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February 2005

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*"The Mountain Nymph, sweet Liberty." — John Milton*

# Why do the worst get to the top?

Friedrich von Hayek posed this question in 1944. While he explained the economics, he omitted the psychology of those driven to wield power. Shortly after, Ayn Rand suggested that producers stop playing host to parasites, but also missed identifying the motive force behind the parasitic need to control.

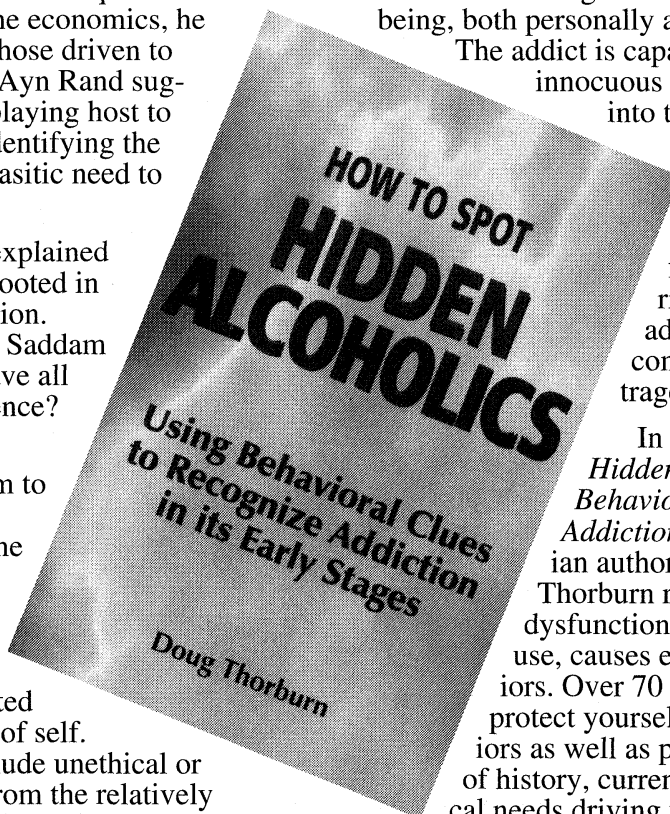
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# Inside Liberty

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## Letters

### Polling Pink

I found your election analysis ("Lies, Damned Lies, and Election Analysis," January) very interesting indeed!

I still think the antigay ballot initiatives brought out Bush's base, rather substantially, even if it brought out some anti-Bush forces as well. Bush's base remains a force to contend with, insofar as it has been emboldened by a growing coalition of evangelical right-wing and more socially conservative Catholic voters.

And if you take a look at Ohio: That initiative in particular got an affirmative vote of 3,249,157 and a negative vote of 2,011,168. Bush won the state by about 136,000 votes. Exit polls tell us that 67% of those who voted for the Ohio same-sex marriage/civil union ban also voted for Bush. The GOP Ohio strategy tied the campaign to the ban explicitly in radio spots, 3 million taped phone messages, millions of targeted mailings, and over 2.5 million church bulletin inserts. Bush won not only the evangelical vote in Ohio by a 76%-24% margin, but the Catholic vote there as well, 55%-45% over Catholic Kerry, a shift of 172,000 Catholic votes to the Republican column from Bush's last showing in 2000. I think a persuasive case can be made that this initiative was just enough to galvanize social conservatives, assuring Bush a victory in Ohio, and, by consequence, four more years.

Of course, voters don't vote on single issues, and most certainly, other issues inspired the Bush vote. But I think we minimize the growing political impact of social conservatism at our peril.

Chris Matthew Sciabarra  
Brooklyn, N.Y.

*Bradford responds:* For your claim that "a persuasive case can be made that this initiative was just enough to . . . [assure] Bush a victory in Ohio" to be credible, you'd have to provide evidence that the ballot measure increased Bush's margin by at least 119,000 votes, his margin of victory in Ohio. You don't offer any such evidence. Instead you offer evidence that the Bush campaign followed a strategy there that they hoped would exploit the ballot measure and that the ballot measure was quite popular with certain voters. All very interesting, but it says nothing about the overall effect of the ballot measure on the presidential vote.

To measure the overall effect, we have to look at actual vote totals, as I did in my article. In Ohio, Bush's margin of victory in 2004 was .57% *lower* than his margin of victory in 2000, when voters had no opportunity to vote on banning gay marriage. In the eleven states where gay marriage bans were ballot options, Bush's vote share increased by 1.56%; in the 40 states where no option appeared, his vote share increased 4.01%.

This is overwhelmingly powerful evidence that the impact of the gay marriage ballot measures actually reduced Bush's margin of victory.

### Central Protection Agency

If we take exclusive jurisdiction as the definition of government, then libertarian anarchism is impossible. Protection agency A has exclusive jurisdiction over the property of its clients, and protection agency B has exclusive jurisdiction over its clients. Whatever problems occur with exclusive jurisdiction, occur with all exclusive jurisdictions. Even with genuine

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anarchism (no protection agencies), everyone has exclusive jurisdiction over his own property. The only permissible anarchism would be communist anarchism, where everything is shared and there is no exclusive jurisdiction. I suggest "protection agency" is a better definition of a libertarian government.

Tom Porter  
Reseda, Calif.

### The Road to Perdition

Kenneth L. Strain writes in opposition to gay marriage (December 2004), apparently threatening to cancel his subscription. He suggests that Liberty is on the road to perdition and bankruptcy, as he claims happened to the magazine *The Week* when it published a picture of two men in a car with a "Just Married" sign on it. Actually, *The Week* is still in business and is published by Felix Dennis, publisher of *Maxim*, *Stuff*, *Fortean Times*, and other magazines — it appears that he has a growing publishing empire, built upon the success of *Maxim*.

I've been a subscriber to Liberty since the first issue, and I miss those early days when the subscriber survey showed more than 90% of the subscribers were atheists. It's my perception that the religious-right subscribers have increased, and it seems rare that an issue comes out without a cranky letter from someone like Strain, whose brand of liberty doesn't appear very libertarian.

Jim Lippard  
Phoenix, Ariz.

### Give Me That Old-Time Constitution

Regarding the recent debate about anarchy and freedom:

For anarchists I have no use;  
It's just because they're so  
abstruse.

Just give me law, but law  
controlled

By Constitution, as of old.

Jim Ware  
Baton Rouge, La.

### The New Anti-Bigotry

Your article by Merrel Clubb in the November issue about "The New

Anti-Semitism" was very disturbing. The vast majority of American Jews do not resemble the political caricature expressed by this article. We are able to distinguish between discussion about Israeli military tactics and discussion about the right to have a peaceful homeland and to be free of bigotry. Zionism is about the right to have a homeland as the center of Jewish life. So not surprisingly, anti-Zionism is indistinguishable from anti-Semitism. When criticism of Israeli policy becomes so disproportionate in terms of the effect on civilians compared to virtually all other countries, including countries like Germany and France and all Arab countries, it strains credulity to say that most anti-Israel sentiment is not

anti-Semitism. I am profoundly disappointed that Liberty would print this article.

Paul Fisher  
Chicago, Ill.

### The New Anti-Zionism

It is difficult to dispute Merrel Clubb's central premise in "The New Anti-Semitism" (November) that the terms "anti-Semitism" and "anti-American" are frequently used today to silence critics of the Israeli and American governments, and that in this context, the actual meanings of those terms have become little more than "snarl-words." I find it ironic, given this premise, that Clubb repeatedly uses the term "Zionism" in almost the same manner.

## From the Editor . . .

I see by my calendar that 2005 is about to begin. Newspapers keep me abreast of American progress in the War on Iraq, the War on Terror, the War on Smoking, the War on Obesity, and various other wars.

Things are now going so badly in Iraq that military leaders have confessed that they were wrong to think they could occupy a hostile country and inspire its inhabitants to embrace democracy (apparently, these military geniuses didn't read the warnings we published here).

The War on Drugs continues to account for half the imprisonments in the United States, with no sign of an abatement of drug use in the general population. The War on Smoking continues to inspire rebellious teenagers to smoke.

Searching the body cavities of people who want to travel by air is now legal and accepted, as is the right of the Department of Homeland Security to set up checkpoints on any road or highway within 150 miles of the periphery of the U.S. to search automobiles and require their occupants to produce identification. Franklin's maxim that "He who would trade liberty for some temporary security, deserves neither liberty nor security" is nearly as forgotten as the Constitution of the United States.

Happy New Year!

But all is not lost. This issue of Liberty is blessed with some delightful writing. Consider, for example, Bill Merritt's account of his encounter with federal agents on a recent visit to our nation's capital, where he caved in to their illegal demands only to see his beautiful daughter (a former managing editor of Liberty) stand up for her rights. Or consider Stephen Cox's look at the politics of the last 175 years of presidential elections, and the lessons they have for Libertarians. Or Craig Cantoni's marvelously crafted debate between the two George W's. Or David Ramsay Steele's essay on money, work, and happiness. I could go on and on.

Life too goes on, and if you pretty much stay at home, the Wars on This and That don't affect you much. The blessings of liberty for which our forefathers risked their lives remain abundant, though liberty itself is steadily being depleted. We hope that the blessings of this particular Liberty will bring you pleasure, joy, and intellectual stimulation.

R. W. Bradford

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Clubb refers to "political Zionism" and "Zionist policies" always in the pejorative. But, since Clubb appears to have some knowledge of the history of Zionism, he must be aware that Zionism is no more monolithic an ideology than is libertarianism, but encompasses a wide range of opinions and perspectives.

