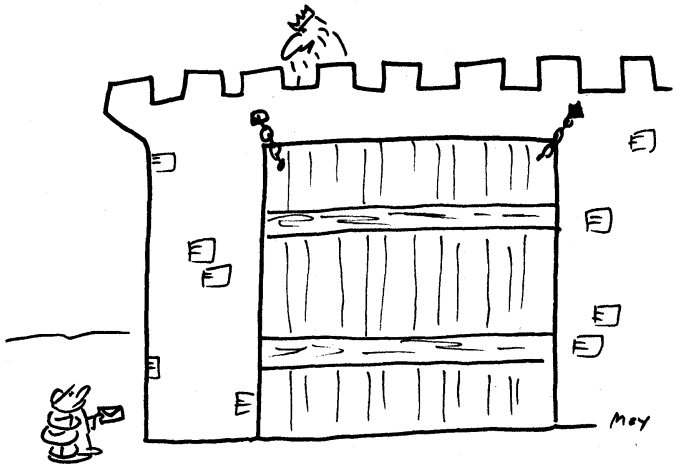
back. Maybe one reason why people retire to The Villages is that the lifestyle seems so familiar to the one they had back home: paying taxes and fees, without much return in benefits. Except, of course, it is a lifestyle without turtles.

Somewhere along in the construction process of The Villages, the workers encountered endangered turtles. Now, if you have been following the news for the last 30 or 40 years, you will know that endangered turtles are just the thing to shut down most developments. But not The Villages. The Villages is Central Florida old people *en masse,* and it worked out a deal with the government department in charge of turtles that made everybody happy. Except, perhaps, the turtles. Like most facts and figures I wanted to know, the salespeople couldn't come up with any actual statistics on the internal life of turtles at The Villages.

Since the building permit already called for bits of green space dotted about the 38 square miles, The Villages took what looks like an acre or two at the far end of the property, surrounded it with a turtle-proof fence, and turned it into a turtle corral, imaginatively designated as a "sanctuary." From then on, whenever a worker discovers a turtle, he tosses it over the fence, and environmental concerns are taken care of.

It's so thick in there with 38 square miles of accumulated turtle that, at night, I am told, one can hear the bellowing and clacking of rutting bull tortoises crashing into each other in an attempt to carve out a little territory for their hard-shell harems. The sanctuary is also, I am pretty sure, a convenient buffet for whatever turtle-eating raptors happen to pass overhead.

As things stand, however, the developed part of the development is still eight miles away. Originally, houses were slated to run right to the property line that separates The Villages from the pleasant community where one of my army buddies lives. But now, with a state-designated turtle sanctuary in the way, the onrushing mob of houses won't be coming closer than a couple of acres to his home. I can't help seeing the advantages to my buddy in this arrangement.



"Just slip it under the drawbridge."

I don't know how many houses are in The Villages right now. As with the statistics on turtle happiness, the sales personnel are long on froth and short on facts. But it's easy to surmise that, given the age of The Villagers, there must be way

Whenever a worker discovers a turtle, he tosses it over the fence, and environmental concerns are taken care of.

fewer than two people per household, and that means scores of thousands of houses, so many that, the morning after a tornado touched down and television was reporting that a thousand homes had been destroyed in The Villages, I drove for hours and never saw any damage.

What I did see were dozens of separately gated communities with developer-inspired names like Tierra del Sol and Hacienda las Palmas. These are, I think, the "villages" that The Villages is named after. Each one is segregated behind its individual wall from all the others, apparently on the basis of the price of the houses. Walled communities within a walled community. To me, that didn't add up to villages at all. To me it added up to some benighted medieval town where citizens of the same kind of background are ghettoed together in isolation from citizens of every other kind of background. Even in The Villages — or, maybe, especially in The Villages — you don't want people from the designer-home quarter having to hobnob with riffraff more properly consigned to the manufactured-home quarter.

Looking through the gates as one drives by, one can manage to see a lot of houses, houses as imaginatively designed, and as crammed together, as Monopoly houses that haven't yet left the box. It's hard to shake the impression that they are made out of the same stuff as Monopoly houses, too, and that if a fire ever gets started back in there, people all the way to Cape Canaveral are going to have their lungs eaten out by the long-chain hydrocarbons and partially oxidized petroleum byproducts thrown off by the chemically based building materials and pastel paints. And there's lots more of those houses to come. The Villages isn't even close to being complete.

Those furiously developing last eight miles of Central Florida pastureland stretching toward the turtle corral are where The Villages intends to park *another* 40,000 thus-far happy Americans (including maybe, even, you and me) who don't yet know what the future has in store for them, just as soon as enough plastic and petrochemicals can be glued together to give us a place to live. To sweeten the deal, I'm guessing the developer will toss in an additional 25 or so golf courses, and, I have it on good report, a town square designed to look like something out of the Old West.

This would complement the town squares they already have. One looks the way a full-scale model of Key West would

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$2.3 Trillion, and Not a Penny More!

by Peter Allen

The international aid community is armed with good will, good intentions, rock-star spokesmen, and, most dangerous of all, trillions of dollars.

Ghana achieved its independence in 1957, the first colony in sub-Saharan Africa to do so. By that time the two world wars of the 20th century had taken their toll on the European imperial powers. Subjecting millions of people to rule from a distant land had become prohibitively expensive. Some people considered it immoral. So there was great fanfare for the new state of Ghana. The Queen's aunt, the Duchess of Kent, attended the independence ceremonies; great hopes were discussed; optimistic predictions were made. The new leader, Kwame Nkrumah, said: "My government fully realizes both the advantages and the responsibilities involved in the achievement of independence. It intends to make full use of these advantages to increase the prosperity of the country."

Prosperity was not to be realized. After a brief period of growth, Ghana's economy floundered. President Nkrumah mismanaged the nation's accounts, embraced socialism, and spent large amounts of borrowed money on an ill-advised hydroelectric dam on the Volta River. In February 1966, while Nkrumah was in China, his government was overthrown in a CIA-backed coup. The country experienced a series of coups before a new, but still corrupt, leader emerged.

So goes the usual pattern of government in postcolonial Africa. A charismatic leader stirs up nationalist sentiment, there is a struggle for independence (sometimes involving guerrilla warfare), the colonial power admits that its rule can no longer be sustained, a plan for independence is hastily contrived, independence is achieved (with varying amounts of animosity toward the former colonial power and a widespread emigration of white settlers), and the nationalist leader pledges immediate and eternal prosperity. He has, however, inherited a country whose people lack the technical skills to replace the departed colonial rulers. He then aggravates the situation by becoming a despot, imposing one-party rule, ruthlessly silencing dissent, and using the national treasury as his personal bank account. He pays off the military and builds worthless monuments to his ego.

This is the point at which virtually anything can happen, so long as it's ridiculous. On Dec. 4, 1977, President Jean-Bedel Bokassa of the Central African Republic had himself crowned *Empereur de Centrafrique par la Volonté du Peuple Centrafricain, Uni au Sein du Parti Politique National, le Mouvement pour l'Évolution Sociale de l'Afrique Noire* (Emperor of Central Africa by the Will of the Central African People, United in the National Political Party, the Movement for the Social Evolution of Black Africa). The ceremony cost $22 million. While these things are going on, the people starve, taxes become onerous,

personal rights are annulled, and an insurgent leader emerges using violence and intimidation, as well as pledges of prosperity if only he and his clan are placed in power.

Now one of two routes can be taken: either one leader will become dominant, normally by procuring the aid of one of the world's superpowers, and succeed in crushing his adversaries, or political exhaustion will result in an election monitored by the international community. Such elections feature lots of lofty language (as well as threats), and are marked by one overriding ultimatum: "I will abide by the results of the election if I win, but not if I lose, because in that case there was obviously fraud. To combat this fraud I will take up arms and fight until the true will of the people is enforced."

Citizens know that the elections are a sham and that they cannot trust anyone in the state apparatus. So they put their faith elsewhere — in their tribal region or ethnic group. People are extremely reluctant to believe that anyone from outside their own ethnic, tribal, religious, or other identity group can be trusted. Unfortunately, they feel this way because it is true. If you are not a member of the ruling clan you will not be showered with the ill-gotten perquisites of state power. Your region will not receive massive building projects, its leaders will not be given blank checks to spend as they please, and you stand a much lower chance of receiving some sham state job to sustain you and your family when starvation overtakes the country. Corruption runs rampant because it must. There is no way people can trust the state, so they look out for themselves and their families at all costs. That includes lying, cheating, stealing, and just plain forcing others to assist them. Illegal roadblocks are set up on main thoroughfares, diamonds are stolen from state-owned mines, and wars are waged on groups that have a resource that other groups want.

Explanations are myriad for the intractable failure of African nations to establish stable governments. Some say it is because the people in African countries never really had anything in common with the others within their state borders. After all, these borders are nothing but figments of the imagination of past colonial masters. Others say that it is because the colonial leaders exploited the land, and then left the African people without the ability or skills needed to reap the benefits of their abundant resources. Still others say that it's just human nature. If you lived in abject poverty and saw a way to enrich yourself and your friends through means that, while less than honorable, could in some way be rationalized, wouldn't you do it? Then there are others who say that the reason is political immaturity and insatiable selfishness. Africans had never before competed in a global economy, so how can they be expected to be good at it right off the bat? Leaders see political positions merely as lofty titles and fat paychecks; they don't have the background for rule and are blinded by the perks of office.

A paradox of economic development is that while free markets work, free-market reforms often do not.

Now, as if all this weren't daunting enough, enter the international aid community, armed with good will, good intentions, rock-star spokesmen, and, most dangerous of all, trillions of dollars.

More Money, More Problems

What can you buy for $2.3 trillion? Happiness? Love? Long life? Perhaps, but there is certainly one thing the sum cannot buy — economic prosperity in the poorest nations of the world. This is what William Easterly, a professor of economics at NYU and a former official with the World Bank, calls "the second tragedy of the world's poor." In his book "The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good" (Penguin, 2006), Easterly argues that Western incompetence in the form of centralized bureaucracies, military intervention, and simple ignorance have brought us to a place where $2.3 trillion has been invested in countries that have responded by getting poorer.

The statistics are amazing. Of the twelve African nations that received the most World Bank structural adjustment loans from 1980 to 1999, seven achieved negative per capita growth. Of the other five, the big winner was Uganda, which experienced 2.3% growth. (For comparison: six of the top ten loan recipients in former Communist nations achieved negative growth — a datum that broadens the issue beyond Africa.) The higher the percent of time a country spent in an IMF or World Bank program, the more likely it was to fail. It would be unfair to blame the World Bank for these nations' struggles, since the bank probably wouldn't be there in the first place if they weren't already desperate, but no one can argue that it is seeing its goals achieved.

Easterly sorts people working in the aid community into two camps, the Planners and the Searchers. For the past 50 years international aid has been dominated by the Planners, who often create more barriers to development than they remove. The first problem with the Planners is their almost religious devotion to grand utopian schemes. Easterly quotes remarks by high-ranking government and aid officials who have made optimistic predictions about what aid is going to achieve: universal access to clean water within the next ten years, universal primary school enrollment by 2010, elimination of infant mortality within the next 15 years. The problem with these predictions is not just that they are preposterously overstated but that when money is allocated and goals are unachieved, no one is held responsible. So the next round of aid suffers the same fate as the previous one.

Easterly argues that the first problems to solve are the millions of small problems that have created the big problem. And this is where the Searchers come in. The Searchers are actually on the ground in the countries in question, getting to know who the locals are, what they want, and how to get it to them. The Searchers create markets that address single problems — for example, the problem of preventing malaria in Malawi.

Malaria is a disease that is deadly to newborn infants but can be prevented with the use of insecticide-treated bed nets.

So a Planner somewhere decided to use other people's donated money to give free bed nets to all Malawians. This might seem like an easy solution to the problem, but as the cliche goes, "For every question there is an easy answer — and it's usually wrong." The "bed net initiative" somehow failed to decrease the infant mortality rate. Yet all was not lost. A Searcher came up with the idea of giving a commission to nurses for each bed net they sold, at a highly subsidized price, to new mothers. This provided the nurses with a strong incentive; it also targeted willing buyers — women who, having just given birth, were very interested in seeing their children survive. This sort of solution could only come from someone who understood Malawi. Bed nets would benefit almost anyone in such a mosquito ridden country, but when they were merely given away for free they often fell into the hands of people who did not use them as intended. In Malawi the free bed nets often transformed into fishing nets and wedding veils.

In Malawi the free bed nets often transformed into fishing nets and wedding veils.

This crippling lack of understanding permeates the aid community. When the Berlin Wall fell and Communist countries were finally able to govern themselves, the Planners proposed an aid policy called "shock therapy." This plan had many important backers, including Easterly, who at the time was a World Bank economist working on the economic transition of Russia. He admits that at the time he believed in "shock therapy," which had as its principal tenet the top-down imposition of a market economy after decades of central planning. But although a free-market economy is infinitely preferable to a centrally planned one, a paradox of economic development is that while free markets work, free-market reforms often do not, and in the case of the newly capitalist Russia, the results were disastrous. Massive corruption turned Russia into an economy based on crony capitalism. As state enterprises were put on the auction block, the well connected cashed in. To cite but one example: the oil firm Yukos was sold to Mikhail Khodorovsky (now serving some very controversial time for tax evasion), the man who owned the bank that was running the auction.

"Shock therapy" at least did half its job. The Russian economy went into a shock from which it has yet to recover, and it is still attempting to find its way after moving from one type of central planning to another. The scheme ultimately failed because Western-style markets could not simply be imposed overnight; they had to grow organically from within into the kind of mature economic institutions that today are placing some of the economies of Eastern Europe among the most dynamic in the world. I have recently taken trips to Slovenia and Slovakia, both of which are growing and modernizing. For five years (2001–05), Slovakia's economic growth exceeded EU predictions. Both have recently joined the EU. Slovenia has now become the first of the former Communist nations to adopt the euro. It will hold the EU presidency in 2008. But neither Slovakia nor Slovenia was among the top ten recipients of World Bank or IMF Structural Adjustment Loans from 1990–99.

If markets could be imposed from the top down, then they would not be "free" markets. Trying to legislate and plan a free-market economy is no different from trying to set prices for goods in Vladivostok from a desk in Moscow. Other elements must be present before a market can be called "free" and operate efficiently. But these elements, most notably property rights, are often lacking in third-world countries. Countries that have not effectively developed property rights, free speech, civil liberties, effective policing, and other necessary elements of a free society cannot be shocked into operating a working free-market economy.

It is estimated that the majority of property in third-world countries is not privately owned, and is not, therefore, a capital resource. In the 19th century the United States expanded property rights by passing the Homestead Act, providing free title to land for people who promised to live on it and improve it. The policy enabled many Americans to acquire capital in land. If an effective way could be found to implement property rights for the very poor people who live in African nations, they would gain equity against which they could borrow to start a business, pay tuition, purchase health insurance, or improve their farms. Without such property rights no World Bank or IMF "Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper" is going to have any success.

What Easterly argues against is central planning, which, having failed everywhere else, has found a comfortable home in the World Bank and the IMF. Indeed there are times when you read about the strategies of these institutions and hear the words of Stalin praising the Soviet Union's Great Five Year Plans. The aid community uses the language of capitalism and free markets, but its deeds do not follow its words. When developing an aid program it demands high-detail plans, and buries those applying for the aid in bureaucratic paperwork. Couple this with a general ignorance of the cultures that the aid community is trying to assist and what you get is a strange amalgam of complicated, supposedly rigorous programs, and abuse by corrupt dictators, who can almost always find a way to get aid money to their cronies. Even worse, since the IMF, World Bank, and Paul David Hewson (aka Bono) haven't the spine to get tough with abusers, failure is almost always rewarded with more debt "relief" and more cash for plans with lofty goals.

Aid workers could administer polio vaccinations while the thugs running the roadblock were extorting money.

Easterly's claims about centralized planning do not prove true in every case. One example is in Chad, where the World Bank funded an oil development project. To ensure that the revenue was not wasted, the bank set clear mandates for its use: revenue could be used only to improve and develop Chad's infrastructure. Thus far the plan has been a success, and recently Chad's dictator, President Idriss Deby, complained that he is not seeing enough of the revenue, a sure sign that the program's goals are being achieved. But it is precisely because the local authorities were not allowed to make their own decisions that this plan has succeeded. Chad is one of the most impoverished nations in the world, and previous aid money spent there has not seen its goals accomplished. The World Bank's team for this project took the wise step of operating on its own and making the decision to focus on infrastructure and bypass the local Chadians and their authorities.

These developments expose another flaw in the aid bureaucracy: its insistence on operating within the framework of the nation-state. Governments need to be bypassed and aid taken directly to the people. This is, of course, more difficult than it sounds. Many dictators reject outside interference in their countries, and aid workers are always under the risk of kidnapping or other harm. Still, work can be done exclusively through local communities. One example that Easterly discusses is the polio vaccinations administered at one of the many illegal roadblocks set up throughout Africa. The aid agency at work in the area realized that this was an excellent place to reach a large number of people. Aid workers could administer polio vaccinations while the thugs running the roadblock were extorting money. It was a creative way to use one of the hindrances of economic development for at least some benefit.

It is easy to cherish false goals when you deal with governments rather than people. The aid community, which is also a de facto political organization, pushes its money towards high-profile goals, not necessarily those that most need attention or that the poor need addressed. And because of this desire to solve the most politically correct problems, money gets wasted.

Conflicts that seemed vitally important at the time often turned out to be mere annoyances, and the seemingly easy solutions employed turned out to be recipes for disaster.

The clearest examples lie in the field of health care. The World Health Organization has had more success achieving its goals than the World Bank, but it has also experienced some of the greatest failures, especially in relation to AIDS. AIDS has become a giant political football, and treating AIDS victims in the third world is an extremely politically correct goal. However, as Easterly argues, it is also a goal that has been very wastefully pursued. "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure": for the cost of a lifetime's worth of antiretroviral drugs for a single AIDS victim, many thousands of people could receive immunizations or other health treatments against more common ailments. No one has anything but sympathy for a child born to an AIDS-infected mother. The amount of good press that can be generated by providing her with antiretroviral drugs is incalculable. Yet this sort of "aid for the headlines" leaves many more people at risk, people who would benefit from cost-efficient means of preventing AIDS and other illnesses.

If seeing pictures of Mobutu's yacht is not enough to scare people away from international aid, I don't know what is.

Easterly also discusses the roots of poverty in the most impoverished nations. He has nothing but disdain for those who claim that the poor are caught in a "poverty trap" that destroys their ability to improve their condition. He points out that other countries have been just as impoverished as the present crop and have worked their way out of it. The problem is bad governance, and bad government, unlike successful entrepreneurs, is something that the third world has in spades. There is no reason to itemize the stream of corrupt leaders who have occupied the role of president in Africa: Mobuto Sese Seko in Zaire, Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe, the aforementioned Jean-Bedel Bokassa . . . the list can be expanded for paragraphs. All looked out for themselves, not their people; and surely no one would argue that their excesses should be ignored because of feelings of inadequacy left over from colonial times.