Although Clubb does not define the term "political Zionism," I take it to include the idea of a Jewish nation-state — a concept that did not really gain much momentum until the 1920s, after the Balfour declaration, and didn't enter the mainstream of Zionist thought until the mid-1930s. This shift in thinking came about as a reaction to two disturbing trends — the rise of anti-Semitism under the Nazi regime in Germany, and the increase of Arab violence against Jews in Hebron, Jerusalem, and other key cities under the British Mandate. Prior to this time, Zionism was largely a cultural and religious movement, although admittedly, it owed its inception to the rise of nationalism in Europe during the 19th century.

Even after the founding of the state of Israel in 1948, Zionism represented a diverse array of positions and viewpoints. This is true even today; it might surprise Clubb to learn that the hundreds of thousands of Israelis who oppose some, or all, of the current Likud government's policies, consider themselves Zionists. And this is also true in the diaspora — one does not have to be a fanatic Likudnik to consider oneself a Zionist. Like the expressions "anti-Semitism" and "anti-Americanism," Zionism is a complex term, with many meanings.

I would expect an article published in *Liberty* to contain more than a tired rehash of conventional arguments; moreover, I would expect it to present a uniquely libertarian slant on the issue with which it was concerned. I am sorry to say that, as interesting as Clubb's article is, I found nothing new therein, nothing that I would consider distinctly libertarian, and at least one glaring error of fact. Clubb insists that the region called Palestine in the 19th century was "already inhabited . . . by a large number of Arabs and a small

minority of Jews." Quite the opposite is the case.

Karl Baedeker's 1906 travel guide to Palestine and Syria estimates the total population of Jerusalem at 60,000, of whom 7,000 were Muslims, 13,000 were Christians, and 40,000 were Jews. Not exactly a small minority there, especially when one considers that in 1906, Jerusalem was the most populous city in the region. Some 60 years earlier, in 1854, the New York Daily Tribune ran an article declaring: "The sedentary population of Jerusalem numbers about 15,500 souls, of whom 4,000 are Musulmans and 8,000 Jews." The author of the article was Karl Marx. Beyond the few cities, the countryside, as reported by Mark Twain and other travelers in the mid-19th century, was largely desolate, inhabited mostly by nomadic Bedouins (who, incidentally, do not consider themselves Arabs).

It's unfortunate that Clubb either did not bother to research this historical background, or chose to present the historical perspective selectively. There is certainly much to criticize, from a libertarian perspective, in the past and present policies of the Israeli government; it would be interesting to see such a critique presented. Clubb's article, however, is not it; it is merely

*continued on page 24*

## Correction

In last month's issue, we incorrectly listed the website for Ballot Access News. Its URL is <http://www.ballot-access.org>.

## 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.*

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# Reflections

**Crashing on Canada's couch** — It was disconcerting to watch George Bush, on Canadian turf, thank the people of Halifax for taking into their homes thousands of Americans who had been stranded when U.S. airports were closed and flights diverted northward on Sept. 11, 2001. Of course, his thanks came three years late. Of course, his gratitude was a prelude to making demands. (Neither the thanks nor the demands came with any concessions on trade issues, I note.) His talk of a longstanding friendship between Canada and the States sounded like those phone calls you get from old and "dear" friends who chat you up before requesting money.

— Wendy McElroy

**Qui custodiet ipsos custodes custodiorum?** — Within days of Bernard Kerik's back-out as Homeland Security

czar, all the embarrassing details about his personal life began to come out. The large themes, if not the details (and probably a lot of them, too) had been widely known on the East Coast. Yet none of the administration's clever, canny, can-do guys apparently knew anything about them.

You know the old expression, Who will watch the watchers? I want to know, Who is watching the watchers of the watchers?

— Stephen Cox

**Purple Hearts for everyone!** — Something I would like to know is what proportion of our servicemen in Iraq are combat troops.

In past wars, the ratio was about nine to one: nine support personnel for everybody who actually fought the enemy. Of the 2.5 million soldiers who went to Vietnam, only about 250,000 actually walked around outside base camp getting shot at.

At this point, close to 300,000 soldiers have rotated through Iraq. If the ratio of support personnel to combat troops is anything like what it was in past wars, then the eleven-hundred-and-something soldiers who have been killed, and the twelve-thousand-or-so who have been wounded badly enough to be sent home, is looking like a pretty big number. In fact, it's looking a lot like a 43% casualty rate. But that's just when you look at the numbers.

When you look at the people, it's a lot bigger because a lot of those 300,000 soldiers are double counted. By now

many of our combat troops in Iraq are on their second tour. So the personal odds of not coming home as healthy as you went over could well be more than 50%. From the point of view of the people involved, this doesn't seem like small-scale incursions on the way to a peaceful future to me. This seems like a major war.

— William E. Merritt

**Join the insanity?** — Libertarian presidential nominee Michael Badnarik agreed to join a Green Party move for a recount in Ohio, where idiot leftists continue to believe Kerry won more votes than Bush. Perhaps "join" is too weak a word. The Greens were not on the ballot, and thus had no status to sue for a recount, so Badnarik's involvement was necessary for the suit to succeed.

The recount will cost the challenging Greens and Libertarians \$113,000 and the state of Ohio another \$1.4 million. Some LP members have objected to Badnarik's participation because the recount forces Ohio taxpayers to pay that \$1.4 million bill. I understand their feelings.

So why did Badnarik agree to the move? "We felt that joining the lawsuit was something we could do at no cost to us, and said we'd be

willing to participate," campaign manager Fred Collins explained. "I don't believe the vote count will change dramatically. But this will go a long way toward making sure that votes will be counted accurately in the future." Barb Goushaw, co-chair of the Badnarik campaign, said that the move was "a cheap way for us to get more publicity," though she acknowledged that most of the publicity in Ohio was unfavorable!

Why did the Greens want the recount? According to a source close to their leadership, they believe that it may turn the election over to John Kerry, who, incidentally, is helping to finance the affair. The press release issued by the Greens referred to websites (e.g. [http://www.tompaine.com/articles/kerry\\_won\\_.php](http://www.tompaine.com/articles/kerry_won_.php)) that argue that Kerry actually got more votes in Ohio, because CNN's exit polls showed him running ahead of Bush.

I agree with those LPers who think this was a bad move because it imposed additional costs on Ohio taxpayers. But even if it had not, I think the decision was a mistake. The notion that Kerry actually won Ohio is simply preposterous,

...AND NOW, MAY I SUGGEST THAT WE SLIP ON OUR ROSE-COLORED GLASSES....



S.H. Chambers

# Word Watch

by Stephen Cox

This department gets a lot of correspondence, some of it friendly, all of it interesting. One of the most interesting messages received in the last month comes from John Hospers, who reports that he becomes distressed when he hears people mangle the English language. Indeed, he is doubly distressed because, being a philosopher as well as a man of sense, he realizes that there is seldom any practical reason why he should worry about others' forms of expression. He can almost always understand what they are trying to say, despite their way of saying it. So he wishes he were not distressed, though he can't seem to help it.

Well, I disagree. I don't want to blow out an artery over other people's insensitivity toward the English language, but I don't consider it irrational to be irritated. Even if it were, the irritation is like eating — you can't get rid of it. And there's always an invitation to indulge in it.

I used to think that only native speakers had lost their ear for the language, but now I see that even foreigners, who should have a better perspective, a sharper apprehension of the sound of words, at least, are just as bad as we are. What kind of world do we live in, I wonder, when I see that an agency of the British government has "quizzed more than 40,000 people in 102 non-English speaking countries on their favourite words" and discovered that "mother" is judged "the most beautiful word in the English language, followed by passion, smile, love and eternity." The report noted that "father" wasn't even on the list of the 70 most "beautiful" words.

That shows you something about psychology, I guess. But what it shows about people's verbal acumen is enough to make you shudder. Anyone with either an ear or a brain could tell, I should think, that "mother" is a low, slow, mumbly word, a word closely akin to "bumbler," though without the neatly

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*Is it too much to expect that 13 years of government schooling should convince my neighbor that there's something wrong with saying, "I seen you coming up the walk"?*

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explosive pair of "b's." "Father" isn't any prize, either, but it's marginally more attractive. At least it gives out with a generous "ah" before swallowing itself in that last, dirty "ther."

Of the other top words, only "eternity" has any kind of rhythm or class. If you don't believe it, just spell them a little more phonetically: "PASHun," "SMY-ul," and of course the immortal "luv." During the last generation, a survey discovered that to native speakers "dawn" was the most beautiful word, despite the fact that, as one scholar observed, "cellar door" was

obviously a lot prettier, once you made the elementary distinction between sound and meaning.

Apparently, it's too much to expect people to make such distinctions, even when they're commenting specifically on the beauty of language. But is it too much to expect that 13 years of government schooling should convince my neighbor that there's something wrong with saying, "I seen you coming up the walk"? Is it too much to expect that 17 years of the same should keep the mayor from saying, "These financial crises have sprang on us suddenly," or that five or six more years might prevent the chair of the English Department from whispering confidentially, "Just between you and I . . . ?"

Yes, as John said, I understand what these people mean, but I'm still disturbed by their total absence of an aesthetic sense.

Suppose that you saw a professional baseball player walk onto the mound in a chicken costume and, before throwing the first pitch, spit on his shoe, pick his nose, and rub the ball vigorously in his ass. The fact that he then struck out the batter would seem somewhat beside the point, as would the fact that, in purely practical terms, his antics made no difference to the game. No one would admire him as a ballplayer; the word would be "clown," and people would be justifiably distressed. Even "innocent" actions have associations; if you act like a clown, that's how you'll be regarded by people who don't act that way.

Words also have associations. There are a number of ways of asking someone to open a door. You can say, "Would you be so kind as to let in some air?" Or you can say, "Hey! Open the goddamn door!" The first set of words suggests good manners, respect for polite conventions, a sense of order and dignity; the second demonstrates a total disregard for all those things. In the same way, bad grammar and usage demonstrate a lack of interest in the basic customs of the English language, its structure and means of self-discipline. They also demonstrate a lack of considerate interest in the readers and listeners who do care about such things.

I'm not talking just about the rules of the formal language. The colloquial language has its own rules and customs; there's an aesthetic pleasure in working with them, too — and a respect to be paid to people who appreciate their power and subtlety. But how much respect for anyone's intelligence is indicated by the following message, lately received:

"Respondents will kindly furnish his/her input by the deadline indicated?"

I'm sure that you have an inbox full of messages like that. I get a hundred or so every day. I understand what they mean, in the same way that I understand that a slice of limp lettuce, a brownish tomato, and some kind of goop that grows down by the railroad tracks qualifies as a "salad" in some of our better restaurants. But I don't like it, and I'm glad to know that John Hospers doesn't, either. In fact, I think it's time we started sending dishes like that back to the cook.



a paranoid fantasy of the lunatic left. I can see no reason why Libertarians should help them in their ridiculous quest, even if all it required was Badnarik's cooperation and about \$10,000 of Libertarian money. And I doubt the resulting publicity can possibly be worth the loss of such little credibility as LPers have.

— R.W. Bradford

**In the army now (like it or not)** — Two members of the California National Guard have filed suit, contending that the military's controversial "stop-loss" program, which forces those whose enlistment is about to run out to stay in the military, is illegal when applied to National Guard soldiers. About 40,000 National Guard members are now deployed in Iraq.

"John Doe," identified only as a member of the 2668th Transportation Company and "married and the father of two young children," is one of them. His unit left for training at Ft. Lewis, Wash., and is expected to depart for Iraq before the end of the year.

Both "John Doe" and another National Guard member who filed suit in August are in the National Guard "Try One" program reserved for military veterans. The program allows veterans to bypass basic training while enjoying military education and family medical benefits for a one-year trial period. Before their one year was up, however, they were called under stop-loss orders for an 18-month tour that includes deployment to Iraq.

The military says the involuntary retention of troops was fully authorized by an executive order signed Sept. 14, 2001 by President Bush. Attorneys for the soldiers, however, cite the 9/11 Commission's report that found no "collaborative operational relationship" between Iraq and al Qaeda means deployment to Iraq is not covered by an executive order written in response to 9/11. They argue additionally that the executive order doesn't cover "nation-building," and that in the absence of a declaration of war by Congress, an involuntary call is a violation of the National Guard enlistment contract.

Many people have deplored the fact that stop-loss orders amount to a "backdoor draft" permitting the government to avoid the consequences of their overly ambitious foreign policy by forcing those who have already fulfilled their military commitment to serve longer.

The first district court to handle the case declined to find the policy either objectionable or illegal, but an appeal was quickly filed. I'm pleased that the case points out that the

U.S. Constitution gives Congress — not the president acting unilaterally — the power to declare war. That check on executive power has been ignored for too long.

— Alan W. Bock

**Affirmative action for hypocrites** — "You're hypocritical" is the favorite put-down of public discourse. It's swift, it's elegant, and most of us have used it. But it is often shallow, and unfair in a tricky way.

For example, in my state there is a region of irrigated farming. It is the most conservative part of the state, and these days it elects Republicans. Urban progressives love to note that the dams and irrigation works were paid for by the federal government. Therefore, the anti-government sentiment of the people there may be dismissed.

What that implies is that anyone who consumes a benefit conferred by the government loses his right to oppose the government. That is not a principle I want established.

It has been shown repeatedly that among college professors in states where people regis-

ter by political party, Democrats outnumber Republicans by margins of up to 7 to 1. Some conservatives are making an issue of it. George Will wrote a recent column on it, and David Horowitz has said there is a "pervasive blacklist" of conservatives on college faculties. Horowitz is calling for an "academic bill of rights," which critics say would be an affirmative action program for right-wingers.

The instant response of "progressives" is to haul out the hypocrisy argument. Here are these right-wingers who huff and puff about affirmative action for black people, and now they want it for themselves! End of argument. Ignore them. They are hypocrites who care only about themselves.

Writing in the San Francisco Chronicle, Steven Lubet, professor of law at Northwestern University, uses this argument. He does it gently, with an air of fairness that is lacking in most face-to-face exchanges with the Left. He ends his column this way:

"Most major universities would likely benefit from the presence of more conservative scholars, who would sharpen the dialog and challenge many assumptions. I might even be convinced to support some form of recruiting outreach or affirmative action for Republicans — but surely my conservative colleagues would never stand for it."

The message: Yes, you have a legitimate complaint, but



you're hypocrites, so we're not going to do anything about it, ho, ho, ho.

There is a problem with intellectual diversity on campus. The solution doesn't have to be a government program in which political outliers are legally assigned to a protected class. Indeed, it had better not be that. Affirmative action for political ideas would be even worse than affirmative action for race, because it implies government management of thought, and that is not a place where any academic should want to go. But there are other answers, and using the hypocrisy maneuver is a way of not finding them.

— Bruce Ramsey

**Setting the cosmos right** — With a few favor-

ite authors, I have only to pick up the first page and I am hit with a comforting feeling of complete familiarity mingled with an exciting feeling of anticipation. Jane Austen's novels affect me that way (no matter how many times I read them), as Louis Auchincloss's did before I realized that they almost always have unhappy endings.

Thomas Sowell is such an author, and "The Quest for Cosmic Justice," published in 1999, is an example of what I mean. Within a few pages you both confirm your own view of the world (one where incentives matter) but you also see the world in a completely fresh way. In this case, you see justice (often called "social justice") as leftists do.

Sowell explains how left-liberals search for "cosmic" justice, not traditional justice, a quest that lies behind much governmental intervention. With traditional justice, people who play by the rules are rewarded; those who do not are punished if they harm others. Because the rules are clear and generally accepted, the result is a world that is relatively predictable, in which people are accountable for their actions.

The search for "cosmic" justice reflects the fact that the universe (the cosmos) is frequently unfair. Some people suffer through no fault of their own — and frequently through nobody else's fault, either. They may be poor because they were ill-treated as children, for example, or because they are unintelligent, or because they were born with a handicap. Such people certainly deserve better; everyone agrees on that. But Sowell points out that harnessing political power to correct these problems almost inevitably ends up harming other people. At the very least, this undermines their cosmic goal.

But leftists don't see this. They don't see that their med-

dling in a futile pursuit of "cosmic" justice has unintended consequences — causing not cosmic but certainly widespread harm. Sowell illustrates the quest with a simple example. In 1996 in San Francisco, a politically influential person was refused home delivery by a pizza company because the neighborhood was considered dangerous. Outraged, this person successfully pressed for passage of a law requiring retailers that offered delivery to deliver anywhere in the city.

This illustrates the search for cosmic justice because, yes, some people in the neighborhood such as this politico were suffering unfairly — they did not create the dangerous neighborhood. The political insider tried to correct this

"wrong" but probably, as Sowell says, at the price of dead truck drivers. "[W]e cannot simply 'do something' whenever we are morally indignant, while disdaining to consider the cost entailed."

Look at the daily newspaper. How many stories — about government pension guarantees, privacy laws, pharmaceutical price controls, foreign aid, minimum wages, urban growth boundaries, you name it — are appeals to "cosmic" justice? When these policies are enacted, many innocent people suffer, all in the name of justice.

— Jane S. Shaw



**SHCHAMBERS**

**Was Popeye a**

**juicer?** — Two of baseball's greatest players — Barry Bonds and Jason Giambi — have revealed to a grand jury that they have used steroids to enhance their already tremendous skills. This violates the rules of baseball, but the rule against steroids has been pretty much a dead letter, since (a) it specified no punishment for first-time violators, and (b) it did not provide that players could be tested to see whether they had used steroids in the first place. The toothlessness of the antisteroid rule, the owners claim, is the product of resistance from the players' union. There is some merit to this assertion, but not very much: if, as the owners' say, the integrity of the game is at stake, then surely the owners themselves are at fault for conceding to the union on this issue.

Should baseball prohibit steroids? Personally, I think it should. One of baseball's charms is that it is played by men who, aside from their gifts at the game's very peculiar skills, are pretty much ordinary human beings. When a good ballplayer like Bonds starts taking steroids in his mid-30s, at the point when ordinarily age is taking its inevitable toll on a ballplayer's ability, and his forearms assume the

appearance of Popeye's spinach-enhanced battling arms, something is plainly wrong. Ordinary people don't develop Popeye arms in their mid-30s, and neither should ballplayers.

Unlike Popeye's spinach, steroids can have seriously unfavorable consequences for those who use them. And since steroids enhance a player's abilities, their use gives those who are willing to face the ugly consequences for their health a competitive advantage over those who are not. If ever there was a perverse incentive, this is it.

Not only do steroids change ballplayers from more or less ordinary human beings to Popeye-armed freaks, allowing their use also provides powerful incentives for all players to put their health at serious risk. If the owners and players cannot figure this out, then baseball will surely head toward a well-deserved decline.