Not that colonialism didn't have an effect. Easterly tells the story of Angola's experience as a region ransacked by the Portuguese for slaves, and shows how the problems created in that era live on to this day. He tells the story of a small strip of land on the eastern side of the Mediterranean Sea with a colorful religious history that was promised to three different groups by its British colonial masters, leading to many of the problems we see today between the Palestinians and the Israelis. The consequences of colonialism are borne out in the statistics, which show that the countries least able to achieve even a modicum of economic growth are almost all former colonies.

It must be admitted, however, that many of Africa's current problems are linked to the exit — often the forced exit — of the skilled people, black and white, who were connected with former colonial governments. And the fact that former

colonies have bad economies is related not just to the political problems of colonialism itself but to the fact that areas of the world that were less developed, politically and economically, were more likely to be taken over as colonies.

While we are talking about political problems, however, we should also notice, as Easterly does (with considerable emphasis), the developed countries' shortsighted military interventions in the name of fighting communism, terrorism, or other things of supposed strategic interest. These interventions go wrong almost as a rule, leaving many dead bodies as well as an extremely embarrassing set of justifications. Conflicts that seem vitally important at the time often turn out to be mere annoyances, and the seemingly easy solutions employed turn out to be recipes for disaster.

The West's lack of understanding of whom it is helping is exemplified in the "enemy of my enemy is my friend" mentality. During the Cold War this maxim seemed to be the only guiding principle. Probably the most depressingly humorous of Easterly's quotations comes from President Reagan, who, in an attempt to contain Libyan dictator Moammar Qadaffi, continued a courtship, started under President Carter, with Sudanese president Jafar Numeiry. Numeiry was a murderous supporter of terrorism who was eventually overthrown by his own officers — yet Reagan explained his foreign policy plan for the region and Sudan's role in it by stating: "We do know that Colonel Qadaffi has been and will continue to be a destabilizing force in the region, so nothing would surprise us, and we do know that Sudan is . . . Sudan is . . . Sudan is . . . one of those countries in that region of Africa."

The countries we have aided in the third world read like a "Who's Who" of failed nationhood: Cambodia, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Nicaragua, Angola, Haiti, and Liberia, to name just a few. While no one would argue that these countries would be successful first-world economies had the U.S. not intervened, our stated goal of turning them into stable democracies certainly fell far short of its mark. All of this reinforces the idea that economic development has to start from within and match the local customs and traditions of the people involved. If that means that they dabble for a while in Marxism or *sharia,* so be it. We all know what the result of those experiments will be.

When comparing the failed military interventions that Easterly documents with the failed aid initiatives, one sees a very distinct pattern. Any attempt to impose Western goals on a foreign people is bound to fail unless the local conditions are such that the community can absorb those goals. Whether the intervention is arms or economic aid, it must reflect the will of those being "aided."

Easterly illustrates this point by contrasting successful with unsuccessful interventions. The post-World War II Marshall Plan in Europe and the similar rebuilding of Japan are both remembered as wildly successful examples of American aid money being used to improve the lives of people who were subject to crushing poverty. An important difference, however, is that European society was already accustomed to property rights, markets, and the rule of law. So was the society of Japan, a nation that had never been colonized and had been experiencing economic expansion for decades before it took its militaristic detour in the '30s.

For other reasons as well, Japan was different from the recipients of current international aid. The Japanese people considered themselves one people and had developed organically, as a single nation. This prevented the kind of internecine conflict we see in many developing nations. Also, Japan was a nation utterly defeated and occupied by the United States. There was no doubt about who was in charge. American aid in Japan took two main forms: food aid to prevent a humanitarian crisis, and financing through loans and grants. The actual development and rebuilding of the nation's industrial infrastructure was left to the citizenry. To aid Japan's transition into the world economy, the U.S. secured for them temporary GATT membership and purchased from them supplies needed to fight the Korean War. All of this helped make it possible for Japan's economy to return to prewar levels by 1952, a remarkably early date.

How to Help the Helpers

One of the many purportedly well-intentioned Westerners who appears in Easterly's book is Jack Straw, until recently the British foreign minister, talking about all the wonderful plans he has to aid the world's poor. Somehow, though, when these plans go nowhere, Jack Straw does not lose his job. Easterly recommends a technical fix for the accountability problem: the major aid agencies should pool the money they spend on self-evaluation to form an independent evaluating body. This body would be looking for aid that is responsive to the needs of the citizens but that at the same time would search for signs of corruption to avoid the aid agency creating more billionaires like Mobutu Sese Seko. This body would be staffed by people who are without a stake in the programs being reviewed, but who have enough understanding of the aid community to document the successes or failures of the next $2.3 trillion.

This suggestion to create an independent evaluating body smacks a bit of the "solve government's shortcomings with

"People are starving in Ethiopia, and you're complaining because your *VCR* doesn't work?"

more government" conundrum — although any improvement in accountability would be a very welcome change in the aid community. Thus far the only consistent response to a failed program is to heave another bundle of money at the same people who wasted the last bundle. The blueprint of promising the world and not asking aid workers to specialize in a particular problem often results in aid workers starting projects that are abandoned and left in disrepair. If aid is not garnering headlines, an aid worker has no more incentive to deliver on some absurd promise that a politician has made.

Thus far the only consistent response to a failed program is to heave another bundle of money at the same people who wasted the last bundle.

Actually, accountability could better be achieved through another approach that Easterly pushes: incremental bottom-up aid. This would require an agency to specialize in what it's good at, while consulting the poor to find out what they actually want and providing them with an incentive to accomplish it. After investments are made, both the aid agency and the people being aided would have a responsibility to see the project through. As in the "bed net initiative," local people would have a stake in each project, with the inherent risk and reward of a regular business venture. This would put the locals in the position of experimenting with property rights and business practices. In addition to providing much needed expertise, the aid specialists on the ground could keep a close eye on all activities. This oversight would be crucial in ensuring that funding could immediately be cut if a project became corrupted or was not seeing results.

This would be a monumental change from the current system. Right now, the IMF and the World Bank give loans and admit nations into their programs with every intention of enforcing strict fiscal discipline. However, when (not if) these programs fail, there are almost no consequences. Debts are likely to be forgiven and new loans granted, no matter what problems have emerged in the previous round of aid. This lack of accountability is extremely detrimental to finding out what does and does not spur economic development. Aid programs are initiated, sometimes with much fanfare, given a short time to germinate, and then left in disrepair or ignored when those involved get frustrated or lose interest. This abrupt end squanders any lessons that could be learned about what the program was and was not accomplishing.

While he stops short of calling for the World Bank and IMF to be discarded completely, Easterly does call for severe restrictions on what they do. In the case of the IMF, he advocates that it avoid working with the poorest nations and go back to its original mission of working with emerging economies that are on the cusp of joining the developed world. This would reestablish the distinction between countries with no functional economy and countries that have done the work necessary to get to the verge of economic stability. Such countries have different needs. They have straightened out the worst kinks in their economies. They can be trusted with aid money, with fewer strings attached.

Such a policy would help end the schizophrenia of the IMF, but it could produce other results, too. Having the IMF involved in developing countries could provide an important check on the World Bank and create a sort of competition between the two agencies that might be beneficial. Competition with each other and the myriad other international organizations that are attempting to help developing nations, when coupled with oversight and transparency, might create a market in international aid that could allow the best ideas to rise to the top. More important than this, however, is Easterly's call for an end to the arrogance of elitist central planning — by the IMF, the World Bank, the UN, or anyone else. People on the outside, no matter how well-educated or well-intentioned, do not automatically understand the intricacies of the cultures they are trying to aid.

For aid to be effective, there must first be some level of trust between people of differing backgrounds. Easterly quotes a study that shows a correlation between the amount of "anonymous trust" that people have in other people — trust in people they don't know — and their average per capita income. Not surprisingly, countries where there is a high amount of anonymous trust enjoy much higher incomes. The recent elections in the "Democratic Republic" of the Congo provide an interesting case study. Few Americans realize that the bloodiest conflict in the world since World War II has been the intractable conflict in the DRC: close to 4 million people have died from causes directly related to the war since it began in 1998. Recently an election was held in which the incumbent leader Joseph Kabila won over rebel leader Jean-Pierre Bemba. Bemba is, of course, unconvinced by the results. His lack of trust in the election officials is no doubt partly motivated by a larger lack of trust in the willingness of the opposition to look out for his supporters' needs.

Would anyone argue that an international body could have negotiated a peaceful power-sharing solution to the American Civil War, or the French Revolution?

Trust is crucial to a nation's economic health. You are

more likely to do business with strangers if you feel that they will uphold their part of the bargain. If you cannot trust a stranger, the only people you are likely to trust are members of your family. If that is true, then you are severely limiting the extent to which your business can grow, and the amount of talent it can take advantage of. Trust also means that you rely on being treated fairly by the authorities. Without trust in the local government, a business will not report its income and will turn to others for protection — often to a local element that is little more than an organized crime syndicate. To break this cycle, aid workers should try to institute law and contract enforcement measures that are simple and transparent. An obvious place to start is with the local tax system, which in many poor countries is onerous, to say the least. Local businesses often find themselves paying taxes to many different "authorities," at rates that fluctuate randomly. Nine Eastern European countries (starting with Estonia in 1991) that used to have extremely complex tax systems have moved to a flat tax that is easy to understand and enforce. They immediately saw increased compliance with the tax code, and higher revenues besides. Their revolutionized tax codes gave people faith that when they paid the mandated amount they would fulfill their obligation to the state, and could go about their other business. That is trust.

Of course, trust is the whole ballgame when it comes to planning an aid program. On the one hand, the detail required by a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper is akin to the repulsive and constraining detail of central planning, but on the other, would anyone really advocate just writing a check to Joseph Kabila and letting him and his cronies spend it as they see fit? At times it seems that this is a strategy Easterly is willing to try. However, if that strategy were followed I'm quite sure we would see a new Gulfstream 5 in Kabila's hangar before we saw a new hospital. It seems that the last and best method left to the West is that of disengagement. Instead of focusing on what we clearly cannot control, let's focus on what we can.

One example is farm subsidies. The Doha Round of WTO negotiations was intended to lower trade barriers around the world but was held up principally over the issue of agriculture subsidies. While advances in technology have made it possible for Africa to greatly increase its amount of arable land, the EU, the U.S., and Japan have been unwilling to lower their farm subsidies. Indeed, in May 2002, with the country still reeling from the 9/11 attacks and an expensive war on the horizon, President Bush signed a $190 billion farm subsidy bill. This bill could only be seen as hostile to free trade and, as a result, to African development. If farm subsidies were rescinded, African farmers could make use of technological advances and sell produce to richer countries at a cheaper price than that exacted for the produce grown by U.S. farmers, many of whom are heavily reliant on farm-bill subsidies.

Further, the West should look long and hard before intervening to stop civil wars in third-world countries, often using the UN as its proxy. While there are times when intervention may be necessary — the Rwandan genocide demanded some sort of response — most interventions merely prolong conflicts. If the warring parties can be prevailed upon to limit hostilities, the UN then tries to set up a "coalition government" featuring prominent roles for the antagonists. This almost never works. Hostilities break out again, until the cycle of disputed elections, claims and counterclaims, hostilities and counterhostilities, kicks back in. However callous it may seem, countries must be left to sort out their own problems. Would anyone argue that an international body could have negotiated a peaceful power-sharing solution to the American Civil War, or the French Revolution?

Encouraging internal change on a diplomatic level and by concerned individuals is fine. Natan Sharansky arugues that aid should only be given after internal reforms allowing freedom of speech and freedom of association. Even then the country in question has to get to the cusp of stabilization on its own. International aid has seen some success with countries, such as South Korea, that had nearly achieved a functioning free-market economy and just needed a last little push to finish off the transition. From the period 1960–79, South Korea has been one of the few developing nations to experience a large economic expansion, growing at an average rate of 8.6% per year. The key is that the country got to that stage on its own. Only then could its citizens appreciate the costs, benefits, and challenges of a 21st-century economy.

Thinking about these issues can have a curiously motivating effect. It can make one eager to find some form of aid that will work.

I, like many other libertarians, have always been extremely suspicious of nonprofit organizations, regarding them as little more than tax shelters, some of which provide support to dubious governments around the world. If seeing pictures of Mobutu's yacht is not enough to scare people away from international aid I don't know what is. But how engaged should we be in the rest of the world's problems? Ignoring the Taliban just left us open for attack, but engaging Saudi Arabia provided those people in Afghanistan with a motivation to attack us.

But those are political and military problems. Surely something ought to be done about poverty and disease in third-world countries. Can Western individuals or groups have a role in helping? And if so, how? By now it should be clear that the bundle of money approach does not work, and efforts need to be aimed at those who understand the local conditions. Libertarians know that local solutions tend to be the best, if not the sexiest, ones. And Easterly's call for property rights and civil liberties, while admittedly not capable of being implemented on a strictly local level, shows an understanding of the true role of government — the protection of the individual, who is the real agent of all economic "development." His prescriptions provide some hope, but they must first be accepted by the aid establishment, and thus far nothing like that has happened. As a former World Bank official told me, such views are considered maverick and read only to understand what the "opposing viewpoint" is.

Of course, there is another approach. Kenyan economist James Shikwati may have said it best in response to a question about what the West should do with promised increases in African development aid: "For God's sake, please just stop." ❑

I Have Seen the Future, *from page 20*

look if Walt Disney had been in charge of Key West. It has bait shops that don't sell bait, and brand-new quaint wooden buildings painted in brand-new quaint faded paint. It is Key West without the smell of fish or rotting wood, without feral chickens or gay bars or panhandlers or, even, an ocean. It is Key West improved by a geriatric band.

Three hundred sixty-five nights a year, bands climb onto the bandstand in the town square to entertain whichever The Villagers are not otherwise entertaining themselves. Even on the night after the tornado carried away a thousand houses, the square was filled with The Villagers come to listen to a lively boogie-woogie group sporting a keyboardist who couldn't have been a day under 80. The other town square had line dancers — which didn't quite fit with the fact that the square, itself, is meant to look like it came from Latin America.

And to some extent, it actually does look like it came from Latin America. At least it looks like pictures that squeamish tourists take of town squares down there. It's a big area faced on four sides by important-looking, ocher-colored buildings with red tile roofs. In the streets leading to the square, the developer has enhanced the effect with the occasional shed roof of artfully pre-rusted sheet-metal. I used to be an architect, and I don't even know where you can buy pre-rusted sheet metal, but there it is.

Facing one side of the square is the cathedral, or at least the best version of a cathedral anybody can afford in this day and age. It's pretty inside, but without the silver and tile and intricate woodwork that the tithes of starving parishioners have supplied to every real cathedral in Latin America — and that Bill Gates would go broke trying to finance at today's prices. Across the way is a huge building that doesn't seem to do much of anything except house a restaurant, but sure looks impressive from the outside.

At the front of the square, where an imposing government building would stand in real life, is the finest structure in all of Villagedom. It contains a huge marble hall, three stories high, at least, topped with an enormous barrel vault made of stained glass (or, maybe, colored plastic; it's hard to tell from floor level). This is, of course, the sales office — with 12 or 18 or some other number of sales people — arranged like chess pieces around the hall so that, no matter which way you jump, you are captured.

It is, as I said, a Latin American town square taken from tourist snapshots — snapshots that never include dogs humping one another, obnoxious street vendors, little kids shoving Chiclets in your face and telling you their sisters are virgins, or gap-toothed old ladies walking on their knees to church. In fact, The Villages don't seem to include any actual foreigners at all. But architecturewise, it's as pretty a rendition of Latin American as any of old Walt's imagineers could conjure up. You almost expect Cinderella to float on down in her bright blue dress.

Sadly, however, she would be Cinderella with the clap. What the old people who aren't line dancing, and aren't golfing, are actually doing is transmitting sexual diseases to each other. Maybe it's because they don't have to worry about anybody getting knocked up, so they don't think they need to be as careful as they used to be. Maybe it's the dark underside of Viagra. Maybe it's because they went to school before sex education. Maybe it's because the kind of person who would move into The Villages is also the kind of person who missed out on the '60s. Anyway, last spring, a gynecologist told Local 6 News that she sees more cases of STDs in The Villages than she did when she worked in the city of Miami. And that's saying something.

Whatever the reason, the salespeople are right. When you move into The Villages, you really do get a lifestyle. The fact that it is a lifestyle that includes herpes and human papilloma virus isn't mentioned. At least by the salespeople. Taking it all in all, I think I will move to Botswana, where they treat old people with respect. ❑

Reflections, *from page 14*

nothing more than get a majority of employees to sign a card consenting to the union's representing them, and that workforce will be unionized. This new bill is a reward to organized labor for its monolithic support of the Democrats in the last election.

This would, of course, give unions tremendous power to coerce employees. If an employee doesn't sign the card, he would be known to the union organizers as a resister, and he and his family could be singled out for humiliation or physical attack. And, after the union takes control of the workplace, he could be the target of retaliation by the union bosses, denied promotions or other opportunities. This is why, even when as many as 90% of workers sign cards saying they want the union to represent them, the union usually loses when the proposal is put to a secret ballot.

What drives unions to pull Democrat strings to pass such a vicious piece of legislation? Simple: the same desire for protection that drives any uncompetitive businesses. Bluntly put, unions are less and less able to sell their services to workers in a free market, so they turn to the government to use its tremendous coercive power to achieve their agenda. And organized labor is increasingly desperate, watching the share of private-sector employees who belong to unions drop from 35% in the 1950s to 20% in the 1980s to a risible 7.4% today.

The unions claim that the reason for this decline is the evil machinations of businesses intent on blocking unions. But the bill would penalize employers who voluntarily *increase* benefits for workers to induce them not to unionize. The real reason why big labor has lost so much of its customer base over the last half-century is what unions *do* — such as collude with organized crime, with union dues in some case financing mob activities. What does it profit a worker if his union gets him an extra half-buck an hour, if his dues help mobsters turn his kids into drug addicts or prostitutes?

continued on page 53

Where We've Been

by Bruce Ramsey

Two decades of Liberty's best and most memorable.

When I find myself in a chain bookstore, sometimes I stop by the magazine racks and look for Liberty. Most magazines try to scream louder than the others to be heard over the din. Liberty is an island of black and blue on plain paper, in a sea of gloss and neon, advertising itself to intelligent readers at the same moderate volume it has held for many years. Our sales figures tell us there's still no need to raise our voice.

It isn't careful attention to fads that keeps our readers coming back. It is, rather, that we're still doing what we have been for 20 years. In this issue, we look at how we have spent that time.

Bruce Ramsey surveys the wide-ranging landscape of Liberty's intellectual meanderings. Stephen Cox, who has written for each of the 172 issues Liberty has published, offers a peek inside our editorial process. We reprint an article that Bill Bradford, our founding editor, wrote for our 10th anniversary, as well as portions of what he wrote elsewhere about the magazine.