We live in an age when everything is considered the business of government, and steroid use by ballplayers is no exception, so it isn't a bit surprising Sen. John McCain (Idiot-Ariz) has publicly told the owners and players that if they don't put teeth into their antisteroid rules Congress will intervene. This is, of course, nuts. Baseball is a private activity and there is no sensible reason for government to intervene. And if baseball wants people to continue to go to ball games, it surely will.

— R. W. Bradford

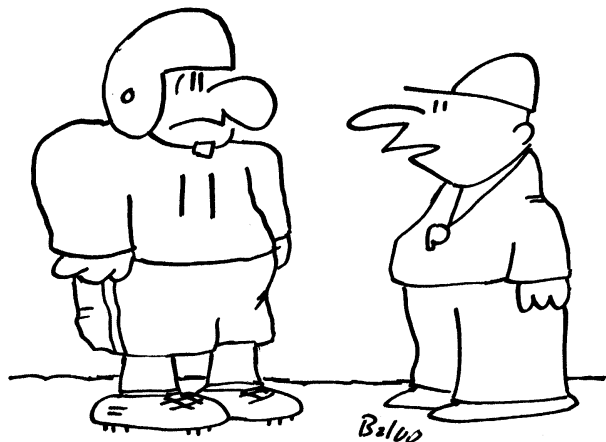
**Drop that nickname or I'll shoot** — In the New York tabloid papers for the past several months, blaring headlines ("RAT BITES GOTTI") have accompanied the court testimony of a rogue's gallery of "mob turncoats," including Frankie "Fapp" Fappiano, Michael "Mikey Scars" DiLeonardo, Salvatore "Fat Sal" Mangiavillano, and Dominic "Fat Dom" Borghese, who have been singing like canaries or castrati about the concerted but thwarted efforts of Peter Gotti to whack Salvatore "Sammy Bull" Gravano for spilling enough beans back in the mid-90s to put away Peter's brother, the late John Gotti, head of the Gambino crime family. Meanwhile, the son of jailed Bonnano boss Vincent "Vinny Gorgeous" Basciano is said to be in danger for allegedly rubbing out the estranged son of Dominick "Quiet Dom" Cirillo, a reputed Genovese boss, without permission of the bosses of both families, which would have violated whacking protocol, an offense that carries penalties ranging from loss of HBO adaptation rights to being buried in five separate oil drums in five different swampy locations in the Jersey Meadowlands. Also in the news during the past couple of years have been such memorable mobsters as Richard "the Lump" Bondi, Ralph "One-Arm" Trucchio, Vincent "Vinnie Ocean" Palermo, Anthony "Tony Connecticut" Megala, Arnold "the Beast" Squitieri, and Richard "Shellachead" Canterella, plus a veritable delicatessen of savory, food-oriented hoods, such as Carmine "Pizza" Polito, Louis "Louie Bagel" Daidone, Michael "Cookie" D'Urso, Louis "Louie Eggs" Consalvo, Salvatore "Sallie Bread" Cambria, and Peter "the Crumb" Caprio.

My question is, who gets to assign these nicknames? Is there a Central Mafia Moniker Registry down in Little Italy or out in the Gotti territory of Howard Beach, Queens, where you go and fill out forms, describing your physical

characteristics and food preferences, and three weeks later you get a certificate bearing your official nickname in the mail? Who decides Vinny is Gorgeous and Sal is Fat? Can you change it if you don't like it, from, say, "the Beast" to "the Cute Cuddly Kitten"? Is it okay for two wiseguys to have the same nickname or does that mean it's curtains for one of them, hereafter known as Anthony "Tony Curtains" Canarino? Don't get me wrong. I like Mafia nicknames. My own Scandinavian ancestors used to have names like Erik the Red and Olaf the Quiet and Thorvald the Picky Eater. Kings and conquerors had names like Charles the Bald, Louis the Stammerer, Aethelred the Unready, Vlad the Impaler, and Ludwig the Mad. Today we're left with banalities like "Slick Willie" or "W" (why not Bill the Serial Fondler or George the Misunderestimator?) and, elsewhere, "A-Rod" and "Boomer" and "J-Lo" and "Puff Daddy." The Mafia is the only group left with any sense of creativity and colorful tradition, going back to Al "Scarface" Capone and Frank "the Enforcer" Nitti and Jake "Greasy Thumb" Guzik in Chicago in the '20s. There was even a guy named Dominick "the Gap" Petrilli who was shot by three unknown assailants in 1953 in New York. Could one of the gunmen just possibly have been nicknamed "Banana Republic"? The trouble is, with all these wiseguys going to jail and becoming informers and going into witness protection programs under new, assumed, and bland names, you wonder if the whole nickname business will eventually go under. Mother of Mercy, is this the end of "Shellachead"?

— Eric Kenning

**Do it for the children** — Examining the post-election rhetoric made a few things clear. First, despite their culture-war talking points, the Dems and the GOP are closer to each other now than they've ever been. Second, neither has any new ideas: the Republicans are happy to continue their slide into European social statism; the Democrats are splintering as the lunatic interest groups they've relied upon for decades get more catty and shrill. Third, none of the other parties have the resources or the marketing sense to do anything more than congratulate themselves over each thousandth of a percentage point gained. Fourth, even if they did have cash to spare, it'd be



"You're still on the team, Zbradowski, but you're being traded to a different beer company."

tough to dent the brains of those used to waddling down to the precinct to endorse their subsidy checks.

What's wrong with our third parties? Historically, the most successful ones have been personality cults. But once the celebrity leaves, the voters drift back to the big two. Thankfully, now that Jesse Ventura is no longer governor of Minnesota, this model, and its inevitable messianic wind-baggery, is all but dead. Still, it got results, while the ideological platform parties — Libertarians, Greens, and assorted mixed nuts — might as well be listed on ballots as "None of the Above." (Nevada thoughtfully includes this

option on its ballots.) So, where does a third party stand, if not on a rickety platform or behind a grinning idiot?

Simple: single-issue advocacy. It has to be something which produces a deep emotional response, yet not something that divides, like prohibition or abortion. It should be a cause which promises to end the polarization of the electorate, one which has the power to bring every decent American together to work towards a common goal. (See how the campaign ads write themselves?) Whipping up this type of frenzy is only possible when demonizing a tiny minority, depicting them as responsible for society's ills;

*News You May Have Missed*

## Little Hope Seen for Truce Between Audiences, Performers

NEW YORK — Senza Speranza, a 287-pound soprano appearing in "La Traviata" at the Metropolitan Opera, charged into the audience during last Saturday evening's performance and sat on several patrons who had hissed her aria, leaving one with broken ribs and two others near suffocation, and forcing the Met to cancel the rest of the performance, in what police are describing as yet another one of the "copycat" brawls that have followed the Nov. 19 melee at The Palace basketball arena in Auburn Hills, Mich., in which Ron Artest and several other Indiana Pacers players charged into the stands and punched out beer-throwing fans during a game with the Detroit Pistons.

Meanwhile, 65 miles north, at the Blue Moon strip club in Newburgh, N.Y., Pandora Farouche, a dancer at the popular "All Nude All the Time" establishment, jumped off the platform and knocked regular patron Greg Middendorf unconscious by swinging one of her 14-pound silicone-enhanced breasts at the side of his head after he failed, for the 37th consecutive time, to insert even a single dollar bill into her only article of clothing, the garter on her left thigh.

In other recent incidents, the Rev. Philo Fantod, an Episcopalian minister who was 47 minutes into his sermon ("Heeding the Signposts Along the Winding Road to Inner Peace") at a church in Old Lyme, Conn., charged

into the congregation and crowned a snoring parishioner with a collection plate; singer Celine Dion interrupted a concert in Colorado Springs and, in a move patented by boxer Mike Tyson, chewed the ear off of an insufficiently weepy fan; and a NASCAR driver steered his car into the stands in Fayetteville, N.C., and drove off with two spectators clinging to the hood all the way to Chattanooga.

In Washington, Department of Homeland Security staffers experienced mood swings that went from orange to red to yellow and back again as they tried to assess the new threat to America's vital entertainment infrastructure.

In Chicago, Dr. Phil McGraw, the daytime-TV psychologist, devoted an entire hour-long program ("Everybody But Me Is Nuts") to the issue, berating Americans for their immaturity and lack of self-control before plunging into the studio audience and landing a left hook to the jaw of a woman who questioned his folksy godlike omniscience.

President Bush seemed to allude to the problem in a speech at the United Nations General Assembly calling for peaceful responses to provocations, which was interrupted when he abruptly invaded the audience and occupied several seats, violently ejecting the people sitting in them, while claiming that he just knew that they were about to throw something at him,

even though no beer, popcorn, chewing gum, or other weapons of mass distraction were ever found. The incident only reinforced persistent rumors that prominent members of the administration, including Bush, Vice President Cheney, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, and new National Security Advisor Barry Bonds, have been hooked on steroids for the last several years.

But law-enforcement officials believe that despite efforts to throw cold water, or at least warm beer, on the trend, it is only getting worse, pointing to an incident at a mall triplex in San Leandro, Cal., where both Colin Farrell, the star of the movie "Alexander the Great," and Angelina Jolie, who plays his mom, suddenly stepped off the screen and began attacking members of the audience who had laughed during one of their over-the-top mother-son scenes, resulting in several moviegoers suffering severe spear wounds, while several others were left traumatized by Jolie's overacting. Subsequently, as in Auburn Hills, where a number of belligerent Pistons fans ran out onto the basketball court, a few angry San Leandro movie fans stormed onto the screen, which is why there's a fat guy wearing a black-and-silver Raiders jersey and a backward baseball cap wandering around the battlefield during the final conquest of Persia.

— Eric Kenning



given Americans' mania regarding anything done "for the children," this leaves but one possibility: forming the Anti-Pedophile Party.

Immediately, almost 100% of the population supports the new movement. Publicity will be easy to get; if the big parties won't debate the APP, we can smear them as being controlled by the child-porn industry, or by the North American Man-Boy Love Association. When they sputter and claim to be against pedophilia, we can say they're just jumping on the bandwagon.

As with any political party, the rhetoric is what matters. Having an agenda with only one item on it leaves a lot of wiggle room for forming policy, and everything the party pursues once in office can be as distantly related to the actual well-being of children as any "pro-child" proposal made in Congress or the White House. We can even begin dismantling government agencies: after all, the FBI has the world's biggest collection of child pornography, and every day field agents pose as minors and talk sexy in Internet chat rooms. That's sick, that's perverse, that's something America doesn't have to stand for. Vote for decency! Vote for values! Vote for the APP!

— A.J. Ferguson

**First things first** — Elsewhere in this issue, I offer statistical analysis which isolates where and how the LP gained vote share at the presidential level. The biggest gain came from states where Ralph Nader was on the ballot in 2000 but was excluded in 2004, and I jocularly concluded that if the LP wanted to name an MVP, it should be the Democrats who kept Nader off the ballot in those states.

But there is an individual who deserves credit, if not for gaining votes, then for keeping the LP's national vote share from slipping further. Bill Redpath, head of the national party's Ballot Access Committee, persisted in efforts to get Badnarik's name on the ballot in 13 states whose local parties had failed. In those states, Badnarik got about 120,000 votes. Among them were three large states where the LP vote share rose substantially, thanks to the exclusion of Nader from the ballot. In Illinois, Badnarik picked up 31,863 votes, running 151% ahead of Harry Browne's 2000 showing. In Pennsylvania, Badnarik got 20,794 votes and a 53.8% better vote share than Browne got four years earlier. And in Texas, Badnarik got 38,573 votes, a 45.1% larger vote share than Browne got.

In all, the national party spent about \$300,000 on ballot access in those states. For this expenditure, it got 118,899 votes that it surely would not have gotten had Badnarik's name not appeared on the ballot. That's a cost of \$2.52 per vote: a real bargain for a party that has great difficulty getting votes.

— R. W. Bradford

**Yielding to design** — Those of us who aren't hard-core atheists were intrigued to learn that a prominent atheist, Antony Flew, is reconsidering his view of God. In fact, according to news reports, he is now a Deist — a person who believes that a "prime mover" set the design for life, then let it develop on its own. Flew, an 81-year-old British philosophy professor who has defended atheism for years, has concluded that "the almost unbelievable complexity of the

arrangements" required to produce life means that some "intelligence" had to get it started.

Although this news will trouble his atheist colleagues, Flew is not the first free-thinking scholar to be frustrated by trying to figure out how life could have started. Fred Hoyle, the late British astronomer, and Francis Crick who discovered DNA both proposed a concept of "panspermia" — the idea that life on this earth came

about through a seed from elsewhere in the universe. In fact, Crick called it "directed panspermia." Although he considered the theory speculative, he said that one reason he and a colleague proposed the idea was "the uniformity of the genetic code, suggesting that at some stage life had evolved through a small population bottleneck."

The kind of intellectual switch that Antony Flew made tends to get swept into a controversy over creationism. Indeed, it is almost impossible to talk about intelligent design (which is what these scholars are grappling with) because Darwinists see any allusion to intelligent design as an attack on evolution. Darwinist Kenneth R. Miller calls intelligent design the "best rhetorical weapon against evolution" and thus refuses to take it seriously.

It's a shame because no one has been able to explain the origin of life in a convincing fashion. If outstanding minds such as Flew's reluctantly see a role for a "prime mover," perhaps we should pay attention.

— Jane S. Shaw

**Angel-headed hipsters** — Anyone who thinks that the typical urban hipster who believes Bush is con-



S.H. Chambers

trolled by the Saudi princes and had foreknowledge of the 9/11 terrorist attacks is somehow more of a freethinker than his Bible-thumping, rural counterpart obviously has had little interaction with either. While the mass culture of modern democracy demands that every citizen have an opinion on every issue, the reality is that nobody has the mind, the time, or the interest to do so. Rather than failing in their democratic obligations, people tend to buy into one of many off-the-shelf, one-size-fits-all sets of opinions proffered by subcultures and interest groups and pass them off as their own.

But all over-the-counter ideologies are not equal, and it does matter which the majority accepts. Christianity is the foundation upon which millennia of Western thought, politics, and social institutions have been built. The typical Christian believes, without needing justification, in the importance of family, the central social role of church and community, the individual's duty to charity, and in the importance of personal responsibility — all venerable institutions and predispositions, proven through the centuries to protect social stability and resist centralized tyranny.

Today's secular left-liberals dismiss or deny the importance of all these traditions. They trade the wisdom and experience of centuries of Western civilization for the destructive doctrines of Noam Chomsky and the propaganda of Michael Moore. They preoccupy themselves with tearing down the traditional institutions of social life and offer little but utopian dreams and the cold, centralized state to replace them. While the recent political moves on both sides of this culture war disturb me, I'd sooner take my chances with a conservative mass of close-minded ignoramuses, who pretty much want things to stay the same, than with these nuts, who want God knows what. — Andrew W. Jones

**Saving Spc. Wilson** — One of the nice things about the American military is that it hasn't entirely been taken over by military people. In fact, I think that's one of the goals the Founders had in mind when they slipped in the bit about a "well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State." Militiamen weren't soldiers. They were just guys who'd agreed to take up arms on an organized, ad hoc sort of basis. As just guys, their real lives were back home, which made them a lot more likely to ask

questions when some numb-nut higher up in the food chain said something preposterous.

We still have militiamen. Militialadies now, too. We call them national guardsmen and, in mid-December, a national guardsman from Tennessee got the chance to question the Secretary of Defense himself about some preposterous lapses in the military procurement program. What Thomas Wilson wanted to know was, how come American soldiers have to dig through landfills for pieces of scrap metal and compromised ballistic glass to up-armor their vehicles?

Putting aside the suspicion that all that talk about "up-armor" and "compromised ballistic glass" suggests that Spc. Wilson may not have clung as tightly to his civilian identity as some of us would have hoped, it's still a good

question. Why aren't all of our Humvees armored by now?

Secretary Rumsfeld didn't exactly answer the question. "You go to war with the army you have," he said, "not the army you might want or wish you had at some later time." Then he went on to blame the whole sorry debacle on physics. It was all physics' fault, he said. Not his. We, as a nation, are producing Humvee up-armor as fast as we can.



S.H. Chambers

Afterwards, a government flack named Pentagon Spokesman Lawrence Di Rita chimed in with the news that the military is producing 450 sets of Humvee up-armor a month. Di Rita then went on to mention America's huge industrial capacity and how we'd won WWII — none of which answered the question, why don't we have the army we might wish we had at some later time?

This is some time later. Counting from Sept. 11, 2001, to Dec. 7, 2004 — the day Spc. Wilson asked the obvious — we were 38 months and 27 days into the War on Terror. When we were 38 months and 27 days into WWII, it was March 3, 1945, and we had the army we wanted by then. In fact, we had it in Germany.

By March 3, 1945, the army we wanted had already won every major battle on the Western Front. By March 3, 1945, the army we wanted had kicked the Axis out of North Africa and Sicily, invaded Italy, conquered Rome, stormed ashore at Normandy, broken out, liberated Paris, pushed back the Bulge and crossed the Rhine. By March 3, 1945, the Secretary of War wasn't trying to figure out how to up-armor jeeps so American soldiers could survive routine supply convoys through already-liberated territory. On

March 3, 1945, the American army was about to enter Cologne.

After 38 months and 27 days fighting WWII, we weren't straining our industrial capacity to produce 15 sets of jeep armor a day. From the instant the first Zero appeared over Oahu, all the way through to the moment the final Japanese diplomat straggled on board the Missouri to sign the surrender, we averaged — including the time needed to design, develop, ramp up production for, and build with a labor force consisting, largely, of people who had planned to be housewives at this point in their careers — an entire brand-new tank every 20 minutes. And we did it while turning out a warplane every five minutes, a jeep every two and a half minutes, and a ship every four hours and 20 minutes. And a lot of those babies used armor, too.

So, Secretary Rumsfeld and spokesman Di Rita, having brought the Second World War to our attention, brought some other facts to mind, too. Like how German soldiers nearly froze to death outside Moscow in December 1941 — not because German industry couldn't produce winter clothing but because, with the Soviet armies collapsing during the summer, the Nazi government cancelled its war-production contracts. Then, when the snow hit the fan, the only way the Nazis could keep their young men from dying was to collect up all the ladies' fur coats they could lay their hands on and ship them east.

Now I don't want to make any unpleasant comparisons here, but the Nazis got into this mess because their civilian leaders were too savvy to upset the economy by spending more on the war than was absolutely necessary. So I leave it to you, Secretary Rumsfeld and Mouthpiece Di Rita, to explain to me how what happened in Russia in 1941 is different from what's going on right now, with American families having to mail fashionable body armor to Iraq to keep their boys from being blown away.

And how, given the same 38 months and 27 days in which our parents built 90,000 tanks, tens of thousands of landing craft, 300,000 military aircraft, 600,000 jeeps and 7,000 ships, we are straining to turn out 15 sets of Humvee armor a day. And why, exactly, that isn't your fault.