As these reminiscences explain, Liberty quickly became what Bill wanted. Then it became much more.

— Patrick Quealy

When Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans, Randal O'Toole noted that "the people who got out were those with automobiles."

Considering Slavomir Rawicz's survival classic "The Long Walk," William Merritt wrote that it is "one hell of a book, if you believe it" — which he pretty clearly did not.

When Murray Rothbard was on a trip to Switzerland, he became more and more annoyed at the *goyish* fascination with the sheer north face of the Eiger, long a challenge to climbers. Wrote Rothbard, a man content to experience the Alps from a veranda, "I am willing to attest that there is not a single Jew who has ever climbed the Eiger, of whatever face, or had the slightest inclination to do so."

Such is Liberty. It has ideology, as in David Friedman's "Do We Need Government?" and Brink Lindsey's "Am I a Libertarian?" It also has charm, as in Bill Bradford's explorations of sun-dried ruins of Western ghost towns and his quest to find the memorial to Jeannette Rankin, the only member of Congress to have voted against both world wars.

Liberty cares about a political theory and everything that goes with it — the people and the stories, and all the arguments about drugs, guns, war, money, cars, cops, cryptology, and any other thing that may inflame the mind, or possibly enlighten it. Here follows my view of what has made Liberty what it is.

To take an obvious thing: the Libertarian Party. What other independent magazine covers it? Liberty has covered it for 20 years — and not always to the subject's satisfaction. Bill Bradford, the founder of Liberty, voted Libertarian on principle, but that did not prevent him from declaring, sadly, that Libertarian politics were to real politics as the Special Olympics are to

the real Olympics. He covered the party's conventions and wrote about its presidential candidates, but he also said that none of them had even a sniff of success, and none of the happy talk to donors was believable. In 2001 he argued that the only things the LP had learned to do well were raising money from libertarians and getting on the ballot. He said he was not ready to give up on the party, arguing at one point that it ought to focus on a single issue — he suggested marijuana legalization — that Americans might go for. He printed a proposal by Randal O'Toole that the LP become a political group like the Sierra Club, and endorsed that, too.

Liberty also ran several pieces decrying LP candidates for undermining somewhat libertarian Republicans — Rep. Bob Barr of Georgia was an example — and in one case tipping control of the U.S. Senate to the Democrats.

There were some fireworks in this coverage. Bill discovered that a man who had been the LP's national director in 1995 had secretly worked for Harry Browne's campaign to become the 1996 nominee. I don't know how many Liberty readers cared about this — I did not — but Bill did, and he went after it. In September 2002, he reported that the LP had taken the strange step of denying Liberty credentials to attend its convention, but that Liberty had covered it anyway.

It's hard to say what would have happened with the LP had Liberty not been around to follow it and challenge it. Maybe it wouldn't have been challenged at all, and only ignored.

Bill was a hard-money guy. He had made his grubstake by dealing in gold and silver coins. He was a font of facts on the history of money, but as a forecaster he was afflicted with the gold bug's congenital inclination toward gloom. In the magazine's first year he was part of a round robin of writers opining about the meaning of the stock market crash of October 1987. All but Karl Hess were hard-money men who either forecasted calamity or were, in hindsight, overly cautious. Hess, whose main interest in metal was what he could fashion from it in his workshop, said he thought the American people had a fine economic future and that readers should invest in their own tools. Bill, to his credit, soon came to the conclusion that "almost all investment advice is smoke," and kept it out of Liberty. He focused his attention on politics, where his judgment was much better.

Bill Bradford voted Libertarian on principle, but declared, sadly, that Libertarian politics were to real politics as the Special Olympics are to the real Olympics.

His great subject was William Jefferson Clinton. In the February 1993 issue, which appeared before Clinton took office, Bill Bradford wrote (as Chester Alan Arthur) that Clinton was "a liar, and an extraordinarily skilled one." The man had "only one ideology: *Bill Clinton ought to run things,*"

Wendy McElroy said she wouldn't have voted against Hitler — "but I would have no moral objection to putting a bullet through his skull."

which meant that Clinton would make no fundamental changes to American government. (A decade later he said that Arnold Schwarzenegger was "the Republican Clinton.")

On March 11, 1994, Liberty's editor placed a bet with a colleague that Clinton would resign or be impeached. He won that bet: on Dec. 19, 1998, Clinton was impeached. And in the issue of April 2001, writing just after Clinton decamped, Bill summed up his subject as a sexual predator, a "liar of extraordinary skill," and a politician who indeed had made no fundamental changes to American government.

During the eight years of Clinton, Liberty took a special interest in two of his subsidiary obscenities. One was the 1993 burning of the David Koresh cultists at Waco, Texas. Liberty was quick on the newsstands with "Holocaust at Waco," in which Bill labeled Clinton Attorney General Janet Reno "the coldest of all cold monsters." Several years later, when the FBI confirmed that it had used incendiaries at Waco, Bill reminded readers of what that meant. After the Oklahoma City bombing — Timothy McVeigh's retaliation for Waco — Liberty cofounder Stephen Cox compared the national media's sentimentality about dead government employees with its lack of interest in dead religious believers. The other Clinton-era obscenity was the fatal shooting of Vicki Weaver, the wife of white separatist Randy Weaver, at Ruby Ridge, Idaho. Bill said that he found the Ruby Ridge story "endlessly fascinating," and eventually printed Randy Weaver's account of it. In 2000 came a ruling in a criminal complaint filed by the state of Idaho against the FBI sniper. The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the Supremacy Clause of the Constitution prevented the state from prosecuting a federal agent who was acting reasonably. However, Judge Alex Kozinski filed an eloquent dissent — and Liberty printed it.

Among Clinton's major obscenities were his wars, particularly the 79-day bombing of Serbia over the issue of Kosovo. The arguments made by American politicians for dropping explosives on Slavs infuriated Bill. Most of the warmongers were Democrats, but not all. There was Sen. Bob Dole, R-Kan., arguing that World War I had started in the Balkans, and implying that as a reason to intervene. Bill wrote that

Europe had gone to war in 1914 "because the Great Powers chose to intervene — which is exactly what course of action Dole recommends."

In September 1999, Bill pointed out that the supposed holocaust of 100,000 civilians in Kosovo — the ostensible cause for intervention — had shrunk to a number of deaths smaller than the number the Clinton administration had burned to death at Waco.

There was more controversy among libertarians about the two Middle East wars. In the May 1991 issue, Jim Robbins, Steve Cox, Leland Yeager, and Loren Lomasky argued for the retaking of Kuwait — and Sheldon Richman, Robert Higgs, and Bill Bradford argued against it. A split reappeared a decade later, after the 9/11 attacks, with Rep. Ron Paul and Richard Kostelanetz arguing for restraint and Sarah McCarthy calling for attack. Then came George W. Bush's proposal to invade Iraq. Bill denounced it, and would have liked for Liberty to come out unabashedly against it, but he was aware that some libertarians supported it. That view was also reflected in Liberty, though the majority feeling in its pages was against the invasion.

The magazine covered other controversies. One was whether a libertarian ought to vote. In May 1996 Wendy McElroy said provocatively that she wouldn't have voted against Hitler — "but I would have no moral objection to putting a bullet through his skull." Bill chided her for that, but there was a certain down-to-earthness to it.

I offered Bill an article questioning the gold standard. He hated it, and ran it anyway, along with a reply by Robert Higgs; he entitled the two pieces, "I'll Settle for Paper" and "I'll Go for the Gold." Liberty ran Fred Smith of the Competitive Enterprise Institute arguing against ratifying NAFTA and Brian Doherty, now with Reason, arguing for it. It ran my piece, "The Conversion of a Gun Grabber," which rejected all the arguments of the pro-gun position, then embraced the position itself.

Not to be stereotyped, Liberty also printed a piece on the Enron collapse by Andrew Chamberlain, arguing that business ethics (which are often regarded as "liberal") are a cornerstone of the free market. "Formal law matters," Chamberlain wrote, "but informal law matters more." The magazine also printed "Who Owns the Fed?" by Bill Woolsey, a lecturer at The Citadel. His no-nonsense (and correct) answer was that the Fed belongs to the government.

The War on Drugs has been another Liberty interest — and one in which the magazine has not been content to make theoretical arguments only. In the 1990s it ran "What Am I Doing Here?" by Rycke Brown, and "Behind Bars" by Dyanne Petersen, both of them serving time for drug violations. In May 1998 it ran writer Peter McWilliams' account of being busted for medical use of marijuana, and two years later it ran Bill's angry report that McWilliams had died while vomiting up his prescription medication — a reflex he had been able to control with marijuana, before authorities had denied him the ability to use it.

Over the years Liberty has chronicled the fight by Nevada libertarians Durk Pearson and Sandy Shaw against FDA regulation of nutritional supplements, ebulliently headlining one piece "FDA TKO." In December 2003 the magazine ran libertarian psychologist Thomas Szasz's commentary on the news that Rush Limbaugh had been nailed buying prescription painkillers on the black market. "It will be interesting to see if Limbaugh learns anything," Szasz wrote. Szasz also took on Jack Kevorkian in a piece called "Alias Dr. Death."

Liberty also staked out a position on "recovered memories": it didn't believe them. As early as March 1994, David Ramsay Steele denounced the recovered-memory movement, and in July 1996 Liberty followed up with "Witch Hunt in Wenatchee." The author was Kathryn Lyon, the journalist who would write "Witch Hunt" (1998), the definitive story of the modern Salem in the state of Washington. Her article denounced the use of "recovered memories" by a cop and a social worker to accuse an improbably huge ring of people of group sex with children and send those people to prison. It took guts to side with the supposed perpetrators. The local press didn't do that until much later, but Liberty did, and Liberty was right.

Liberty also covered the theory of liberty. One argument rolled out in these pages has been between those who see liberty as a moral imperative and those who are for it because it works. Bill was in the second group, arguing (as Ethan O. Waters) for "consequentialism" in "The Two Libertarianisms" (May 1988) and (as R.W. Bradford) in "The Poverty of the Nonaggression Imperative" (Dec. 1999). A related argument was between utopians and non-utopians. An example was my "Dialog with an Absolutist" and Aeon Skoble's reply, "In Defense of Extreme Libertarianism," in 2003. There were also arguments about alliances. In 2003 Bill argued in "Liberty and the Right" that the time had come for libertarians to end their alliance with conservatives. In 2006 I took the opposite view in "Our Allies, the Conservatives."

A new writer, Indian-educated Jayant Bhandari, recently offered Liberty readers a fresh way of thinking about their central political value. Comparing India to Britain and America, Bhandari wrote that the state was a manifestation of liberty, or the lack of it, but that the source was the beliefs and habits of the people. "The seedbed of oppression," he wrote, "is not the state but the culture."

Many, many more examples of Liberty's interest in theory could be mentioned. But the magazine has never neglected its interest in the people of liberty, the individuals who have been important to the individualist movement. Granted, it has not always covered them in a reverential spirit. In the magazine's second issue, Bill wrote "The Apostasy of Robert

> I had grown increasingly convinced that there ought to be a publication in which libertarians could discuss serious intellectual issues without the need to explain the fundamentals of libertarian thinking (unless, of course, challenging them) or any need to apologize for libertarian views. It seemed to me that most libertarian publications were oriented toward explaining their ideas to non-libertarians. They were outreach publications. I wanted an inreach publication.
>
> *From RWB's fifth-year report on Liberty (September 1992).*

Nozick," about how the celebrated author of "Anarchy, State, and Utopia" had used rent-control laws against a landlord. This set a tone: no one was sacred, though wanton tearing-down was not appreciated either.

Some of Liberty's subjects had ties to the individualist movement that many in the mainstream media missed the significance of. Alan Greenspan, with his ties to Ayn Rand, was the obvious example, but there were others. Liberty noticed in 1990 that Stan Tyminski, who had come in second in the balloting for the presidency of Poland, had been the head of the Libertarian Party of Canada. Tyminski was beaten by Lech Walesa, but he made a splash. Liberty also noticed that Clarence Thomas, a nominee for the U.S. Supreme Court, had been a fan of Rand, and suggested that if he were confirmed he might be surprisingly hardcore in his opinions. He was.

An editor at Liberty once told me that having Ayn Rand's name on the cover boosted newsstand sales, and she is probably the most written-about libertarian in the magazine. The first issue featured Cox's "The Films of Ayn Rand," followed shortly after by Bradford's "In Search of 'We the Living,'" the movie made in Italy, during World War II, from Rand's first novel. Liberty printed Rothbard's "My Expulsion from the Rand Cult," Tibor Machan's "Ayn Rand and I," John Hospers' "Conversations with Ayn Rand," Bradford's "Was Ayn Rand a Plagiarist?" (his answer: she wasn't), Barbara Branden's account of the making of the TV movie "The Passion of Ayn Rand," Cox's account of "The Development of Ayn Rand," and Chris Matthew Sciabarra's complaint about the posthumous editions of Rand ("Bowdlerizing Ayn Rand"). The magazine ran Bradford's "The Selling of Ayn Rand's Papers" and Sciabarra's "The Search for Ayn Rand's Roots." It covered Rand in the book section with Bradford's hostile 1989 review of Nathaniel Branden's "Judgment Day" — "Nor hath hell a fury like a man scorned," Bill wrote — and, a decade later, with Brian Register's milder review of Branden's "My Years with Ayn Rand." Liberty interviewed Barbara Branden and Nathaniel Branden both, nearly a decade apart, and also R.A. Childs ("Ayn Rand, Objectivism and All That"), whose comments were published shortly after he died.

For all the magazine's fascination with Rand, when it came to choosing the Libertarian of the Century, Liberty's editors voted for Ludwig von Mises, who narrowly edged out Rand, Rothbard, Milton Friedman, and Friedrich Hayek. The magazine's senior editors had a lot to say for each of these important figures.

H.L. Mencken was Bill's favorite author, though he allowed that the Sage of Baltimore was not a libertarian "in the sense the term is used today." Bill repeatedly defended Mencken against the charge of anti-Semitism that rose when Mencken's diary was published 35 years after his death. It annoyed Bill that Mencken's words were taken out of the context of his life, his times, and his overall style, and that the publisher had smeared its deceased writer in an apparent effort to sell more books. When biographer Terry Teachout repeated the charge of anti-Semitism in "The Skeptic: The Life of H.L. Mencken" (2002), Bill wrote, "I detect something missing: an argument."

Liberty has carried many articles on libertarians, proto-libertarians, and writers of distinctive interest to libertarians. There was Cox's work on Isabel Paterson, mine on Garet Garrett, Richard Kostelanetz's on George Orwell, and David Friedman's on 19th-century jurist Stephen Field. In March 1992, William Holtz wrote a provocative piece arguing convincingly that Rose Wilder Lane had ghostwritten her mother's "Little House on the Prairie" books. Two years later Bill charged that Holtz's book, "The Ghost in the Little House," had been ignored in libertarian circles because of opposition from Lane's heir, Roger MacBride.

Other articles of note on libertarians are Randy Barnett's "In Search of Lysander Spooner," Richard Ebeling's "The Lost Papers of Ludwig von Mises," Martin Morse Wooster's piece on the "fusionist" Frank Meyer, and Bettina Bien Greaves' on Friedrich Hayek. David Ramsay Steele reviewed Justin Raimondo's biography of Murray Rothbard, "An Enemy of the State," artfully deflating its subject by saying, "Rothbard was not an outstanding thinker who pursued fringe politics as a hobby, but an outstanding influence in fringe politics who pursued intellectual system-building as a hobby." And I can't forget Liberty's review of "Truth Is Not a Half-Way Place," a biography of Robert LeFevre supposedly written by Carl Watner and supposedly reviewed by Ethan O. Waters. Actually, "Waters" was Bill and the book had been written by LeFevre himself. It was worth reading, Bill concluded, for "the sheer nuttiness of its subject and its wealth of unintended humor."

Reviews have been a Liberty specialty. I recall the late William Moulton's delightful retrospective on John Stormer's tub-thumping 1964 tract, "None Dare Call It Treason." "What was the book about?"

One aspect of Liberty has never changed, and I hope never will. Liberty is an independent publication, unaffiliated with any other organization or institution. We feel free to publish opinions that are unpopular with any other libertarian entity. Our editorial standard remains the same as it was on the day we began: Liberty publishes good writing of interest to intelligent libertarians. We do not care whom we offend. More than once I've taken angry phone calls from the heads of other libertarian organizations. I always try to be polite and understanding, but I never apologize or promise to tone down future articles. Among those offended by this open policy is me: Liberty frequently publishes writing that I strongly disagree with.

This is not necessarily the policy with other libertarian periodicals. One of Liberty's contributing editors once told me that when he worked for another libertarian magazine, staffers discussed among themselves whether a particular submission followed the "KL," which was an abbreviation for the "korrect line." The editor of another libertarian publication once told me that he considered himself the libertarian movement's biggest expert on foreign policy, and would never publish anything on foreign policy that did not agree with his beliefs. This sort of policy impoverishes any magazine.

From RWB's fifteenth-year report on Liberty (August 2002).

Moulton wrote. "Well, the kind of things that seem very fascinating and sinister when one is 16." (I was 13 when I read it.) Richard Kostelanetz tickled my fancy with his review of Mel Bucklin's PBS documentary on Emma Goldman, noting that

"The Apostasy of Robert Nozick" set a tone: no one was sacred, though wanton tearing-down was not appreciated either.

the program left less of an afterimage of Goldman than the brief portrayal by Maureen Stapleton in the movie "Reds." The PBS documentary, which cared more about Goldman's fornications than her thoughts, was, Kostelanetz said, another bit of blah financed by the National Endowment for the Humanities "in the sad continuing tradition of inept federal welfare."

Probably my favorite review, partly for the editorial audacity displayed in running it, was written by Robert Watts Lamon, who identified himself as "a sort of right-wing beatnik." In the July 2004 issue, Lamon took on Barbara Ehrenreich's "Nickel and Dimed," an account by a prosperous leftist who went slumming among the working poor. "I spent many years in low-paying jobs, and found 'Nickel and Dimed' remarkable for its defects," Lamon wrote. He went on to discuss how a poor person can flee harsh climates, shop in secondhand stores, and find friends to share housing with. Concluded Liberty's practitioner of poverty: "She just didn't know how to live as a poor person."

Certain articles gave especially memorable signals of what to expect from Liberty. The journal tracked down the principal author of the underground anarchist classic "The Market for Liberty," and printed an article on her life as a nomadic seller of rope sandals. It ran pro and con reactions to the death of Ronald Reagan ("Rot in hell," said Jeff Riggenbach), and it provided a warm sendoff to Karl Hess, the man who coined Barry Goldwater's line that "extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice . . . and moderation in pursuit of justice is no virtue." Liberty provided posthumous tributes to Milton Friedman, Murray Rothbard, Robert Heinlein, and, of course, Bill Bradford.

Liberty has an interest in openly capitalist aspects of American popular culture — the part that deals with images of achievement and wealth. It ran my piece about Samuel Merwin and Henry Kitchell Webster, the early 20th-century authors of the business romance "Calumet 'K.'" It ran a story on the Stratemeyer Syndicate, which grew out of the Horatio Alger books, and how Stratemeyer managed the Hardy Boys series. It ran a story on the Disney character Scrooge McDuck. It ran a piece by current Liberty editor Cox, who teaches literature at the University of California at San Diego, on J.R.R. Tolkien's revival of the epic literary form in "The Lord of the Rings." It ran a piece by Scott Bullock, an attorney at the Institute for Justice, on Neal Peart, the libertarian drummer of the rock group Rush.

The magazine published such unusually American memoirs as Jim Bristol's "Fighting the Draft in WWII," John Hospers' "The First Time: I Run for President," and Michael Freitas' "The Best Little Whorehouse in Idaho." It published a piece by Wendy McElroy on how establishment feminists, who had once defended the rights of prostitutes, had abandoned them as politically incorrect. Correspondents occasionally wrote of other parties' meetings, such as Tim Slagle's 2004 account of the Green Party convention in Milwaukee and Bill's report in the same year of the Democratic caucuses in Liberty's hometown of Port Townsend, where he was outed by a perceptive lefty. The magazine also provided vivid on-the-spot coverage of the shutdown of the World Trade Organization in Seattle on Nov. 30, 1999, and, shortly after, coverage of the opening of a dirt road at Jarbidge, Nev. Both were political acts.

Jarbidge, a cluster of houses around a dusty general store, has been called the most isolated town in the Lower 48 states — which made it one of Liberty's interesting places. The magazine has a thing about places. It ran Bradley Monton's piece about living in Lebanon, and an article by Jim Peron, when he was about to be expelled from South Africa. Liberty's most peripatetic writer, Doug Casey, has filed reports from Cuba, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Syria, Dubai, Haiti, Colombia, and Guatemala; if his investments ever run dry, he should be able to sell his passport to a museum. Bill Kauffman, a champion of small-town America, has written lovingly about his hometown of Batavia, N.Y., and Richard Kostelanetz has argued that the best place for a libertarian to be is Manhattan. Larry Sechrest briefly attained national notoriety with his none-too-flattering piece on Alpine, "A Strange Little Town in Texas."

The magazine sometimes annoys the neighbors. Sometimes it annoys me, too, though more often it delights. I ponder why that is, and out fall several reasons. Partly it's because Liberty believes what I believe in a general way, and partly it's because it is not too fussy in any particular way. Partly it's because the magazine serves the unexpected along with the features, like Cox's "Word Watch," that I count on. Partly it's

Liberty was quick on the newsstands with "Holocaust at Waco," in which Bill labeled Clinton Attorney General Janet Reno "the coldest of all cold monsters."

because of the writers that I have come to like, though I have never met them. Hess was one: I saw him only once, 36 years ago, and never agreed with him politically. But I liked him. There are other people in the magazine like that.

I have been reading this journal for 20 years. I wish Liberty (and liberty) a rich and unpredictable future. ❑

At Liberty

by R. W. Bradford

At Liberty's tenth anniversary, Liberty's founder considered its meaning and purpose, its past and future.

On June 5, 1987, my associate Timothy Virkkala took a fat envelope to the post office in Port Townsend, Washington. It was addressed to a printer in Seattle, and it contained photo-ready masters for the first issue of Liberty. During the previous six months, my wife Kathy, Tim, Steve Cox, and I had worked feverishly to reach that moment. We had developed a business plan, conducted a direct mail campaign, recruited several excellent writers to contribute to our effort (including three — Doug Casey, Murray Rothbard, and Ross Overbeek — who had agreed to grace our masthead as editors), sold about 1,200 subscriptions, written and edited 40,000 words for publication in that issue, designed a format, and laid out a magazine.

Ten years is a long time. It's long enough for a teenager to become an adult, and if he's Bill Gates, to earn a sum equal to three years' gross domestic product of Africa.[1] It's also long enough for communism to transform itself from a grave threat to humanity to a dim memory of interest only to historians, and long enough for a Democratic Congress to be replaced by a Republican one and for a Republican president to be replaced by a Democratic one. And ten years is also long enough for Liberty to be launched, to develop a personality, and to find its place in the world.

Liberty's first issue is easily recognized by anyone reading its September 1997 issue. Its masthead lists seven editors, six of whom — Kathy Bradford, Stephen Cox, Douglas Casey, Ross Overbeek, Timothy Virkkala, and yours truly — are still editors today. It featured cartoons by Rex F. May ("Baloo") and a collection of absurd news ("Terra Incognita"), both of which still brighten our pages. The 1987 issue has fewer pages, a larger logo on its less colorful cover, and no "Reflections" at its front. But aside from these, few differences are readily observable.

The Best-Laid Plans . . .

Liberty was conceived as a magazine of good writing of particular interest to intelligent libertarians. Our original plan called for a purely "in-reach" journal for libertarians and classical liberals; we didn't contemplate publishing analyses of public policy or comments on current events. After our third issue had been published, we surveyed subscribers, asking them to evaluate our efforts. The most popular category was "analysis of current events." Since we hadn't at this point published any analyses of current events, this was disturbing. We figured it was evidence of powerful demand from our readers, so we broke down and invited our contributors to provide commentary on current events. Our next issue featured an analysis of the ACLU and the war in Nicaragua.[2]

And in the following issue, we began to gather our editors'

shorter comments into "Reflections" at the start of each issue.[3] This eclectic collection of commentary, spleen-venting, short essays, obnoxious comments, and diverse libertarian opinion quickly became Liberty's most popular feature.

Breaking Stories

We've broken our share of major stories. In 1989, we were one of the first publications to report the rising threat to free speech on the campuses of universities,[4] and we published a detailed analysis of "political correctness" before most people had ever heard the term.[5]

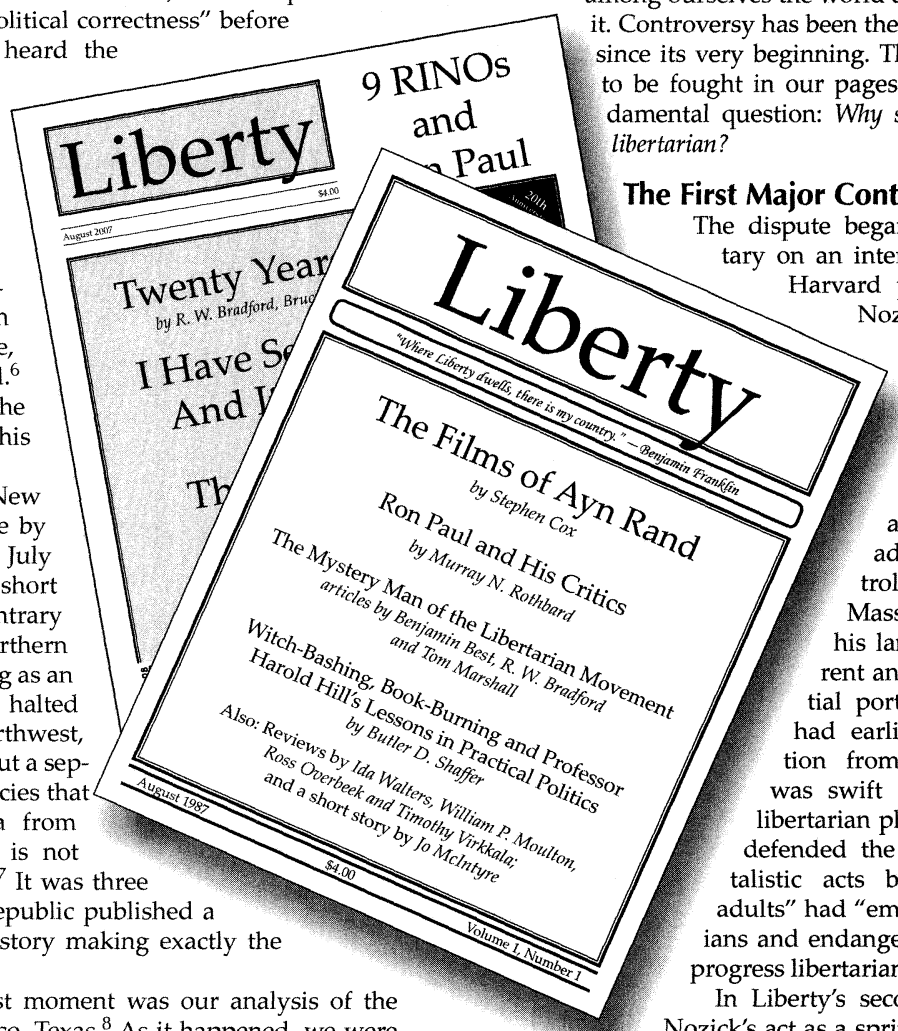
In our September 1990 issue, Dr. Ron Paul reported in our pages that the "morning after" birth control pill had critical non-abortion uses and argued persuasively that, even from an anti-abortion perspective, it ought not be banned.[6] Three months later, the New Republic made this their cover story.

We scooped the New Republic again, this time by a wider margin, in our July 1991 issue. I wrote a short piece reporting that, contrary to press reports, the northern spotted owl, whose listing as an endangered species had halted logging in the Pacific Northwest, was not a species at all, but a separate population of a species that inhabits North America from Mexico to Canada and is not in any way endangered.[7] It was three years before the New Republic published a much-ballyhooed cover story making exactly the same point.

Perhaps our proudest moment was our analysis of the BATF-FBI siege near Waco, Texas.[8] As it happened, we were scheduled to go to press with our June 1993 issue on April 22, just three days after the FBI assault on the Branch Davidians resulted in the death of more than 80 people, including 23 children. While virtually all other American periodicals were expressing sympathy for the trauma suffered by the FBI and outrage that the Davidians had brought this upon themselves, we published articles by Steve Cox and myself, calling the press to account for its supine cowardice and denouncing Attorney General Janet Reno as a self-confessed mass murderer, based on her statements and interviews the day of the conflagration. We headlined our coverage "Holocaust in Waco," a deliberately provocative title and arguably an outrageous one. It was our best-selling issue ever on newsstands.

I am quite proud of the discussion and analysis we have presented of current issues and events like the preposterous U.S. invasion of Panama to arrest its president,[9] the Rodney King beating and subsequent trial and riots,[10] and the Gulf War.[11] Thanks to our very talented editors, we were able on short notice to devote a special section of the magazine to a variety of intelligent libertarian insights into these and other major stories.

But we've never lost focus on the point that Liberty is more than anything else a place where we libertarians discuss among ourselves the world and our approach to it. Controversy has been the lifeblood of Liberty since its very beginning. The first major battle to be fought in our pages was the most fundamental question: *Why should a person be a libertarian?*



The First Major Controversy

The dispute began with a commentary on an interesting news event. Harvard philosopher Robert Nozick, who had brought a new respectability to libertarianism with the publication of his "Anarchy, State, and Utopia," took advantage of rent control laws in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to force his landlord to lower his rent and refund a substantial portion of the rent he had earlier paid. The reaction from most libertarians was swift and indignant: the libertarian philosopher who had defended the morality of "capitalistic acts between consenting adults" had "embarrass(ed) libertarians and endanger(ed) the hard won progress libertarianism has made . . ."

In Liberty's second issue,[12] I used Nozick's act as a springboard for a novel argument:

> Consider a society identical in every way to current American society, except that 200 years ago, every inhabitant of the continent agreed to vest all ownership of real estate in a corporate body, which would be governed according to the same rules that are encoded in U.S. law today. Nominal private ownership was allowed, subject to periodic payment of fees (called "real estate taxes") and various other controls (called "laws and regulations") on the behavior of those who might live on the corporately owned land. The original corporate agreement specified that the taxes, laws and regulations might be changed according to certain specific procedures.

I further supposed that this society subsequently developed in exactly the same way the United States developed,

and that it was identical to contemporary America in every way except for that fateful day when every inhabitant had agreed to vest ownership in the corporate body.

If the historic origin of the laws was universal consent, Nozick was acting in a completely moral fashion according to libertarian theory. But if the historic origin was less than universal consent, then Nozick's action was criminal. If one condemns Nozick for using an institution whose origin was coercive, then what about the fellow who uses roads or message delivery systems that have their origin in coercion, or who accepts employment from a coercive institution? The same logic that forces condemnation of Nozick seems to force condemnation of anyone who uses any government services whatever — in other words, every person in America today.

If, as most libertarians believe, "no man has the right to initiate the use of physical force against others and coercion is universally opprobrious," I argued, then "the actual customs, laws and actions of a social arrangement are of relatively little import in evaluating its morality: what really counts is whether the social arrangement had its origin in voluntary contract of all landowners."

I concluded by observing that there is a "second libertarianism," one that advocates liberty "as the most expeditious and utilitarian arrangement for human interaction," and that this sort of libertarianism has no problem with the argument I had posed.

Heating Things Up

At the time, Liberty had the slowest printer in the world, one who took five weeks to print and mail an issue. So there wasn't time for readers to respond in the next issue. But I sent a copy of my piece to Liberty's editors, hoping for a response, and Murray Rothbard quickly penned a defense of the mainline libertarian position.[13] The issue that followed contained ten critical letters from readers, along with my responses.[14] I followed up with an essay exploring the differences between "The Two Libertarianisms" ("moralistic libertarianism" and "consequentialist libertarianism") in the following issue, criticizing and defending each.[15] The discussion caught David Friedman's eye, and he forwarded three chapters from the new edition of "The Machinery of Freedom" that addressed the same issues, which graced Liberty's pages during the coming year.[16]

Our interest in Rand has angered both Rand's hardcore fans and her harshest critics. The former find us too critical, and the latter too appreciative.

And so began a controversy that has percolated into our pages from time to time ever since. Our September 1988 issue trumpeted Hans-Hermann Hoppe's "The Ultimate Justification of the Private Property Ethic," which proposed a radical alternative to the natural-rights-moralistic approach and the consequentialist-utilitarian approach.[17] Hoppe argued that "by being alive and formulating any proposition . . . one demonstrates that any ethic except the libertarian ethic is invalid." Murray Rothbard was a great enthusiast for Hoppe's argument and asked me to solicit responses from prominent Randian philosophers, whom he thought might share his enthusiasm. I decided to try to balance the responses by inviting some from individuals who would likely be more critical. We needn't have bothered. We were again inundated by responses and letters-to-the-editor. In the end, the only support Hoppe received, aside from Murray's enthusiastic encomium ("dazzling breakthrough") was from Sheldon Richman.[18]

From Murray Rothbard's delightfully vicious "Ronald Reagan: An Autopsy" to our continuing exposure of Bill Clinton's moral turpitude, we've spared no American political leader.

High-powered debate over the fundamental principles of libertarian thought has continued to percolate in Liberty's pages, most recently in the discussion of the death penalty by George Smith, Tim Virkkala, and John Goodman.[19] But there have been many other, less-philosophical controversies in our pages as well. We have published challenges to other aspects of libertarian doctrine — most notably, the notion that libertarianism requires an isolationist foreign policy. This time, the challengers were Steve Cox and Jim Robbins, who argued that the Soviet Union posed a great threat to liberty and ought to be opposed by the U.S. government. Sheldon Richman vigorously defended the orthodox non-interventionist position. I meekly suggested a third position: that isolationism was not entailed by libertarian thinking, but was virtually always prudent.[20]

LP Agonistes

Perhaps the single topic of most controversy in Liberty's pages has been the Libertarian Party. In our very first issue, we published a lengthy article endorsing Ron Paul's campaign for the LP presidential nomination, and a shorter essay delphically supporting Russell Means' quest for the same honor.[21] I myself have supported every LP presidential nominee, but among Liberty's other editors have been supporters for every other major candidate in each election, and in every election year they've made their case in Liberty's pages.

Unlike any other periodical, Liberty takes the LP seriously, without patronizing it, providing the same sort of analysis and coverage that mainline periodicals provide for the Republicans and Democrats. We've covered every Libertarian

national convention, rooting out stories unreported by other media, and offering the kind of critical coverage not found elsewhere. We take seriously the debates within the party, and our editors and contributors usually have had a lot to say about LP politics.

That is not to say that we've ignored the major parties. When Patrick Buchanan made a bid for libertarian support for his right-wing crusade for the presidency, contributing editor Jim Robbins trekked to New Hampshire for a very revealing interview.[22] We had reporters at the 1992 and 1996 GOP conventions,[23] and were among the very first magazines to identify the defining characteristic of Bill Clinton: his naked, all-encompassing lust for power.[24]

From Murray Rothbard's delightfully vicious "Ronald Reagan: An Autopsy"[25] to our continuing exposure of Bill Clinton's moral turpitude, we've spared no American political leader. At our Editors' Conference in 1995, when Harry Browne announced his campaign for the LP presidential nomination, I publicly endorsed his effort, but warned him that in the virtually impossible event that he were elected president, I'd withdraw my support and he could expect the same treatment that Reagan, Bush, and Clinton have received in our pages. And I meant it.

A Giant of Liberty

In 1987, we surveyed subscribers to Liberty and delegates to the Libertarian Party's national convention about a wide range of subjects.[26] We asked them to evaluate the influence of 27 libertarian thinkers and philosophers, living and dead, on their intellectual development. It came as no surprise that the two most influential figures by a wide margin were Ayn Rand and Murray Rothbard. And it comes as no surprise that Liberty has published a good deal about these two figures.

Rand occupies a unique place in American intellectual history. Though she was undoubtedly an intellectual, her advocacy of radical libertarianism has led most conventional scholars to dismiss her from serious consideration. The stridency of her personality and her insistence that her followers agree with every jot and tittle of her philosophy reduced much of her following to a hagiographic cult, unwilling to subject her to critical analysis. As a result, there has been precious little serious scholarship regarding her life and work.

So it was relatively easy for Liberty to become the primary journal publishing studies of Ayn Rand. Our first issue included Steve Cox's discussion and review of the three films whose screenplays Rand had written.[27] Seven issues later, I wrote an article about the 1943 Italian film version of "We The Living," which revealed that much of what Rand had said about it was false.[28] We have since published John Hospers' detailed account of philosophical discussions he had with Rand,[29] Murray Rothbard's account of his split with Rand,[30] Tibor Machan's memoir of his encounters with Rand,[31] and lengthy interviews with Rand's friend and biographer, Barbara Branden,[32] and with libertarian raconteur Roy Childs,[33] not to mention vigorous reviews of virtually all books about Rand published since 1986, as well as detailed analyses of (and disputes about) her political philosophy.

Curiously, our interest in Rand has angered both Rand's hardcore fans and her harshest critics. The former find us too critical, and the latter find us too appreciative. Personally, I think they're both nuts: Rand was not a goddess worthy only of veneration, but she was an important intellectual whose life and thought merit serious and extensive exploration.