— William E. Merritt

**Ginsberg vs. Graham** — I didn't know anything about religion when I went off to college. In fact, I didn't know anything about college when I went off to college. The curriculum didn't matter, or the teachers. It was the summer after high school and I was going steady with someone (now my wife) and the big thing in picking a school was driving time. I asked the guidance counselor for a stack of catalogs for colleges within 200 miles so I could get back every Friday night. I picked the place with a lake and swans on the cover.

It was 1960, the beginning of the decade when things started coming apart in America — or got more free, depending on whether you think Billy Graham or Allen Ginsberg got it right. The downside of that era can be seen in one of those "Neediest Cases" stories that ran in the New York Times right before Christmas, to encourage people to help the less fortunate. This one was about a promising

young guy from the Bronx who started out in the Boys Club of America and ended up in jail.

"It was the whole hippie thing," explains the man, now 53, referring to how he got sidetracked by the '60s. "I remember going through the Village barefoot with a joint in my hand," he says. There was Jimi Hendrix and wine in the schoolyard, and then Rikers Island after he was picked up with 75 bags of heroin stuffed in his pockets.

Along the way, he was homeless from 1986 to 1999 and had three kids by three different women, and now he has HIV from sharing drug needles.

The story ends with the good news. He's clean, thanks in part to rehab money from the New York Times Neediest Cases Fund. "He now lives in a studio apartment on the Upper West Side paid for by the HIV/AIDS Services Administration. Medicaid pays for his health care, and he receives food stamps. He no longer drinks or uses drugs; he has even stopped smoking cigarettes. He has, though, picked up one of his old habits: Every Sunday, he attends church."

It's easy not to feel sorry for this guy. The poor are seldom perfect. And mostly, they don't have good lawyers or family coaches to get them through the rough spots.

In this guy's case, he was arrested at 15 for carrying a roach clip, used to hold marijuana, in his pocket. It might sound like a convenient excuse, but he says now that he thought that meant he would never be able to get a job or enlist in the Army. For a dumb kid doing drugs in the Bronx, peddling a little marijuana, and then heroin, looks like a step up from a life of anticipated joblessness.

If one is into the theological blame game, none of the calamities in this man's life come as a surprise, or as anything approaching real injustice. Damnation, first in the Bronx and then in the eternal sense, comes to those who do

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bad things. And on the other side of the coin, those who aren't bad will inherit the Earth, including the best cars and houses, and then eternal bliss.

In his most famous book, "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism," Max Weber took things a step further, past individual rewards and punishments, and argued that capitalism, the most bountiful economic system, was the direct result of a religious movement, Protestantism, specifically Calvinism.

As luck would have it, I didn't know people were running barefoot through the Village in the '60s with joints in their hands, or I'd have been there. Instead, I ended up in mandatory chapel three mornings a week in the middle of some Ohio cornfields at Muskingum College, a school with deep and everlasting Calvinist roots, and no Hendrix. Before I got there, students weren't even allowed to dance at the proms. They just sat at card tables and stared at each other and listened to Guy Lombardo.

I didn't know it when I paid up, but cars weren't allowed for freshmen, so the first year was one of much unforeseen hitchhiking. Until the check cleared, I also didn't know we could be expelled for having a glass of wine with our parents over Thanksgiving or Christmas break. As a white male, that first day on campus was also the first time I'd ever felt like a minority, when I was called a "papist." I'd never heard of the word. It meant that I supported "Romanism," instead of the United States. It was like I'd stepped into the Thirty Years War.

Aside from astronaut John Glenn, Muskingum's most famous graduate was Agnes Moorehead, who played Endora on the "Bewitched" television series. She died of lung cancer 20 years after making "The Conqueror," the ill-fated movie shot in 1956 in the Utah desert near where the government was doing nuclear testing. Those tests are sus-

pected to have caused the cancer deaths of several of the film's stars, including John Wayne, Susan Hayward, and Dick Powell. Said Ms. Moorehead shortly before her death, "I wish I'd never done that damn movie."

Anyway, what I learned in chapel was Calvin's doctrine of predestination, the idea that God decreed, beforehand, the salvation of some and the damnation of others. It's the kind of doctrine that makes people anxious about whether they're stuck from day one in the bad or the good group. To get some reassurance, this led people who believed this stuff to go full blast in achieving economic success, thinking that God signifies his favor by giving the best cars and top knickknacks to the elect. In short, the fat cats are God's people, hence "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism."

Somehow, I think the whole thing might be more complicated than that. On the day this was written, the New York Times had a story about two sisters, one 73 and the other 70, who were out in below-zero winds in Brooklyn begging from strangers in their cars. "The money was for their bilious nephew and his crack habit, their own blood who was smoking up their lives," explains the Times. "He had already cost them their house, their savings, their dignity." If they don't deliver the cash, the nephew flies into crazed tirades, bruising their ribs and blackening their eyes. It's been going on for years.

A few pages away, there's an article by Somini Sengupta about the "beggar boys" of Senegal. They too face a beating if they don't deliver the cash. Dispatched to the streets by religious leaders, called marabouts, their daily quota ranges from 50 cents to \$1.30, plus whatever nuts or sugar cubes are dropped into their tin cans as they chant verses from the Koran. "From Bombay to Mexico City to Bangkok, child beggars are a banal fact of life," writes Sengupta. "UNICEF

### *News You May Have Missed*

## Kerry Vows Bold Windsurfing Initiative

BOSTON — Sen. John Kerry, after careful reflection on his loss in the November presidential election, has concluded that very few people in states like Kansas, South Dakota, and Ohio are out windsurfing most weekends, and this is why his campaign tragically failed to "connect" with enough ordinary, Middle American voters to swing the election in his favor. He is determined, he has told aides, to do something about it, and, after borrowing some of his wife's pocket change, he has set up the \$400 million Real Deal Progressive Windsurfing Foundation, staffed by 315 graduates of Harvard and Yale law schools, which will establish free training centers to teach the chal-

lenging sport in small towns throughout the Great Plains and in the decaying industrial cities of the upper Midwest. The foundation will also encourage school districts to replace football and basketball programs with athletic programs that, by stressing aquatic sports and skiing in Idaho, will allow Midwestern youngsters to grow up with a deep sense of identification with stiff, solemnly decorous people from Massachusetts who have \$200 haircuts.

"Once a majority of people in Topeka and Joplin and Akron give up driving pickup trucks over to the Wal-Mart or playing checkers on the front porch or whatever the heck they do with their time and are out there riding the

waves in neoprene wetsuits on a regular basis, John Kerry will be revealed as the plain-spoken man of the people he is and he'll coast, or at least surf, to the nomination and ultimate victory in 2008," said campaign manager Mary Beth Cahill.

Kerry also hopes to capture a much larger share of the crucial evangelical Christian vote next time by recruiting several liberal theologians trained in hermeneutics at Union Theological Seminary in Manhattan, who will attempt to convince voters that Jesus, based on the Gospels' declaration that he walked on the Sea of Galilee, was in all probability a windsurfer too.

— Eric Kenning

reported last week that half the world's children, a billion people, face extreme deprivation." Across Africa, they're orphaned by AIDS, sold as cheap labor, turned into soldiers at ten by warlords. There's a photo with the article of a skinny young child panning for diamonds in Sierra Leone, for earnings of perhaps a bowl of rice a day. And it's all been choreographed beforehand, predestined, so that God's favorites get the jewels and the kid doing the panning dies at 12? By what kind of God? — Ralph R. Reiland

**Every vote counts!** — As a resident of the state of Washington, where Republican Dino Rossi edged out Christine Gregoire in the governor's race by a margin that makes Bush's 2000 victory over Gore in Florida seem like a landslide, I am witness to the same sort of calls for an infinite number of recounts by the losing candidate that the entire country endured in Florida in 2000.

Every vote has already been counted twice, and Rossi won both times. The third count is bound to be less accurate than the previous two because it is being conducted by hand, whereas the previous two were done by computer. Since the ballots were designed to be computer-counted, it stands to reason that hiring hundreds of clerks to read and hand tally the ballots will be less accurate than using equipment designed to do the same thing. The Democrats, who demanded (and are paying for) the hand count, insisted that the counties that used touch-screen computers use the computer records to print up ballots and that the clerks read and hand tally these as part of the process. Perhaps surprisingly, the Democrats abandoned this especially absurd proposal.

Nor is confidence in these processes enhanced by the fact that officials in King County, which voted overwhelmingly for the Democrat, keep finding more ballots that they had lost, and not included in their earlier counts. You might think the media would be upset at the extremely lax care that King County officials give to ballots, but so far, I haven't heard a word of such criticism.

The most disturbing aspect of the whole process is that, as in Florida, those demanding infinite recounts deny that they are seeking to change the outcome of the election. All

they want, they insist, is to be sure "that every vote is counted." This rationale has, so far as I can tell, not been challenged by anyone.

Well, I for one can recognize horseshit when I see it, and if this isn't horseshit, then every horse who has ever lived is eternally constipated. If their motive was to be sure "that every vote is counted," then why are they recounting only the ballots in the governor's race? Why not recount the ballots in the Senate race? Surely, it is as likely that minor clerical errors were made there as in the governor's race? What about the contests for Congress, the state senate and the state house? What about the races for county commission? Precinct delegate? Why not every single race in the entire state? The chances of error are no less in these races than in the governor's race.

The reason, of course, is that the governor's race is close enough that its outcome might change. The motive for the recount is obvious: the challengers hope to turn a loss into a victory.