Murray Rothbard got involved with Liberty in 1985, back in the planning stage. My relationship with him was always cordial and friendly, and he never failed to support us in our enterprise. When we wanted a premium to offer to charter subscribers, he generously donated his "The Sociology of the Ayn Rand Cult," and he contributed to virtually every issue until he resigned in early 1990. During that time, I spoke to him very frequently, often two or three times a week. He was delightful to work with, even when we differed on one thing or another.

From the start, Murray understood that Liberty would be open to all libertarian opinions, and would make no attempt to follow the well-hewn "Rothbardian" line. At my first meeting with him, I warned him of my disagreement with much of his political theory and suggested that I might publicly disagree with him from time to time. This he accepted joyously. He always shared his pungent and powerful opinions, and cheerfully accepted the fact that sometimes his advice was not followed.

I remember sending him a copy of a manuscript by John Dentinger that criticized the LP for becoming too right-wing.[34] When I spoke to him about it, he told me that he thought it was loathsome. I sheepishly told him that in the interim — he had put off reading it for a few days — I had circulated it to other editors and had decided to publish it. "Would you be interested in writing a response to it?" I asked. "Sure," he said. "But you'll have to send me another copy." He went on to explain that he had hated it so much that he had destroyed the copy I had sent him. . . .

My relationship with Murray, however, remained cordial even after I received a fax from his colleague at the Mises Institute, Lew Rockwell, telling me that Murray had decided that he wouldn't be writing for Liberty in the future, and would like to resign his position as Senior Editor. Between that day and his passing in January 1995, we spoke occasionally and affably. I heard from time to time that he had denounced me in the pages of his newsletter, but I never saw the denunciations, and I wouldn't have been particularly upset if I had. Even before I first approached Murray, I knew that he had a long and well-known history of breaking with his political associates, usually with denunciation and recrimination, and that it was almost inevitable that my relationship would end this same way.

> It will be produced inexpensively enough that it can survive on relatively limited circulation. It will consist of 16 to 48 pages, 8.5" x 11", attractively but not expensively printed. Circulation of 1,000 can be attained within one year, and placement of advertisements and additional direct mail campaigns can build its circulation to 2,000 within a year or so. By setting the circulation goal at such a modest level, keeping expenses to a minimum, and budgeting expenditures to meet those expenses, such a publication can be viable.
>
> *From RWB's business plan for Liberty (1987).*

I prefer to remember him as the charming, brilliant, and joyous friend he had been in Liberty's formative years. He was the wittiest man I have ever met, the best man with whom to spend an evening in a bar that I ever knew. I miss him enormously. . . .

Into the Future

Of course, Liberty is more than philosophy, politics, and libertarian personalities. We've published some rather exotic travel writing. I remember once at a Mont Pelerin Society meeting, a federal judge took me aside and said, "You've got a misprint on your cover," as he pointed to a title emblazoned on our September 1991 issue: "Stalking the Giant Testes of Ethiopia."[35] "Actually," I explained, "that's not a typo . . . " We've published some very fine short stories and even an occasional poem, to the apparent annoyance of some of our readers.

In 1988, Murray Rothbard talked to an interviewer about Liberty:

> The libertarian movement was beginning to crumble before Liberty was founded. Everybody was so concerned with talking to the outside, to Democrats or Republicans or whoever, that we forgot to develop our own thinking, our own ideology, our own point of view.
>
> Part of what the libertarian movement is about is developing an attitude, finding out about the world and commenting on it from a libertarian perspective, and reacting to it and trying to change it, so that libertarianism is not just an abstract ideology somewhere in a vacuum.

Surely, in his enthusiasm, Murray exaggerated Liberty's impact. But he was right about one thing: Liberty has fulfilled its basic goal of producing a magazine where libertarians can discuss the world and our thinking without inhibition or apology. The fact that we sell thousands of copies on newsstands to non-libertarians is entirely serendipitous.

For me, at least, Liberty has been an enormously satisfying adventure. In the magazine trade, magazines are generally classified as "circulation-driven" or "advertising-driven" — that is, financed by those who purchase them or by those who advertise in them. Most political magazines, especially those with circulation of less than 100,000, fit into a different category: "donor-driven." Most are financed primarily by their donors, who are generally large wealthy foundations or corporations.

Liberty is a unique publication, a political magazine driven by its readers and its editors. Virtually all of Liberty's writers have worked without compensation beyond the pleasure of seeing their writing in print. But our expenses are virtually all met from our subscription and newsstand revenue, and we've put together ten years of a pretty good magazine and maintained our independence.

And who knows? Maybe we'll be publishing monthly in a year or so . . . then bi-weekly . . . then weekly . . .

Who knows where it all will all end? ❑

Notes

1. This is an exaggeration.
2. May 1988
3. July 1988
4. July 1989
5. July 1990
6. September 1990
7. July 1991
8. June 1993
9. March 1990
10. July 1992
11. May 1991
12. October 1987
13. December 1987
14. March 1988
15. May 1988
16. July, September 1989
17. September 1988
18. November 1988
19. May 1997 and July 1997
20. March, May, July 1990
21. August 1987
22. March 1992
23. November 1992, November 1996
24. February 1993
25. March 1989
26. July 1988
27. August 1987
28. November 1988
29. July 1990, September 1990
30. September 1989
31. November 1989
32. January 1990
33. April 1993
34. March 1988
35. September 1991

If we are to believe what is published in trade journals about magazine publishing, the past decade and a half have been terrible for magazine publishing, with both subscriber and newsstand sales declining and advertising revenues down. The advice most often given to magazine publishers to fight this trend is simple: attract more readers with shorter articles, more pictures, glossier look, and more color. The theory is that in this age of remote controls for changing channels, people just don't have the attention spans they once had. The poster child for this formula is USA Today.

Anyone who compares Reason magazine as published in 2001 to Reason as published in 1987 can plainly see the change, which has become even more evident since Reason's most recent makeover. And the trend continues: Rolling Stone just announced an editorial change that The New York Times describes as signalling "the end of Rolling Stone's history as a publisher of epic narratives and literary journalism." No longer will it publish the work of writers like P.J. O'Rourke, Tom Wolfe, and Hunter S. Thompson. "Many editors have concluded," the Times reports, "that words in magazines are often beside the point." Now what's in are "funny charts, outrageous photos and articles that are little more than captions on pictures." Rolling Stone's publisher thinks this is the result of the explosion of new media: "Back when Rolling Stone was publishing these 7,000 word stories, there was no CNN, no Internet. And now you can travel instantaneously around the globe, and you don't need those long stories to get up to speed."

I disagree. While the number of people who read may very well be declining, we at Liberty think that there remains a very substantial market for the kind of good writing that we publish. And we aim to serve that market.

From RWB's 15th-year report on Liberty (August 2002).

Confessions of a Liberty Editor

by Stephen Cox

What, exactly, happens atop the precipitous staircase at Liberty HQ?

When you read Bruce Ramsey's article on the history of Liberty, you'll see that, to a remarkable extent, the history of this journal is also the history of the modern libertarian movement. You would have to think very far before you thought of anyone who has been important in that movement who hasn't written or been written up in Liberty. It's an avalanche of names, and it hasn't stopped. There are always new people — writers like Jayant Bhandari, Michael Christian, Jon Harrison, and Gary Jason, to list a few of the names that have recently added luster to our pages.

The people who try to herd this avalanche are Patrick Quealy, Drew Ferguson, Mark Rand, Jo Ann Skousen, and Kathleen Bradford. I do some of it too, but those are the really important people at Liberty HQ. Sitting in the front row at this circus are Liberty's senior editors, John Hospers, Jane Shaw, and Bruce Ramsey himself. They're not just long-term ticket holders; they often leave their seats and join the action. No journal could have better friends than they are — and, after all, a journal is nothing but its friends, the people who stick with it and contribute their best. It's hard to go wrong when you have friends like the people I've mentioned.

There's a common idea that writers are very different from their writing, that when you meet someone whose work you like, you're certain to be disappointed. That idea is mostly true — except about the people who contribute to Liberty. When I meet our authors, I almost always find that they are just as interesting as their writing. They even look the way you'd expect them to look — something that's notoriously untrue of writers in general. Still stranger is the fact that when these people assemble at a Liberty conference, they are remarkably polite, tolerant, gracious, gentle to one another. Writers usually aren't like that, and you would expect libertarian writers to be very unlike it: they're individualists by definition, advocates of dissenting ideas, no one of which they manage to agree on.

If you haven't already gathered this by reading Bruce's essay, you won't be surprised to learn that the people of Liberty are an astonishingly various, opinionated, intellectually assertive, complex group of people. Actually, every one of them is a group, individually, and that goes for the editor

as well. That's what makes a group interesting, and apparently we realize that it does, and are therefore determined to be gracious to one another, at least when we're all present in person. When it comes to writing and editing, though, you can expect to see some combat.

Every journal editor is constantly in combat with somebody over something, usually something completely unpredictable. Who could have guessed that the scholar who wrote with such judicious calm about the events of the Peloponnesian War would have become so angry about that colon I wanted to insert in paragraph 6, especially because (can't he *read?*) the colon is necessary to make his damned writing make sense? Who could have imagined that the distinguished author of a history of labor legislation should have undertaken a 5,000-word essay on the significance of the Wagner Act, only to show up, a week behind deadline, with a 2,000-word essay, 1,800 words of which were devoted to his recent visit to Singapore? Who could have guessed that the essay we commissioned *against* the global warming theory, to balance the essay we commissioned *in favor of* the global warming theory, would have turned out to be in favor of it after all, just at the time when we were going to press with "The Great Global Warming Debate" as the centerpiece of our current issue?

The incidents just mentioned have been altered to protect the guilty, but something like them is bound to happen in any normal editorial day. Just as likely to happen are moments of miraculous largesse: the author you haven't heard from in five years suddenly sends you an article on exactly the right topic and of exactly the right length to fill that enormous hole in Features; the world-famous writer modestly inquires whether he may submit a contribution on the hottest news topic of the month (oh yes, that might be interesting . . .); the writer who is always fighting over every detail of his copy replies to your voluminous suggestions for changes in his last article with a laconic, "All OK. Yr. suggestions helpful." Once again, the people of Liberty prove that they are really the best people in the world — but you shouldn't kid yourself into thinking that you know how the daily drama will turn out.

Bill Bradford, the founder of Liberty, was the only editor I've ever known who never lost his cool. Everybody else, including me, has that moment when the manuscript goes flying off the desk and the embittered finger launches the retaliatory email (usually to disastrous effect on the sender). Occasionally I heard Bill utter an anguished "Jeeze!" or a question like, "How can he *write* a thing like that?" But more often I heard an amused and sarcastic, "Oh, wonderful! Just what we needed!", when some disastrous literary event took place. Bill did become agitated when he couldn't get something good on a topic that he wanted to cover. But basically, he was a long-haul guy, prepared to enjoy both the successes and (shall we say?) the challenges of writing and editing. He realized, as every writer and editor should, that the important thing wasn't what he felt, but what he published.

If you're waiting for people to gather round and say good things about your work, you might as well just go and hang yourself.

When I meet our authors, I almost always find that they are just as interesting as their writing.

Since I succeeded Bill as Liberty's editor, I've learned a lot. I've also confirmed a lot of the things I learned from him. All of them, in fact. Here are a few of those things.

1. Anger is (almost) beside the point. Some literary people are shocked and infuriated when they are denounced in emails, blog posts, letters to the editor, or anonymous notes slipped under their door. Bill never was. He knew that if you were that easily demoralized, you probably wouldn't publish much of anything. But he also knew that there is a healthy kind of anger, and it can be useful: it can get people to write. Some of the noblest words ever uttered were prompted by anger. Think of the Declaration of Independence. Think of "Give me liberty, or give me death!" I know editors who would change that to something with a calmer tone, something like, "In my own opinion, a significant degree of personal freedom may well be a necessity for a successful life." Bill, by contrast, always considered it his duty as editor to demand that sentences like the second one be converted as quickly as possible into sentences like the first.

Nevertheless, anger shouldn't be the final product. A lot of our editorial correspondence has been devoted to convincing would-be authors that writing and ranting are not precisely the same. You may be right to hate George Bush, or the Roman Catholic Church, or the International Communist Conspiracy; still, you need to say something informative about the subject, or no one will take you seriously. And you need to say it in an interesting way. That means expressing something more than anger itself. There are few pleasures equal to making fools out of your enemies, but the effect won't come off if your anger is all that people see.

2. You are not H.L. Mencken, nor should you try to be. Mencken, the great libertarian journalist, was always Bill's idol. Bill loved the abuse that Mencken showered on the leaders of his country. And not just the leaders. "Democracy," Mencken said, "is the theory that the common people know what they want and deserve to get it good and hard." Mencken's abuse had charm; it had a shimmer to it. But Bill never tried to write

like Mencken. He agreed with Isabel Paterson, who thought that people who tried to imitate Mencken's style would inevitably screw it up. You could say that about any kind of literary cloning: it always results in deformity.

This is because, as Mencken himself said, everyone has his own style. It can be improved; things can be done with it; but it will always be that person's individual style. You can't change it, and if you try, you will twist it till its head falls off. Authors ruin themselves that way, too. A significant amount of a libertarian editor's job consists of the attempt to convince otherwise talented people that they don't have to call every politician they discuss a "fungus-ridden scion of the scoundrel class," just because they *think* that H.L. Mencken would have written that.

3. People almost never tell you that you're right. The most common remark that writers make to editors is, "Why should I write? Nobody cares about my stuff." Of course, when someone makes that remark, he's probably looking for reassurance, which is easily provided — and on excellent grounds. If you're waiting for people to gather round and say good things about your work, you might as well just go and hang yourself. People don't do that. Basically, they send letters to the editor only when they *hate* your work. The fact that you never hear from them probably means that they admire your work. And if they actually do hate it, and they publicize the fact, well, they're also publicizing *you*. What can be wrong with that?

The good thing about writers is that they have imaginations; they can picture things. So you can tell them, "Look, I know your stuff is good, and you know your stuff is good, and we both know that there are other intelligent people in the world, people who want to read good stuff. Can't you picture those people out there, reading what you write? OK, keep writing for *them*." This isn't flim-flam; it's the truth. It's what Albert Jay Nock said, two generations ago, in one of the greatest of libertarian essays, "Isaiah's Job," where he says that all a writer has to do is keep pumping out his best stuff, secure in the knowledge that good people are reading it.

Naturally, however, you still have to be prepared for abuse. As every libertarian editor knows,

4. The audience can turn on you. There are four issues that make libertarians really, really mad: war, immigration, religion, and the Libertarian Party. Let me break it down:

> (A) War. Virtually all libertarians are isolationists, despite the fact that we can never agree on what "isolation" means in practice. Hence our constant fights about wars and rumors of wars.
>
> (B) Immigration. If you want to arouse passions, run an article either favoring or opposing open borders, or anything resembling that idea.
>
> (C) Religion. Many libertarians regard religion as the principal enemy of liberty. Many others believe that liberty arose in a Judeo-Christian context and cannot long exist in an atheist society. Each group is constantly being amazed at the existence of the other. Neither can conceive that the *ridiculous* and *wholly discredited* attitudes of the other group could possibly find expression in a *libertarian* journal. Please cancel my subscription!
>
> (D) The Libertarian Party. Many people equate small-l libertarianism with large-L Libertarianism. Many others just wish that the Libertarian Party would go away. These two groups don't get along, at all, and there's really no way to please them both, any more than there's any way to please both the pro-religious and the anti-religious people.

The only intellectually honest course is to publish whatever is well written and well argued from any significant point of view. That's the course Liberty tries to follow. But don't have any illusions: the most visible result will always be a torrent of letters expressing shock that "Liberty is no longer a libertarian journal." Oh, and for the third time this year: cancel my subscription.

5. Please don't parse. I hate to use that Clinton-era verb, but there are authors and editors who want to justify everything they do by reasoning in a word-by-word way. Bill was amused by these people, but I'll admit that they usually get my goat.

To cite an example: I am very unsympathetic to anything associated with the word "Roosevelt," but if an author says, "Franklin Roosevelt was committed to the destruction of America," I believe it's my duty to object. Listen, I say. Do you mean that Roosevelt wanted to perform genocide on the American population, or sell off the land to Canada? Clearly, the answer is No. So please revise your sentence. But now comes the exercise in "parsing." "What is distinctive about 'America'?" the author says. "Surely it's America's constitutional system. And what is 'destruction'? The ending of that system. And what does 'committed' mean? It means that Roosevelt consciously decided to do something. Now, can you deny that Franklin Roosevelt, when he proposed the institution of Social Security, which he *must have known* was nowhere mentioned in the Constitution, was committing himself to destroying the American constitutional system, i.e., America?"

Once again, the people of Liberty prove that they are really the best people in the world — but you shouldn't kid yourself into thinking you know how the daily drama will turn out.

Well, yes, I deny it. Although I still don't like Roosevelt. Furthermore, I won't sign off on your article, no matter how many pointless messages we exchange. The difficulty is that, while you are reasoning in a word for word way, your

audience will be reading you sentence by sentence, and paragraph by paragraph. And wondering what in the hell you're talking about.

6. All good writing is about the present. The news that appears in Liberty is *news*, but so also, ideally, is everything else we publish. There's no point in rehashing what people already know, especially if you're going to sling that hash in the way it's always been slung. All right, I guess there's some point to it, because many people (including some libertarians) read simply to be reassured that they are in the right, in precisely the same way in which they always thought they were in the right before. Bill never regarded those people as meriting any attention at all. As far as he was concerned, they could get their sedative from some other source. I agree. Even if you're writing about basic libertarian principles, you need to say new things about them.

Any kind of literary cloning always results in deformity.

There is no subject — no subject on earth — that can't become news. Several Liberty writers have written about the affairs of ancient Iceland, and they've made them as fresh as the latest gossip. The rule is simple: treat the past as if it were the present. If you're writing about the books and people of the past, you should treat them as passionately or respectfully or disdainfully as you would treat the books and people of today. If you treat them like a bag of bones, that's what your writing will be.

Admittedly, these ideas, though obvious, are sometimes difficult for authors (or editors) to understand. That is because

7. Authors and editors know what they want to see in print (whether anyone else does or not). An erudite author (and Liberty has many such) will always have something in his prose that he's particularly proud of, something that he would rather die than part with. Maybe it's a final paragraph that concludes with the words, "Any politician who follows *that* program will end as Stevens Thomson Mason did!" To the author, this is precisely the right allusion: it is fresh; it is vivid; it expresses everything he wants to say. To him, the fact that almost no one else will be able to follow it means only that almost no one else has bothered to be educated.

To the editor, this is nonsense; and it is now his job to persuade the author, first, that the editor really does know who Stevens Thomson Mason was*; second, that the editor agrees that the allusion is very appropriate, for people who can understand it; third, that practically nobody will understand it; and fourth, that the climactic allusion can be made only at the risk of ruining the article.

The ensuing dialogue will be amusing, if you're neither a writer nor an editor. But so far, I've told the story from the editor's point of view. Let's see it from the author's. It's always the author's job to insist, and keep insisting, that editors would not exist if it weren't for writers, and not the other way around; and that if Shakespeare had been saddled with an editor, we wouldn't have any of his plays. Author and editor have different interests and ideas, and the best that can be said is, Let them fight it out.

This sentiment leads to my eighth and last observation:

8. Libertarian ideas are really true. Ideas about people, I mean. The libertarian notion is that people are self-motivated, unpredictable, unquantifiable, incapable of being reduced to a single dimension, and that the great engine of social progress is the individual's interest in . . . what's interesting to him.

The range of interests, motives, and responses that characterizes our readers and writers never ceases to amaze me. The greatest reward of every writer is simply to *write* and express himself in his own way — and every writer has a unique definition of what is rewarding to him. For some, it's arguing the main point; for others, it's a subtle manipulation of adjectives. I know writers who will accept wholesale revisions of their argument, but would rather kill their cattle, burn their seed corn, and sow their fields with salt, than change one word of a thematically irrelevant description. Different people set different values on different things.

As for readers, you'll go very wrong if you think that the audience for Liberty is people whose first and only concern is public policy or strictly libertarian ideas. Sometimes, indeed, that is their primary concern. But sometimes it's the latest movie. Sometimes it's the true cause of the Civil War, or whether George Washington was a Christian; or why the Mesoamericans didn't use the wheel, except in little toys. Sometimes, it's the price of tea in China. You really can't predict what the audience, or any of its members, will applaud in the current issue. You can only try to come out with the best you can find of a lot of different things. You can only try to keep contributing your best, whatever it is.

The only intellectually honest course is to publish whatever is well written and well argued from any significant point of view. That's the course Liberty tries to follow.

That's what all of us contentious people at Liberty, both writers and editors, have been trying to do, and that's what we're going to keep on doing. ❑

*Stevens Thomson Mason (1811–1843), first governor of Michigan, suffered an abrupt descent from immense popularity to total obscurity.

The Liberty Poll

Liberty has twice surveyed libertarians about their beliefs, their values, and their backgrounds: once shortly after the founding of the magazine, and again ten years later. Both times, our editors shared their thoughts about trends in libertarianism that the results might represent.

Nearly another ten years have passed since the last Liberty Poll, and our 20th anniversary seems an opportune moment for another. You, too, can be part of the Liberty tradition that has our readers asking at conventions and conferences, "How did *you* answer the Flagpole Question?"

Please answer whichever questions you wish, and return this page (or a photocopy) with your answers marked to: Liberty Poll, P.O. Box 1181, Port Townsend, WA 98368. Feel free to attach a sheet of paper and expand or explain any answers. Answers will remain confidential.

Thank you for your help!

Personal

Your age: _____

You are: ☐ Male ☐ Female
☐ Caucasian ☐ American Indian ☐ Black ☐ Asian
☐ Other _____

Your annual income is: ☐ less than $10,000
☐ $10,000–$20,000 ☐ $20,000–$30,000 ☐ $30,000–$50,000
☐ $50,000–$100,000 ☐ $100,000–$250,000 ☐ Over $250,000

Your formal education (highest level completed):
☐ Some high school ☐ High school graduate (Private? ☐ Yes ☐ No)
☐ Some college ☐ Two year college degree
☐ Bachelor's degree (Private? ☐ Yes ☐ No)
☐ Some grad school ☐ Master's degree ☐ Doctoral degree

Your occupation (check as many as apply):
☐ Computer-related ☐ Engineering ☐ Managerial
☐ Small-business owner ☐ Scientific/Technical ☐ Investor
☐ Medical professional ☐ Factory worker ☐ Teaching
☐ Farmer ☐ Nonprofit organization ☐ Law ☐ Sales
☐ Government employee ☐ Other _____

Years in military: _____ Highest rank: ☐ Officer ☐ Enlisted

Family: Married? ☐ Yes ☐ No Legally? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Number of offspring? _____ Number of grandchildren? _____
Number of divorces, if any? _____
Number of older brothers? _____ older sisters? _____
Number of younger brothers? _____ younger sisters? _____

Religion: Which of the following best describes your religious training as a child? ☐ Roman Catholic ☐ Mainline Protestant
☐ Fundamentalist Protestant ☐ Jewish ☐ No religion
☐ Other _____
Do you consider yourself a follower of any religion today? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Which, if other than specified above? _____
How long ago did you most recently attend a church or other form of worship? ☐ 0–7 days ☐ 8–30 days ☐ 31–90 days
☐ 91–365 days ☐ 1–5 years ☐ Longer ☐ Never

Sexual orientation: ☐ Heterosexual ☐ Homosexual
☐ Bisexual ☐ Other

Sexual activity (check one):
☐ Autoerotic only ☐ Celibate ☐ Monogamous
☐ Polygamous ☐ Casual/Promiscuous ☐ Group sex

How long have you been with your current partner? _____

What are the political beliefs of your current partner?
☐ Passive libertarian ☐ Active libertarian
☐ Quasi-libertarian ☐ Other _____

Intellectual development

(A) Do you consider yourself to be a libertarian? ☐ Yes ☐ No

(B) Who introduced you to libertarian ideas?
☐ Teacher ☐ Friend ☐ Parent ☐ Relative
☐ Writer ☐ Other _____

(C) Before becoming a libertarian, how would you characterize your political beliefs? ☐ Left ☐ Right ☐ Center

(D) Please rank on a scale of 1 to 5 the degree to which the following thinkers influenced your intellectual development (5 = substantial importance . . . 1 = little or no importance).

We are *not* asking you to report the degree you agree with these individuals' thought — what we seek to know is how important each figure was in the growth of *your* thinking, especially with regard to social and political matters.

Your Mother	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
Your Father	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
Brother and/or Sister	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
Aristotle	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
Frederic Bastiat	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
R.W. Bradford	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
Nathaniel Branden	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
Harry Browne	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
David Friedman	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
Milton Friedman	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
Barry Goldwater	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
Henry Hazlitt	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
F.A. Hayek	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
Robert A. Heinlein	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
Karl Hess	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
Thomas Hobbes	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
John Hospers	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
Thomas Jefferson	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
Immanuel Kant	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
Robert LeFevre	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
John Locke	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
Tibor Machan	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
Peter McWilliams	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
H.L. Mencken	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
John Stuart Mill	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
Ludwig von Mises	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
Albert Jay Nock	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
Robert Nozick	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
Ayn Rand	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
Robert Ringer	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
Murray Rothbard	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
Herbert Spencer	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
Lysander Spooner	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
William G. Sumner	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
Morris & Linda Tannehill	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
Benjamin Tucker	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
_____	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
_____	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

Moral opinions

Please check the following statements if you believe them to be true, or if they express your own values or opinions.

☐ There is a proper role for government, but that role is much smaller than the role government plays at present.
☐ Government should be eliminated altogether.
☐ Abortion is wrong.
☐ Abortion should be illegal.
☐ A person should have a legal obligation to support his or her offspring.
☐ Political action is an appropriate method of advancing individual liberty.
☐ People have a responsibility to vote.
☐ Communism is the greatest threat to human liberty.
☐ Terrorism is the greatest threat to human liberty.
☐ The U.S. should remove all restrictions on immigration.
☐ The U.S. should remove all tariffs immediately.

(over, please)

☐ There is a God.
☐ An employee of the state is a receiver of stolen goods and therefore is committing an improper act.
☐ One can accept government services (food stamps, subsidized housing, use of roads, etc.) without committing an immoral act.
☐ If the state expropriated all wealth and one could not exist without accepting stolen goods, it would be moral and proper to accept such goods (i.e., live within the system).
☐ A proper government would have an absolutely isolationist foreign policy.
☐ It is always wrong to initiate force against another human being.
☐ All men by their nature have a right to:
☐ Life ☐ Liberty ☐ Property ☐ The pursuit of happiness

My political beliefs are based upon (feel free to check more than one of the following): ☐ My religious beliefs
☐ My understanding of history ☐ My life experience
☐ Rational, philosophical analysis ☐ My understanding of economics

Ideological Activism

Do you give money to:
☐ Libertarian organizations ☐ Humanitarian organizations
☐ Cultural organizations ☐ Religious organizations

Have you given money (aside from the purchase of books or subscriptions) to any of the following libertarian organizations?
☐ The national Libertarian Party ☐ A local Libertarian Party
☐ Cato Institute ☐ Institute for Objectivist Studies
☐ The Ayn Rand Institute ☐ Ludwig von Mises Institute
☐ Reason Foundation ☐ Liberty Foundation
☐ Advocates for Self-Government ☐ Institute for Justice
☐ Foundation for Economic Education
☐ International Society for Individual Liberty
☐ Other _____

Do you talk to acquaintances about libertarianism? ☐ Yes ☐ No
What percentage (if any) respond favorably? _____

Do you speak in public about libertarian ideas? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you belong to any political organizations? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Which ones? _____
_____

Do you belong to any community groups? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Which ones? _____

How many conferences, seminars, and conventions did you attend in the last year? ☐ One ☐ Two to five ☐ Six or more

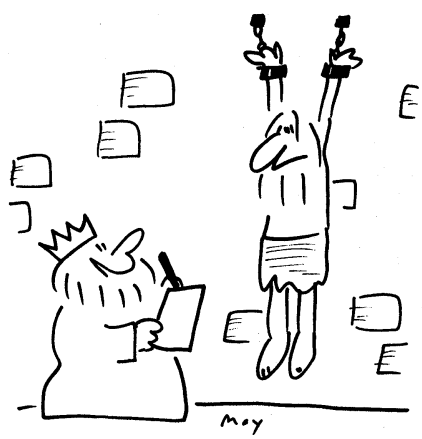
Are you a registered voter? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Are you a member of a political party? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Which one? _____

Have you ever run for a political office? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Problems

(A) Suppose that you are a security guard for a large shopping mall. A terrorist has threatened to drop a bomb from a balcony into a crowd.



"I'm taking a survey — are you (A) miserable, (B) terribly unhappy, or (C) in abject despair?"

He is moving toward the balcony's railing carrying an object that you believe to be a bomb. You have a gun. He has a hostage between himself and you (he knows that you have identified him). You have only a few seconds to react.

Which of the following most accurately reflects the action you consider appropriate?
☐ You should fire a gun at the terrorist only if you are certain that you will miss the hostage.
☐ You should fire at the terrorist if there is a reasonable chance that you will miss the hostage.
☐ You should fire through the hostage, if necessary.

(B) Suppose that a parent of a newborn baby places it in front of a picture window and sells tickets to anyone wishing to observe the child starve to death. He makes it clear that the child is free to leave at any time, but that anyone crossing his lawn will be viewed as trespassing.
Would you cross the lawn to help the child? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Would helping the child violate the parent's rights? ☐ Yes ☐ No

(C) Suppose that a parent decides to experiment with a radical new diet for his newborn child.
Should you prevent the parent from trying the diet, if you had good evidence it would endanger the child's health? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Suppose that you had good evidence that the diet would endanger the child's life? ☐ Yes ☐ No

(D) Suppose that you are on a friend's balcony on the 50th floor of a condominium complex. You trip, stumble, and fall over the edge. You catch a flagpole on the next floor down. The owner opens his window and demands you stop trespassing.
Which of the following statements reflects your beliefs?
☐ You should enter the owner's residence against the owner's wishes.
☐ You should hang on to the flagpole until a rope can be thrown down from above.
☐ You should drop.

(E) Suppose that your car breaks down in an unpredicted blizzard. You are trapped and may well freeze before help can get to you. You know that there is only one house within hiking distance. You hike to it. The owner, a frightened woman whose husband is absent, refuses to admit you (she has no phone, so asking her to telephone for help is pointless).
Which of the following statements reflects your beliefs?
☐ You should force entrance, but in this case it would not constitute an act of aggression.
☐ You should force entrance, even though it would be an act of aggression.
☐ You should not attempt to enter the house.

(F) Suppose that you live in a large city. Your neighbor constructs an atomic weapon. He assures you that he would detonate it only as an act of defense. You believe that he intends to commit an act of extortion ("The city must pay $1 million, or I will detonate it").
Which statement most clearly reflects your beliefs?
☐ You (and your neighbors) should prevent the construction of the device.
☐ You should put up your house for sale and move (check here ☐ if you feel obligated to tell your prospective buyers of the situation). You should not interfere with his actions.
☐ You should do nothing, since such a situation is unthinkable and, therefore, is not happening.

Please send to:
Liberty Poll, P.O. Box 1181, Port Townsend, WA 98368

We did not change the wording of most questions. We added a few new answers to bring the survey up to date. We are interested in how our readers today will answer the same questions we asked a decade ago, and we think our readers are interested in the same thing.

The Liberty Poll is not a scientific survey of libertarians; it is an informal survey of readers of Liberty. We do not represent that it is anything more than that, but it is still a lot of fun! Interested readers may find history and extensive analysis of the Liberty Poll and its results in the July 1988, September 1988, and February 1999 issues.

Reviews

"Joseph Conrad: A Life," by Zdzislaw Najder. Camden House, 2007, 745 pages.

The Power to Make You See

Timothy Sandefur

Joseph Conrad was undeniably a prodigy. Born in Poland in 1857 and learning English at the age of 21, he became one of the greatest sculptors of the language, combining innovative techniques with a bold and perfectly honed sense of texture and rhythm. He is often described as an "impressionist," and with good reason. In "Nostromo," to take one quick example, he describes how "the appearance of the Gould carriage on the Alameda would cause a social excitement. From the heavy family coaches full of stately señoras and black-eyed señoritas rolling solemnly in the shaded alley white hands were waved towards her with animation in a flutter of greetings." The reader's mind sees the white hands and the black eyes and the heavy coaches — and the impression is palpable, though merely suggested.

Even his sentence structure, with his distinctive *adjective-and-adjective-noun* construction, often connotes, rather than denotes: "suddenly, as we struggled round a bend, there would be a glimpse of rush walls, of peaked grass-roofs, a burst of yells, a whirl of black limbs, a mass of hands clapping, of feet stamping, of bodies swaying, of eyes rolling, under the droop of heavy and motionless foliage" ("Heart of Darkness"). One can almost hear the jungle drums.

He achieved the same effect in the broader scope as well. Where other writers tell stories directly, Conrad's are complicated, full of time shifts and hearsay, and images that only suggest the most important elements of the plot, from many different perspectives. At one point in "Lord Jim," the reader is told the story through a letter that describes what another person told another person about yet another person's actions — a multilayered effect like mirrors reflecting mirrors that can be haunting and precise at the same time.

These are just some of the ways that Conrad straddles the line between modernist and romantic. The motivations and ideas of his starkly drawn characters matter, but they struggle and falter in an indifferent universe. As Zdzislaw Najder puts it, Conrad "distanc[ed] himself from realism and naturalism" on the grounds that "[t]he artist 'speaks to our capacity for delight and wonder . . . to the solidarity in dreams, in joy, in sorry, in aspirations . . .'" Honor, dignity, and beauty matter in his books; his female characters in particular are usually dazzling, passionate, and intriguing. Yet his heroes rarely prevail, and for the one novel in which they do he chose the significant title of "Chance." "The fate of a humanity condemned ultimately to perish from cold is not worth troubling about," he wrote in an 1897 letter. "If you take it to heart it becomes an unendurable tragedy. If you believe in improvement you must weep, for the attained perfection must end in cold, darkness, and silence."

Conrad's attitude toward humanity thus contains a typically modern double standard: victory is impossible, yet man's efforts to succeed anyhow are the highest nobility. This is a central tenet of existentialism, and it was put succinctly by the nihilistic Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., in a comment on "Calumet 'K'" (Ayn Rand's favorite novel): "The universal romance of man," he said, is "to face obstacles and to measure his force by the number that he overcomes. . . . [T]he true path

is the line of most resistance." Life is at bottom a confrontation with a challenge one cannot meet, and what little redemption there is can be found only in one's dedication to duty. "Struggle,"

The motivations and ideas of Conrad's starkly drawn characters matter, but they struggle and falter in an indifferent universe.

Conrad wrote to a girl he was romancing, "means life, and for me the pleasure lies precisely in the struggle itself — never in the victory or in the fruits of victory." The girl kept her elegant response to herself. "I do not agree," she wrote in her diary. "For me life is happiness, but happiness that is silent, tranquil, gentle." Of course, any of Conrad's heroines would have said the same.

It would be easy to make too much of Conrad's Polishness, and indeed, as Najder — himself a Pole, whose book is elegantly translated by Halina Najder — shows, his contemporaries often did just this, much to his irritation. Yet beyond vague references to his pessimistic outlook, critics have never pinpointed just what it is about his work that is uniquely Polish. If anything, Najder argues, Conrad's writing was more influenced by French literary traditions, which shared with the Poles the romanticism prominent in all his work. But Conrad's father, a prominent socialist and agitator for Polish independence, was exiled by the czar, and all his life Conrad was inundated by his countrymen's patriotic appeals. He joined few of these, but insisted he was a believer.

In many other ways, his writings reveal a profound political conscience. This is most notable in "Heart of Darkness," his masterpiece written in protest of the bloodthirsty imperialism of King Leopold II of Belgium. And his other works betray a keen suspicion of the 20th century's political fantasies. One thing is clear: he was not a socialist. His portraits of "anarchists" in "The Secret Agent," or of South American strongmen in "Nostromo," are precise and deadly, and critics have noted an eerie similarity between the vulture that watches over Nostromo on the beach and the "hater of capitalists" who perches by his deathbed.

Some critics have contended that Conrad was a liberal, but this is hard to accept. He seems to have more in common with the early 20th-century romantics who went on to found paleoconservatism. Liberalism pictures society as a group of self-determined individuals able to choose for themselves; whose social bonds have an articulable and deliberate basis in consent. But for Conrad, it consisted "of unavoidable solidarity in hope, in uncertain fate, which binds men to each other." This is the typical appeal to mystique that underlies the romantic (or "organic") conception of society. Not only are our duties ultimately pointless, but their origin is also obscure.

It is probably no coincidence that Conrad was a favorite of T.S. Eliot. Like Eliot and, later, Russell Kirk, Conrad rejected what he called "[t]he material apparatus of perfected civilization which obliterates the individuality of old towns under the stereotyped conveniences of modern life." And, like them, he based his repudiation of modernity on a romanticized image of pre-modern life that has little in common with the facts — indeed, as Najder explains, much of Conrad's nostalgia for his own sailing life was sheer counterfeit. Take, for example, his claim in "The Mirror of the Sea" and elsewhere that sailing ships had soul, while steel-and-steam ships have not. Nobody can write it as beautifully as Conrad can. "I remember moments when even to my supple limbs and pride of nimbleness the sailing-ship's machinery seemed to reach up to the very stars," he wrote.

> For machinery it is, doing its work in perfect silence and with a motionless grace, that seems to hide a capricious and not always governable power, taking nothing away from the material stores of the earth. Not for it the unerring precision of steel moved by white steam and living by red fire and fed with black coal. The other seems to draw its strength from the very soul of the world, its formidable ally, held to obedience by the frailest bonds, like a fierce ghost captured in a snare of something even finer than spun silk. For what is the array of the strongest ropes, the tallest spars and the stoutest canvas against the mighty breath of the infinite, but thistle stalks, cobwebs and gossamer?