Of course, it doesn't sound particularly high-minded to say that you want a recount to capture political power, and "make sure every vote counts" has a lovely altruistic flavor to it. It portrays its proponents not as power-hungry politicians, but as benevolent defenders of the people's say in determining who governs them.

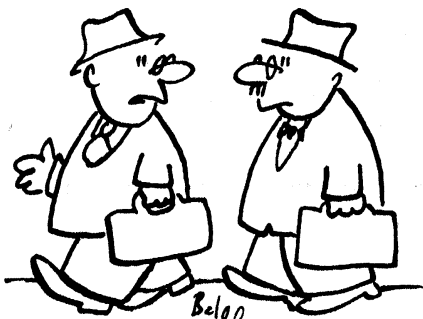
Why hasn't anyone in the media pointed out this obvious fact? I don't know, but the next time I hear Democratic loser Christine Gregoire explain that she just wants to make sure "every vote is counted," I shall change the channel from the so-called "news" to reruns of Seinfeld. If enough people do that, perhaps the idiot news readers and commentators on local television will realize that they are not doing their jobs. — R. W. Bradford

**The lean, mean shuffling machine** — President Bush has begun the process of shuffling U.S. troops around the globe by talking about moving troops from Germany, South Korea, and even Japan. The all-too-gradual administration plan aims to move some to Don Rumsfeld's "New Europe" and to bolster force levels in Iraq. A better course would be to consider a more extensive redeployment, mainly to the United States.

The threats of the near future are more likely to come from terrorist cells and guerrilla forces than from nation-states seeking to challenge U.S. dominance. The best way to deal with them is through agile, mobile, high-tech special forces able to move quickly and lethally and improvise in the field — Secretary Rumsfeld's "lean and mean" military vision in spades (or perhaps, outright private mercenaries, but that may be getting ahead of things). Stationing large numbers of conventional troops in Germany, Okinawa, Korea, and Central Asia — let alone the volatile Middle East — is more likely to stir resentment than to improve national security. It's long past time to move beyond Cold War deployments and prepare a more effective and appropriate plan for the realistic threats of the near future.

— Alan W. Bock

## Congress



"I know we can't repeal the laws of nature, but I don't see why we can't amend them."

# Politics vs. Ideology: How Elections Are Won

*by Stephen Cox*

Presidential elections have always been about interest groups, with ideology playing only a small role. Libertarians should learn from this.

"I have long entertained a suspicion, with regard to the decisions of philosophers upon all subjects, and found in myself a greater inclination to dispute, than assent to their conclusions."

— David Hume

As Hume automatically doubted the conclusions of other philosophers, so I have a strong tendency to distrust the speculations and assumptions of political commentators and party activists, especially when they are engaged with their favorite subject, the nature of American presidential elections. Here I want to dispute a number of attitudes that they have propagated among the American people, attitudes that obtrude themselves wherever politics are discussed.

One of these attitudes is the tendency to regard presidential elections as "defining historical events," as expressions of great "ideas" and great "social movements." Even the election of 2004 was commonly described, before it happened, as an event that would "change the nature of American politics for the foreseeable future." It is now being described as a "political watershed" that has precipitated a last, desperate battle to "redefine the heart and soul" of the losing party.

A second attitude, one that is closely linked to the first, involves the idea that decisive victory in a presidential contest confers a "mandate" on the winner, ratifying his ideology and requiring that its principles immediately be put into practice. *Vox populi, vox dei*; or, as H.L. Mencken said, democracy is the idea that the people know what they want,

and deserve to get it good and hard.

A third attitude runs contrary to the first two. It stems not from a misplaced sense of drama but from flat-footed pragmatism. It arises from the theory that elections are won, not by ideas, but by an assemblage of "populations," "communities," or "voting blocs" that are known in advance to be favorable to one party or another. Find enough blacks, ecologists, soccer moms, and college professors; herd them to the polls; and the Democrats will win. Lure enough angry white males into the cave, and victory will go to the Republicans. This kind of theory is classically represented by Theodore White's study of the election of 1960 and V.O. Key's studies of the degree to which people tend to adopt the party allegiances of their parents.

The third attitude often produces a fourth. People who harbor it see America as a nation characterized by highly stable "power bases"—ethnic groups, social classes, that kind of thing. They believe, therefore, that any party that succeeds in capturing one of those bases from the other party will thereby change the whole shape of American politics. Suppose the Republicans capture the Democrats' "Hispanic base," or the Democrats capture the Republicans' "values base." The winning party would then "have a lock on" subsequent presidential elections. Or so people say.

Each of these four attitudes, I believe, is grounded in an element of truth. There are such things as political "bases," communal sources of political identification: "I am a Catholic"; "I am an African-American"; "I'm gay"; "I'm a Southern rebel." There are also such things as political ideas and social movements, and these can have noticeable effects on elections, occasionally dramatic effects. And people who

win elections are free to claim that they have succeeded in attaining a mandate. But the picture of the world that people with these four attitudes see is very far from the world as it is.

I recently looked at returns from the past 45 presidential elections, beginning with 1828, which is about the time when political parties as we know them began to take form and the popular vote for president began to assume its current significance. The numbers I saw prompted questions about the nature of American electoral success.

Let's start with the issue of the winner's "mandate." President Bush suggests that his decisive electoral victory in 2004 constituted a mandate for the programs he favors. Democrats are eager to dispute this claim. They suggest that

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*People work for American political parties, give money to American political parties, and to a large extent vote for American political parties in order to win elections. Few people do any of these things merely to express some set of abstract views.*

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his victory was (in the words of a certain political scientist) "actually one of the narrowest" in the last 100 years. But both sides are wrong. Although Bush got only 51% of the popular vote, nine of the past 25 winning candidates (including Truman, Wilson, and Clinton) got even less. Bush was nearer the center than the end of the list. Only by standards very far removed from common sense, however, could such a victor derive a "mandate" from his success in running with the pack.

American elections are not won by "ideas" that can conveniently be transformed into mandates. For one thing, the diversity of the American populace, a diversity that is ordinarily very well reflected in any snapshot of either the winning or the losing party, means that no one is able to calculate exactly what it was that appealed to this heterogeneous group of voters and thereby produced the alleged mandate. I, and 5 million other people, may have voted for presidential candidate X primarily because we liked his advocacy of free trade. My next-door neighbor, and 5 million of his friends, may have voted for candidate X primarily because they are recipients of the economic handouts he endorsed. And in a normal election, candidate X would need all of us to win, no matter how opposed our premises might be. Even if he gathered enough of us together to win 60% of the vote, he could not have a mandate to give all of us, or any one of us, exactly what we wanted.

But the big fact about American presidential elections is that they are won by small margins. In only five of the past 45 elections did the winning candidate get anything near 60% of the popular vote: Harding, 1920, 60%; Roosevelt, 1936, 61%; Johnson, 1964, 61%; Nixon, 1972, 61%; Reagan, 1984, 59%. All these victors (four of whom, by the way, had the advantage of incumbency) were pitted against extraordinarily weak opponents. All but one (Johnson) were able to

contrast themselves with closely preceding administrations of the opposing party (those of Wilson, Hoover, Johnson, and Carter) that were generally perceived as disastrous.

It was not "ideas" that defeated James Cox (1920), Alfred Landon (1936), George McGovern (1980), and Walter Mondale (1984). True, many people voted for Harding and against Cox because they disagreed with the Democratic Party's support for the League of Nations. Many people voted for Roosevelt and against Landon because they believed that Roosevelt's economic policies were worth a continued try. Many people voted for Nixon and against McGovern because they believed that McGovern was a socialist, and socialism is not a good idea. Many people voted for Reagan and against Mondale because they were opposed to the social-welfare liberalism that Mondale championed. But it is difficult, if not impossible, to see Harding's party, let alone Nixon's, as a party of ideas.

Roosevelt's and Reagan's parties were much more ideological, although the two candidates spent about as much time dodging their parties' ideological assumptions as they did explicitly advocating them. Johnson's victory can plausibly be viewed as a repudiation of Barry Goldwater's ideological conservatism. Yet even Johnson's election, which was won by a swing of only eleven points from the 50% taken by the Democrats four years before, hardly represented an overwhelming ideological victory. In only eight states did the popular vote on either side of this, by far the most highly polarized electoral contest of the 20th century, exceed Johnson's national share of 61.1%. His was a broad victory, but it had no deep wellsprings of support. In the next two elections, the opposing party won, the second time by a "landslide."

And Johnson's victory in 1964 was as close as you get to a "mandate" in American electoral politics. The fact that President Bush can dare to represent his achievement of a 51-48% victory as a mandate merely demonstrates what a deformed meaning the word has come to possess, under the pressure of America's highly competitive two-party system.

One may say of this system, as Mark Twain supposedly said of the weather, that everybody talks about it but nobody

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*The two major parties drift eerily across the political, social, and literal landscape, seeking whom they may devour.*

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does anything about it. The reason is that there is nothing to be done. The logic is inexorable. People work for American political parties, give money to American political parties, and to a large extent vote for American political parties in order to win elections. Few people do any of these things merely to express some set of abstract views. Even voters who, because of their geographical location, are doomed to lose — Democrats in Indiana, for example, or Republicans in New York — can picture themselves as contributing to the larger, national effect, or to a party-building effort that may eventually pay off in their benighted home states.