Such intoxicating prose poetry is typical of Conrad, but the facts are a little bit sharper. Sailing in Conrad's day was an extremely dangerous enterprise: "The year 1883 was a record one for accidents at sea," Najder writes. "2,019 seamen's lives were lost — or about one percent of those in active service." That's also an average of about six per day. Early steamships may not have been much safer, but for Conrad — who in his real life was an enthusiast for such modern conveniences as automobiles — to rhapsodize about the mystique of older ways was disingenuous.

Yet such rhapsodies were and remain the typical refrain of those who reject the "atomistic individualism" of liberal politics and preach against the "alienating rationalism" of the Enlightenment legacy — writers such as Coleridge, or Carlyle, or Lawrence, or Pound, or Eliot, or Kirk, who scorned the life of technological

For Conrad — who in his real life was an enthusiast for such modern conveniences as automobiles — to rhapsodize about the mystique of older ways was disingenuous.

advancement and insisted on an allegedly "higher" wisdom of emotion, tradition, and social stratification. These writers began by choosing *Gemeinschaft* over *Gesellschaft*; then they chose *Kultur*

over *Zivilisation*; then they chose a Reich over a Republic.

Perhaps it is unfair to contend that Conrad's romantic fixations were part of the tradition that spawned and applauded fascism. There is no doubt he would have rejected national socialism if he had lived long enough to see it, and he did speak later in life of his devotion to "an impartial view of humanity in all its degrees of splendour and misery together with a special regard for the rights of the underprivileged of this earth, not on any mystic ground but on the ground of simple fellowship and honorable reciprocity of services . . . matters removed as far as possible from that humanitarianism that seems to be merely a matter of crazy nerves or a morbid conscience." Certainly he was always opposed to racism, imperialism, and political tyranny. But like Eliot, Kirk, and others, neither his political views nor his criticism of others' were grounded in rational notions of individual freedom or government by consent. He appealed not to reason but to the obscure "fellowship" of "humanity." This fellowship was under assault from a modernism that he saw as a mesh of brutality and rationality.

We can only imagine how much of this was attributable to Conrad's own experiences; for while Najder has uncovered a wealth of new information about his background, we know little of his inner life before he turned to writing novels, and much of what he wrote in his memoirs was exaggerated. This is frustrating because Conrad's ambiguity has led many critics to seek its key in his biography. As Najder acknowledges, Conrad's work, "to be adequately understood and appreciated, requires an inordinately large amount of background information." Without such information, one is liable to make such foolish arguments as African writer Chinua Achebe did in 1975, when he accused Conrad of racism for "Heart of Darkness." Such a charge is, if possible, even more absurd than the same accusation often leveled against "Huckleberry Finn." Twain's attitudes on race are at least ambiguous on occasion; Conrad's are not.

But while Najder's biography provides a precise, thorough, readable history of Conrad's life, it mostly shies away from analysis of the novels themselves. For example, he writes that the notorious Mr. Kurtz of "Darkness" was inspired by a French passenger who died aboard Conrad's steamer, and notes briefly the many other villains whom critics have suspected as models for Kurtz. But aside from rightly noting that the character was based on "the behavior of a great many Europeans in Africa," Najder is silent. He does not describe the acts of these people (or even mention the person I think most obvious as a model for Kurtz: the brutal conman Henry Morton Stanley), and only alludes to how Marlow's gradual shedding of his civilized character echoed Conrad's real experiences in traveling up the Congo.

This is because, while recognizing the importance of biography in interpreting Conrad, Najder believes that "the proper study of the biographer is a study of culture," and "not, as is often assumed, of psychology, which must remain a sphere of speculations." He thus tries hard to avoid psychoanalytic interpretations of Conrad, just as Ron Powers explicitly attacked psychoanalysis in his recent biography of Mark Twain. But, like Powers, Najder cannot really resist. His book is studded with references to Conrad's depression and psychological "needs"; he even cites psychology journals and textbooks at least half a dozen times. Like it or not, psychology is a useful, if often abused, tool for interpreting great writers. Although he goes too far in some respects, Jeffrey Meyers' 1991 "Joseph Conrad: A Biography" remains a more interesting book, because it is interlarded with intriguing analysis of the novels that is missing from Najder's biography. Of course, Najder is a leading Conrad critic who has published several volumes analyzing the books, but it would be nice to have at least a taste of such analysis here. Likewise, Najder points intriguingly to Conrad's borrowings — in some cases, outright copying — but fails to follow through. The novel "Under Western Eyes" bears such a striking similarity to Dostoyevsky's "Crime And Punishment," for example, that many readers have wondered what he was getting at. But Najder does little to explain why Conrad (who hated Dostoyevsky) would do such a thing.

Alas, Conrad's inspirations, both biographical and literary, remain largely mysterious. But unfortunate as that may be, we retain his brilliant final legacy in his books, with their hypnotic power and their poetic perfection. "My task," he wrote in his famous artistic credo, "is, by the power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel — it is, before all, to make you see." In that, he succeeded masterfully. ❑

All his life Conrad was inundated by his countrymen's patriotic appeals. He joined few of these, but insisted he was a believer.

"American Bloomsbury," by Susan Cheever. Simon & Schuster, 2006, 240 pages.

The Birthplace of American Literature

Jo Ann Skousen

In the middle of the 19th century, five Massachusetts writers changed the way Americans would think about themselves, about social responsibility, and about the world. Although they didn't know it, these men and women were creating a new genre of literature that later writers would call "transcendentalism" and "The American Renaissance." In her new book, Susan Cheever calls them "American Bloomsbury."

The title's reference to the London literary group that included Virginia Woolf, John Maynard Keynes, E.M. Forster, and Lytton Strachey is an apt description of how a writer can change the world: it may not take a village, but it often requires a group. Throughout literary history, in fact, groups of writers have created new genres and built up new philosophies as they listened to one another's ideas and responded to one another's writings.

Together these New England writers — Bronson and Louisa May Alcott, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Henry David Thoreau — developed a new philosophy that focused on individualism, self-reliance, and inner spirituality.

Cheever tells and retells the story of these blooming New England friendships, focusing on each of the major writers in turn. The book is not an analysis of what they wrote, but an examination of how their friendships influenced their writing. She writes about Alcott's crush on Thoreau, Melville's interest in Hawthorne, Hawthorne's infatuation with Fuller, and Fuller's attraction to everyone. The result is a fascinating examination of their interdependence, both financial and intellectual.

At the center of this group was Ralph Waldo Emerson, a third-generation Unitarian minister who eventually left the church in favor of a more self- and nature-centered religion. "The foregoing generations beheld God and nature face to face; we, through their eyes. Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe? Why should not we have a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation to us, and not the history of theirs?" he demanded in the introduction of one of his earliest essays, "Nature."

Funded by an inheritance from his first wife's death, Emerson became friend, mentor and benefactor to several writer-philosophers, including the Alcotts, Thoreau, Hawthorne, and Fuller. Later, when Hawthorne began earning his own money from the success of "The Scarlet Letter," he would provide the same guidance and financial help for another budding writer, Herman Melville. Later still, when Emerson's money ran out, Louisa May Alcott would become benefactress with the profits from her reluctantly written masterpiece, "Little Women."

Although Cheever's admiration for these writers is apparent, her book does not fall into the trap of hagiographic hero worship. While admiring Thoreau's principles and the influence he had on 20th century Americans, Cheever correctly points out his hypocrisy in self-righteously eschewing money and materialism while gladly accepting the largesse of his friend and benefactor, Emerson. Anyone reading "Walden" would assume that Thoreau had removed himself far from society, deep in the woods. But in fact, he built his shack in Emerson's backyard (albeit a big backyard) and often walked the mile into town to visit with friends and enjoy a congenial meal.

Similarly, although she admires the transcendentalists' leadership in promoting abolitionism, Cheever expresses utter contempt for their naive support of John Brown, whose violent attacks made him not a martyr but a common murderer, thoroughly deserving his execution by hanging. Groupthink can lead to wondrous new philosophies, but it can also reinforce bad ideas.

A memoirist herself, Cheever cannot resist inserting herself into the literary group about whom she writes through her own self-conscious musings: describing the scene of Margaret Fuller's drowning, for example, she begins paragraphs with "I am haunted by . . . " "I can imagine . . . " "I see . . . " Visiting modern day Concord she focuses on her own three children and two dogs and the need to find an ice cream store; at home in her study, she "sees" Thoreau coming down Emerson's walk and the Hawthornes strolling through the village.

Although Cheever's admiration for these writers is apparent, her book does not fall into the trap of hagiographic hero worship.

I found these reflections distracting, pulling me out of the 19th century and

into the present. Nevertheless, I recognize it is part of what creates the intimacy of Cheever's writing style — she writes as though she personally knew these authors, attended their lectures, joined them for summer walks. And I guess I'm just a tad envious that she has become a part of their blooming group.

In many respects, reading "American Bloomsbury" reminded me of the libertarian giants of the second half of the last century. People like Bob Kephart and Leonard Read were the Emersons, men of impeccable intellect and values who provided both a forum and the quiet funding that allowed ideas on liberty to blossom. Bill Bradford's Liberty is similar to Margaret Fuller's Dial, both magazines written by volunteer contributors and funded by a modest subscription rate supplemented by idealistic benefactors. Ayn Rand, in addition to being a leader in the movement, matched Margaret Fuller's open sexuality that simply ignored the connubial rights of the women to whom her friends were married.

As we celebrate the 20th anniversary of Liberty, it is a good time to reflect on the writers who have influenced our own writing, the groups we turn to for intellectual, emotional, and even financial support, and acknowledge their significance in bringing libertarian principles to light. In fact, I ended up marrying my Emerson! ❑

Medianotes

Sequential downpour — Blockbuster movies these days are almost like TV shows — episodic installments that turn up every couple of years with familiar characters facing new dilemmas. This summer we could channel surf to several: Spiderman 3, Pirates of the Caribbean 3, Fantastic Four 2, Shrek 3, Die Hard 4, Harry Potter 5. The blockbusters began in May with box office success, but viewer disappointment.

What went wrong? Why didn't we get caught in Spiderman's web? Why weren't our imaginations pirated away? Why weren't the Four fantastic?

Familiarity is partly to blame. We've gotten so used to computer graphics and special effects that the Amazing Spiderman doesn't amaze any more. I'm more impressed by the old-fashioned live-action stunts that appear early in all three "Pirates" movies than by the more expensive but less convincing computer-generated ship battles.

We've also become too familiar with the characters. After three installments, Johnny Depp's Captain Jack, once so fresh and witty, has become a caricature of his own caricature, failing to surprise and delight audiences as much as the original did. The best performance of his swagger in "Pirates 3" actually comes from Keira Knightley as Elizabeth Swann, rolling her eyes and her body in Johnny Depp style as she leaves her weapons at the door, cleverly reminding us that she learned her pirating from Captain Jack.

Similarly, I've grown tired of Tobey Maguire's wide-eyed innocence. Sure, I liked the behind-the-scenes look at the woes of being a superhero in Spidey II — the red uniform turning his undies pink, the difficulty of holding a regular job and keeping a regular girlfriend when the dangers threatening the world take precedence. But enough already! Follow the lead of the "Batman" machine and hire a variety of actors to play the character, each bringing a fresh interpretation to the role.

What's missing most from these super movies is a clear-cut supervillain with a super plan who makes me care whether the superhero succeeds. We've had enough of hero angst. Threaten the world as *I* know it. Show me that the black goo threatens *my* existence, that Sandman might cause earthquakes to destroy *my* world. Most of all, *don't* show me that Sandman is just a sweet old Joe who is only trying to buy medicine for his daughter. I don't want to feel sorry for the bad guy!

Therein lies the biggest problem with epic movies today, from "Star Wars" to "Spiderman": Hollywood's love affair with victimization. They simply can't create a villain any more without feeling compelled to provide justification for his crimes. Must we all get along?

"Pirates of the Caribbean" suffers from a similar lack. Episode Two introduced a compelling enough villain in the form of the tentacled Davy Jones. But Episode Three twists itself into a knot making a government agent into the bad guy, while turning Davy Jones into a victim. Now, I'm all in favor of villainizing government, but if your choice is between a larger-than-life, squid-headed pirate and a self-centered twit in stretch pants, red jacket, and curled wig, which one is going to shiver your timbers?

I guess I'm part of the problem, because I'll continue going to see summer blockbusters as long as Hollywood continues to make them. But will I see them again and again? Will I buy the videos, the merchandise, the soundtracks? Until the stories improve, not likely. Let's hope that Hollywood producers return to investing some of that big-budget money in the works of lesser-known, talented filmmakers with a genuine story to tell and creative, artistic ways to tell it. — Jo Ann Skousen

Sowell's Folly — Writers courageous about contents are often equally courageous in exploring alternative literary forms. Thomas Sowell in no exception. Having published a "straight" autobiography in "A Personal Odyssey" (2000), which I recommend, he here makes a book ("A Man of Letters," Encounter Books, 2007, 320 pages) from letters, both long and short, that he sent to various people from 1960 to 2005. Having published some alternative autobiographies myself, I leaped for the book.

It doesn't work. The principal fault is the book's interior design, which is credited, across from the contents page, to none other than Thomas Sowell. His historic letters appear in comparatively large type, double-spaced, with dark rectangular borders around them. In much smaller type, lacking borders, appear his recent comments on the experience portrayed in his correspondence. Oddly, for the index he returns

to the larger typeface, even though most indices, for good reason, are set in type smaller than that in the body of the book.

His recent comments, written when he was 75, are often more interesting than the letters, especially those written decades ago. In this respect, this book reminds one of the collected correspondence between Gertrude Stein and Thornton Wilder, both so circumspect that they said little, while the book's editorial comments, again in smaller type, were more interesting and instructive. There as here, I found myself skipping over the letters to read the annotations. The difference between the two books is that Sowell today bests his earlier selves. Though I can't think of any previous book that works and looks like this, may I wonder: what was Sowell the designer and self-editor thinking?

Finally, the book reminded me of why I don't often read authors' collected letters, even when edited by people other than the author. Lacking any thematic development, they are easily skimmed. If "A Personal Odyssey" told a story, this book doesn't. That's unfortunate, because I rank Sowell among the great American writers; his best books, for one measure, are classics that will survive him. However, as the designer and editor of his own letters, Sowell is surely farblundget, which is Yiddish for confused, really confused.

— Richard Kostelanetz

The whole of the law — "Norms of Liberty: A Perfectionist Basis for a Non-Perfectionist Politics" (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005, 380 pages), is a book that deserves much more attention from libertarians than it has received.

One of the severest problems from which libertarianism suffers in our postmodern age is the tendency to blur the line between liberty and relativism: to misapply the *political* rule that we are free to act so long as we respect others, to the realm of *morality*, which guides one's own conduct. This error is best expressed in the Wiccan slogan, "An [if] it harm none, do as thou wilt." This is fine politics, but it leaves people with no guidance in solving even the simplest ethical conundrums. It is certainly no compass for excellence. Should I study tonight or go to the game? Should I marry a girl when my parents disapprove? Should I drink another beer? None of these questions can be answered by "do as thou wilt." In fact, such slogans necessarily take the form of commandments, because the two clauses don't relate: what does doing as one pleases have to do with not harming others? And since a moral injunction that is not logical can only be asserted as an *ipse dixit* formula, the result is old-fashioned morality-by-commandment: "Honor the sabbath day." Why? There's no why, it's just because He says so. So with the Wiccan nonsense.

Unfortunately, this error is not unique to Wiccans; many libertarians have absorbed the idea that morality is subjective, and therefore that the only universal moral commandment is to harm no other person. As important as the principle of respecting rights may be, it is a political principle that must rest on a solid moral foundation. Substituting it for morality short-circuits libertarianism, rendering it ethically confused and its political prescriptions ungrounded and unconvincing.

In "Norms of Liberty," Douglas Rasmussen and Douglas Den Uyl provide a thorough response to this problem. Of course, libertarians tend to be suspicious of universal moral precepts, because they are so often asserted by authoritarians who would impose them on unwilling citizens. But as Rasmussen and Den Uyl show, authoritarianism is not only unwarranted but self-defeating: since moral excellence requires a person to choose his actions in pursuit of moral excellence, any politics that enforces a "right" action on unwilling citizens destroys the basic requirement of goodness, and renders the action neither good nor bad. Moreover, there are many different kinds of excellence. Morality and excellence are not subjective, but, like physical health, they exist only in relationship to each individual *as an individual*; they are agent-specific. The excellence of a truck driver differs from the excellence of a poet, and thus the "one best way" *cannot* (and should not) be imposed on either of them by the state.

Given the individual focus of goodness, there must be some way, in Jefferson's phrase, of leaving individuals "free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement." This is done through rights, which are not primarily *ethical* but *political* instruments, allowing people to get along when real excellences (as well as their beliefs about excellence) differ. Rasmussen and Den Uyl's argument leads to some surprising conclusions, such as that the violation of rights is not a basically *immoral* act — rather, the immorality comes from the self-destructive nature of choosing actions that result in violating rights: respecting rights "is necessary for the moral game to be played, but it is not an instance of playing it well or even playing it much at all."

The book suffers at times from an academic tone, and a terrible lack of examples. But as an answer to some of libertarianism's most serious internal problems, "Norms of Liberty" is an outstanding and important contribution.

— Timothy Sandefur

Tour de Paris — I cannot claim to be the most widely traveled man, but I have traveled to Europe on several occasions, and I find two cities, Paris and Prague, especially beautiful. And, if pressed, I give the edge to Paris. If you have like sentiments, I heartily recommend a movie now playing in art houses, "Paris, je t'aime" (Victoires International, 2006, 120 minutes).

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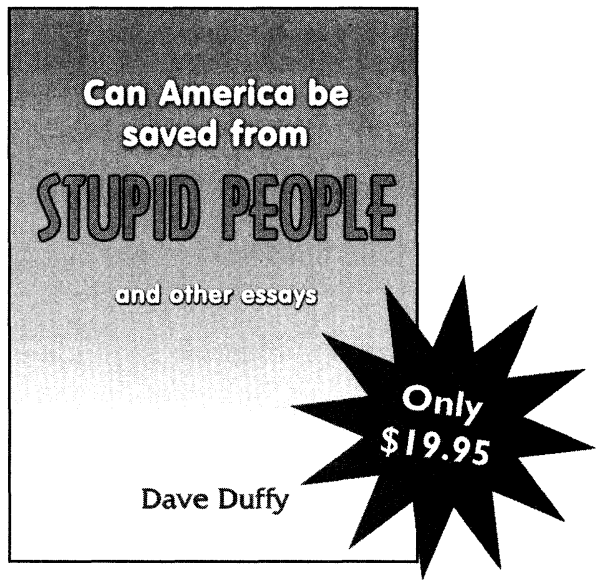
"...Burglars, and all criminals whose deeds risk violence, destroy parts of society. They are like arsonists, setting little fires all over the place, burning down what the rest of us try to build up. We build hope for the future, and they burn it down." — page 233



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liberty_8/07 DD1

This movie is a series of 16 vignettes, each directed by a well-known director, set in a different Paris district, and based (however loosely) on love. (It has the tagline, "Stories of Love, from the City of Love.") The result is a set of mini-stories, some very moving, and all showing the profound beauty of Paris.

The cast is impressive, including French, British, and American actors such as Marianne Faithfull, Miranda Richardson, Juliette Binoche, Willem Dafoe, Nick Nolte, Sara Martins, Maggie Gyllenhaal, Bob Hoskins, Elijah Wood, Natalie Portman, Gerard Depardieu, Ben Gazzara, and Gena Rowlands. The directors include Olivier Assayas, Oliver Schmitz, the Coen brothers, Gerard Depardieu, Gus Van Sant, Alexander Payne, and Wes Craven(!), among others.

The vignettes are all visually compelling, though they vary in quality. In the story "Place des Victoires," Binoche — a fine and beautiful actress — plays a mother devastated by the loss of her young son, a boy who loved cowboy movies. In a moving scene, she follows his voice out to a deserted street, where a spectral cowboy (played by Dafoe) lets her see her boy a final time.

In another powerful vignette, "Quartier Latin," an older separated couple (played splendidly by Gazzara and Rowlands) meet in a cafe to finalize their divorce. As the waiter (Depardieu, who also directed the piece) serves them wine, they discuss their involvement with younger lovers, and their past together. It becomes clear that they loved (and love) each other and would have kept their marriage alive, but for her inability to keep her sarcastic mouth shut and his inability to keep his zipper shut. Not a bad description of why so many marriages fail.

A less emotionally compelling (but still watchable) vignette, "Quartier de la Madeleine," directed by Vincenzo Natali, has a tourist fall (literally and figuratively) for a vampire. The tourist (Wood, who is developing into a very fine character actor) sees a beautiful vampire (a sexy Olga Kurylenko) sucking the blood from a corpse, and he instantly falls in love. Finding herself observed, she moves to him as if to bite him, but spares him instead. As he leaves, he falls down a staircase and dies. Seeing this, the vampire delivers her bite, bringing him back to life as a vampire. The vignette ends with them embracing and lustily biting each other's necks.

As uneven as they are, the vignettes all show Paris effectively. The acting is uniformly excellent. All in all, a delightful evening's entertainment.

— Gary Jason

Culture matters — Keeping in mind Thomas Sowell's thesis that

Notes on Contributors

Peter Allen is a government official currently working abroad.

Baloo is a *nom de plume* of Rex F. May. His website is baloocartoons.com.

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

R.W. Bradford (1947–2005) was the founding editor and publisher of *Liberty.*

Scott Chambers is a cartoonist living in California.

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.*

Richard Fields hosts a weekly cable access TV talk show in Sacramento called "The Libertarian Counterpoint."

Jon Harrison lives and writes in Vermont.

Gary Jason is a writer and philosophy instructor. His books include *Critical Thinking: Developing an Effective Worldview* and *Introduction to Logic.*

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

Ross Levatter is a physician in Phoenix.

Bill Merritt is a sometimes-novelist living in Gaborone, Botswana. If you are offended at what he has to say, you are welcome to try to pursue him through the Botswana legal system.

Oisín Ó Conail is a graduate of Texas Christian University (Go Frogs!) living in Ireland.

Patrick Quealy may be found in his natural habitat, a Seattle coffee shop.

Bruce Ramsey is a journalist in Seattle.

Ted Roberts' humor appears in newspapers around the U.S. and is heard on NPR.

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

Jane S. Shaw is the executive vice president of the J.W. Pope Center for Higher Education Policy in Raleigh, N.C.

Jo Ann Skousen is entertainment editor of *Liberty.* She lives in New York.

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

differences among peoples commonly attributed to race really reflect culture, I was struck by two albums that have recently appeared. Both contain American vernacular music sung by men trained in the classical operatic tradition.

One is Thomas Quasthoff, the renowned German bass-baritone now in his late 40s, who has overcome serious physical handicaps caused by thalidomide to become one of the great singers of our time. Barely four feet tall, with hands resembling flippers, he has a big and flexible voice that is particularly strong in classic solo song cycles. I particularly recommend his DVD of Franz Schubert's "Die Winterreise," with English subtitles. Quasthoff's "The Jazz Album — Watch What Happens" (DGG, 2007), recorded mostly with German backup musicians, contains such standards as "My Funny Valentine," "I've Grown Accustomed to her Face," and the Gershwins' "There's a Boat Dat's Leavin' Soon for New York."

The other singer is Morris Robinson, a large African-American perhaps a decade younger than Quasthoff, more of a bass than a baritone, very much a star-to-be, who looks like a sometime football lineman, as indeed he was. In the five years since I heard him singing John Cage, Robinson has appeared at New York's Metropolitan Opera, mostly in the role of a king, in part because of his physical size and his resonant deep voice. Among the songs in his "Going Home" (Decca, 2007), recorded in America, are "Go Down, Moses," "Wade in the Water," and "Sometimes I Feel like a Motherless Child."

Take out two CD players and listen to Quasthoff and Robinson alternately, and in a blind test — no cheating — you can't with your ears alone identify differences between them. For a while I thought a German accent in English would distinguish the two, but when my eyes told me that my ears had mistaken Quasthoff for Robinson, I realized that I was actually hearing the more formal diction developed by opera singers. Only when I read the album notes did I recognize the differences in their repertoire.

The similar sound of Quasthoff and Robinson reflects, of course, their common musical training and culture, notwithstanding differences in race, nationality, mother tongue, and physical size. In understanding musical art as well as society, Sowell gets it right. That he has written little, if anything, about music is a measure of his persuasive truth. — Richard Kostelanetz

Sometimes it talks — My first reaction on seeing "On Bullshit" (by Harry G. Frankfurt; Princeton University Press, 2005, 67 pages) was: this is a joke, surely. By the time I had gotten around to the extended analysis of a brief personal exchange between Ludwig Wittgenstein and another philosopher, I felt that I was being sucked in to an ingenious parody of academic writing, a kind of magnificent "tall tale" of a great intellect (and amid my stifled guffaws in the bookstore, I didn't care).

This is, however, a straight-laced philosophical inquiry into the nature of bullshit, an attempt to grasp an "understanding of what bullshit is, why there is so much of it, or what functions it serves." "On Bullshit" defies expectations, discovering unexpected new meaning in a concept both familiar and vulgar — a marvelous alchemy. Some gems from the book:

> [A] fundamental aspect of the essential nature of bullshit: although it is produced without concern for the truth, it need not be false.
>
> It is impossible for someone to lie unless he thinks he knows the truth. Producing bullshit requires no such conviction.
>
> Both in lying and in telling the truth people are guided by their beliefs concerning the way things are . . . The bullshitter ignores these demands altogether. He does not reject the authority of truth, as the liar does . . . He pays no attention to it at all. By virtue of this, bullshit is a greater enemy of the truth than lies.

A wonderful little hardback book to treasure, and a great gift for family and friends. — Oisín Ó Conail

Reflections, *from page 28*

And consider the union corruption that workers have seen. Maybe the union gets you an extra 50 bucks a week, but you see the union boss earn a million a year for "helping the working guy," and you see that all his family members have cushy jobs in the union hierarchy.

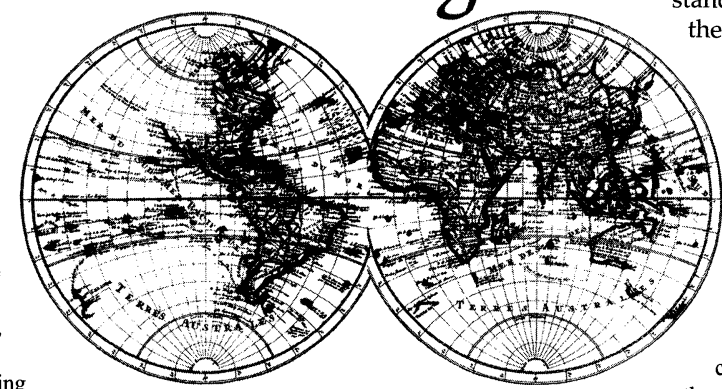
Equally visible to the average worker is the fact that unions typically fail to deliver the goods. Unions occasionally fund clinics or scholarship programs, but usually the dues go elsewhere, and the worker winds up with little to show for them. Most egregious is the failure to deliver job security — in fact, unions are more often job killers than job savers.

Then there are the deceptive practices. Consider those union dues again. While collected to fund union projects and activities, they are in great measure used to fund leftist candidates and causes. The unions deliberately ignore the rights granted workers under the Supreme Court's *Beck* ruling, and compel workers to pay dues to support candidates they often despise. Is there anything more outrageous than using a white auto worker's union dues to elect politicians who enact affirmative action laws that make it impossible for that same worker's children to get into a good university?

Or how about the use of forcibly collected union dues to support politicians who fanatically fight vouchers, ensuring that the workers' children — not, please note, the children of the politicians, business owners, or union bosses — will be forced to attend crappy schools.

It is the dismal spectacle of what unions have done (and failed to do) that has cost them their target market. In this they are, frankly, grotesque caricatures of so many failed American businesses, demanding that the government coerce consumers to buy their wares, rather than provide the sort of wares the public wants. Maybe unions should instead look to reform themselves — eliminate corruption, serve the workers, quit spending workers' dues on everything but the workers, and cooperate with businesses rather than try to destroy them. But I won't hold my breath. — Gary Jason

Terra Incognita



Switzerland

Fashion meets the precautionary principle, from *Le Matin:*

Swiss clothing manufacturer Isabodywear is launching a special line of men's underwear that claims to protect men's sperm from harmful cell phone radiation.

The briefs are made with threads of silver which block cell phone rays and reception. The inventor, Andreas Sallmann, explains that when you put a cellphone inside your briefs, then dial your number from another phone, you probably won't even get a signal.

Madrid

Violence in the cyber-streets, noted in the *Register* (U.K.):

Spain's bitter political wrangling has spread to Second Life with supporters of socialist and conservative parties trying to burn down each others' party offices in the virtual world.

"They have thrown bombs, entered the building with sub-machine guns, lit fires, everything you could imagine," said an official from Spain's ruling Socialist Party, using the Second Life moniker Zeros Kuhm. A spokesman for the conservative opposition Popular Party noted in response that the party has "complained to the Second Life commission about the terrorism."

Palestine

Revenge for the Children's Crusade, from the Middle East bureau of Agence France-Presse:

A Hamas-run television station defied Israel and the Palestinian government by continuing to air a controversial children's puppet show with a Mickey Mouse lookalike preaching resistance.

Complete with Islamic songs and calls for cities in Israel to return to Palestine, one recent episode apparently sought to prepare children for their end-of-year examinations — with Farfur the mouse being told that cheating is forbidden.

Asked why by an Al-Aqsa television reporter, he looked left and right to see what his friends were writing and answered: "Because the Jews destroyed my home and I left my books and notes under the rubble."

"I'm calling on all children to read more and more to prepare for exams because the Jews don't want us to learn," Farfur then said after being told he had failed the test.

La Crosse, Wisc.

Another fugitive brought to justice, from the *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel:*

A 60-year-old man spent 17 hours in jail after a background check during a routine traffic stop uncovered an arrest warrant for a 1984 ticket. Michael L. Saxton said he never knew about the citation for failure to display boat registration numbers that the Wisconsin Circuit Court website listed as having been issued against him in June of that year.

Los Angeles

Opening sally in the battle for truth in advertising, webbed by *Fortune:*

CKE Restaurants Inc., parent of the Carl's Jr. and Hardee's fast-food chains, sued rival Jack In the Box Inc. over new television commercials it says mislead customers into thinking that Angus beef burgers come "from the rear-end and/or anus of beef cattle by creating phonetic and aural confusion between the words 'Angus' and 'anus.'"

United Kingdom

New expurgation from the standard site on British birds, from the *Telegraph:*

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds has banned the use of the word "cock" when applied to the male of the species, in case it causes offense. The word has been replaced by four asterisks.

A website moderator noted: "It is not political correctness. The issue is words that can be used in an offensive context and we should not forget that the RSPB website has a massive viewing from children."

Another forum poster, John, in Holmfirth, had the final word, posting: "I was thrilled to see on the bird table a pair of *Parus major.* As bird lovers will know, a Parus major is a great tit, and while ***** do not get past the forum censor, 'tits' do not cause offense."

Greeley, Colo.

Victory for First Amendment rights, reported in the *Rocky Mountain News:*

A former Democratic Party activist who left dog feces on the doorstep of U.S. Rep. Marilyn Musgrave's Greeley office during last year's 4th Congressional District campaign was found not guilty of criminal use of a noxious substance.

Kathleen Ensz's lawyers never denied that their client left a Musgrave campaign brochure full of feces at the front door of the congresswoman's office. But they argued that Ensz was making a statement protected by free speech — the poop was a symbol of what she thought of Musgrave's politics.

A Weld County jury deliberated about two hours before acquitting Ensz of the misdemeanor count.

Mumbai, India

Culinary note, from the *Bombay Times:*

The owner of a restaurant named after Adolf Hitler said he will change its name.

Puneet Sablok said he would remove Hitler's name and the Nazi swastika from billboards and the menu. He had said the restaurant's name — "Hitler's Cross" — and symbols were only meant to attract attention.

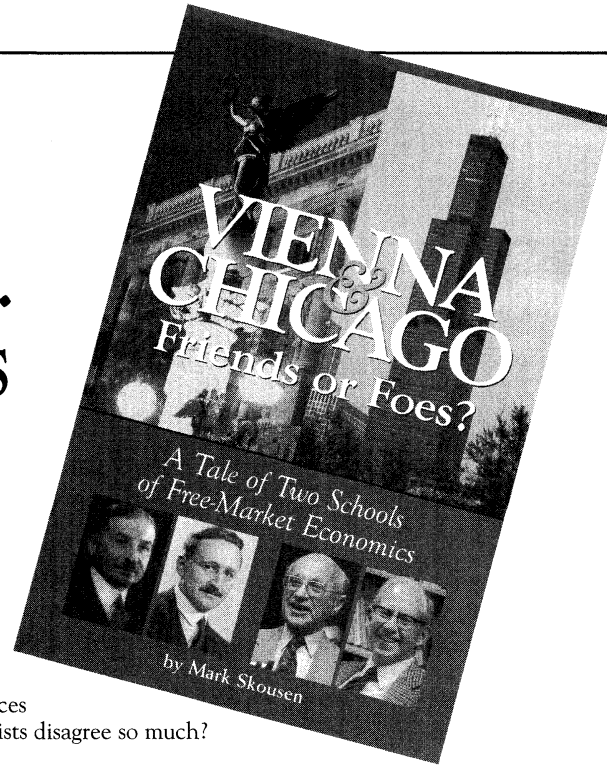
Sablok made the decision after meeting with members of Bombay's small Jewish community. "I never wanted to hurt people's feelings," said Sablok.

Special thanks to K. Bolka, Bart Cooper, and Russell Garrard 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?

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.
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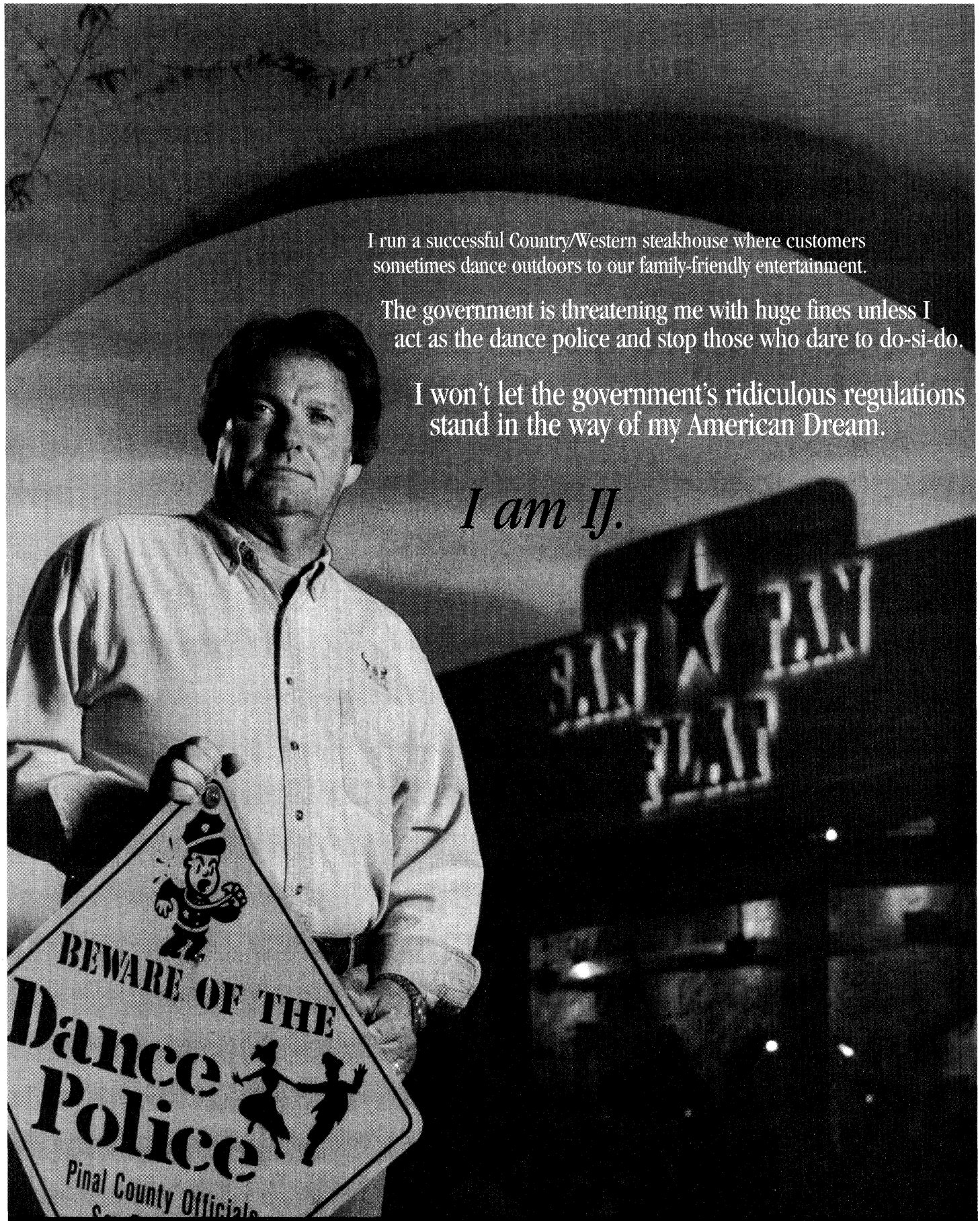

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