But there can be no question about the professional man-

agers of the major parties: they are working to win, and to win right now. Even Bill Clinton, that embittered opponent of the great right-wing conspiracy, tried to convince John Kerry to campaign aggressively in favor of the anti-gay-marriage measures that were placed by the Right on the 2004 state ballots. For Clinton, winning was what counted. The important thing was to come out a vote or two in front of the other guy, no matter how you did it. He knew that the 49% he won in 1996, or even the 43% he won in 1992, was about as good as any 51% that someone else might get. Just get that vote!

"Winning," in the context of American politics, is not like winning World War II. It's more like winning one of those 18th-century wars in which, with tremendous effort, one of the European powers captured a hundred square miles of marginal territory, only to give it back the next time a war came along. But American elections are even more complicated and "marginal." In the 18th century there was an England, a France, a Spain, an Austria, and a Prussia, each representing great and permanent blocs of power. Such blocs do not exist in America. Unlike other countries, America has never had a "Catholic" or a "Protestant" party, or even a "religious" party. It has never had a viable "labor" party. Its regional parties, such as the Southern Democratic Party in the election of 1860 or the States Rights Party in the election of 1948, have been of very short duration.

It's worth asking why this is. The reason is that Americans, heirs of two centuries of political and religious individualism and extreme social mobility, are people of multiple social identifications. Here's an example. Most gay Americans currently identify with the Democratic Party. They may not know a word of the party platform, but they feel a personal identification with a party that (they believe) "supports" them as gay people. It's all very vague, and the vagueness expresses the fact that push so rarely comes to shove in American politics. If you're an ordinary, hard-working, law-abiding American, it's not easy to tell, from its overt actions, whether a political party "supports" you or not. It doesn't give you immunity from taxes, allow you exclusive use of the municipal swimming pool, or grant you a title of nobility; neither does it arrest you for being "who you are." It doesn't dream of doing such things. Once in power, it treats almost everyone with contempt and indifference, occasionally doling out some political welfare in the shape of "affirmative action" or "faith-based initiatives" — until the next election comes around, when it starts talking again about "making the government look more like America."

Still, I know gay men who care nothing about politics as such, but would probably kill themselves rather than cast a Republican vote. Yet millions of gay voters also identify themselves as property-owners, Texans, home-town boys, friends of the military, tax foes, Christians, and other people emotionally or logically identified with the Republican Party. Who can tell how such people will vote? Who, therefore, can tell how gays "as a group" will vote? Nobody. And you can say the same thing about people in virtually every social group in the country, because virtually everyone in America is self-identified with a multitude of groups, causes, jobs, beliefs, interests, prejudices, and experiences.

The task of the American political party is to exploit as many of these personal identifications as possible. This is not a science, and it cannot be. Representatives of any group or position with which some people identify are free to say, as they are saying of the recent Republican victory, "We caused it! If it hadn't been for our 3% of the vote, the candidate would have lost." But that goes for every 3% and even 2% and 1% of Bush's vote. All of those percentages were necessary to elect him.

Further, it is by no means clear that the, say, 60% of the gay population that voted for Kerry in 2004 will vote for a Democratic candidate in 2008, whatever he does or does not

*Almost every minor party is an ideological party, and that explains why such parties either remain minor or cease to exist.*

do (or is perceived as doing or not doing) in relation to gay people. Group identifications vary unpredictably, and so does the strength of group identification in the lives of individual people. A black ex-military voter may have felt strongly impelled to vote for Bush in 2004, but he may feel only weakly impelled to vote for the Republican candidate in 2008, when (God willing) the war will be over.

Voting behavior is like other forms of human action, as explained by such economic theorists as Friedrich Hayek and Ludwig von Mises; it proceeds from individual, variable, nonquantifiable preferences. Someone who writes "Vote for Bush!" at the top of his Things-to-Do list in November 2004 may write "Vote for Hillary!" at the top of that list in November 2008; or his list for the first week in November may start with "Buy new shoes," "Remember conference call," or "Register kids, preschool," with no entry at all pertaining to electoral politics.

What happens in American elections is that the party that lost the last one looks for a way to win the next one, knowing (if it's smart) that it cannot rely implicitly on any stable bloc of voters. Even the legendary strength of African-Americans' identification with the Democratic Party can easily recede sufficiently to keep most potential voters in that "bloc" away from the polls. The best that each political party can do is to go through its list of possible voters, trying to interest as many as possible, beginning with those most strongly identified with itself (at the moment) and proceeding as far down the list as its funds and energy permit. If the gay vote is sixth on the list, a party that has any possibility of getting it will try to do so, altering its own character and "ideas" when alteration is necessary to optimize its capacity for winning.

One result is that the two major parties stay fairly close to equal in strength. Another result is that voter identification groups drift restlessly from one party to another, and the two major parties drift eerily across the political, social, and literal landscape, seeking whom they may devour. The solid Democratic South is now the solid Republican South. The Republicans, formerly the big-government party, are now the small-government party (except when they're not). Blacks used to be "predictably" Republican; now they are



"predictably" Democratic. College professors used to vote Republican; now they vote en masse for the Democrats. Democratic soccer moms become Republican security moms; populist evangelical Christians (Democratic) become community-standards evangelical Christians (Republican); big business stands with the Republicans, leaps suddenly toward the Democrats, then shivers into a thousand fragments, each pursuing its own interest in government benefits or obeying its managers' ethnic, gender, or ideological inclinations, or the phases of the moon.

American elections are won not by stable power blocs but by *shifts* in party identifications among people who used to be in those blocs, until they escaped. Some of the shifts, which go on all the time, in every conceivable direction, coincide with major intellectual or social movements, the kind of movements that change large patterns of intellectual and social history. But electoral politics has its own more intricate, local, and self-adjusting patterns, the patterns of the marginal gains and losses that happen as parties hunt the all-important plurality of votes.

The most historic and ideological election in American history was undoubtedly the election of 1860, when the Republican party came to power as the political expression of the antislavery movement. Abraham Lincoln won just 40% of the vote that year. In 1864, he managed to increase his party's share to 55%, but by then eleven opposition states were not even voting; they were out of the union. His raw popular vote — the vote of a wartime president! — had increased by only 19% over the 1860 total. At that rate, if the Southern states had not seceded and other things had

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*Ideas have a chance of gaining influence, but their chances often improve when they don't have to carry an entire political party with them. This is what supporters of minor parties usually do not understand.*

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remained equal, he would have received only about 48% of the popular vote in 1864. Presumably, the nominee of the Democratic Party would have beaten him. It was no historic mandate, conferred by the voters on Abraham Lincoln, that inspired the Southern states to leave the union after the election of 1860; it was a refusal to recognize the self-correcting nature of American electoral politics.

In 1868 and 1872 the Republicans responded to their perilously small electoral margin by nominating Ulysses S. Grant, a war hero. Grant won both elections, but he received only 53% and 56% of the vote, respectively. (And in both instances, his margin was inflated by unnaturally Republican conditions in a partly disenfranchised South.) During the remaining three decades of the century, an era that witnessed many historic ideological and social movements, to which both parties attempted to adjust, the Republican Party usually won; but the winning party's head was never far above the water. The winners' vote-shares were 48%, 48%, 49%, 48%, 46%, 51%, and 52%.

Let's take another example of the difference between "history" and electoral processes. The administration of Franklin Roosevelt (1933–1945) was clearly a triumph for the ideology of big government and the welfare state. Yet Roosevelt came to power on a small-government platform, displacing Herbert Hoover, who endorsed roughly the same ideas and practices as Roosevelt but had been discredited by his failure to "solve" the Great Depression. Roosevelt's victory by 57% to 40% of the vote was not a mandate for the distinctive set of policies that his administration eventually came up with; it was a vote against Herbert Hoover. In 1936, Roosevelt's share of the vote climbed to 61%, an enormous accomplishment in an American election. Although he was running against feeble opposition, it is certain that many of the votes he received were from converts to the big-government ideology. By 1940, however, Roosevelt's vote was down to 55%; in 1944, in the midst of a global war, and against an opponent who was barely campaigning, he achieved only 53%. His highest percentages of votes came from the deep South, where some people might have expected his modern liberalism to be one of his less popular characteristics.

A worse fate befell the party of Lyndon Johnson after his great "ideological" victory of 1964. In 1968, the Democratic Party's left-liberal stalwart, Johnson's hand-picked successor and apologist Hubert Humphrey, gained only 43% of the vote against country-club Republican Richard Nixon (43%) and segregationist George Wallace (14%). In 1972, a revival of left-liberalism under George McGovern lost the election for the Democrats by the terrific margin of 61% to 38% (which was, however, just 5% lower than Humphrey's vote). In 1976, Jimmy Carter, who was perceived as an anti-ideologue if not as a "conservative," crept into a 50–48% victory against a Republican Party discredited by the Watergate scandal. In 1980, 16 years after the defeat of Goldwater, the great champion of conservatism, a conservative administration came to power with Reagan's 51–41% victory over Carter. In other words, the Democrats sank by nine points that year, and the Republicans rose by three.

Such small margins, achieved by such large movements! And ideological movements were far from the only factors involved. There were also matters of personality, of preceding failure or success in office, and of geography, with Carter exerting, initially, a special appeal to the South. In view of these relatively small but shifting margins, it is understandable that President Clinton's supporters should have regarded his progress from 43% of the vote in 1992 to 49% in 1996 as a triumph, whether of ideology or of personal charm (they didn't care, so long as he remained in office).

In truth, however, only ten elections out of the past 45 have been won by margins of 48% or less. Clinton's 1996 victory put him on the southern shore of the mainstream of electoral success, the broad current that has carried 19 presidential candidates to victory with shares of 49% to 53%, the current that swirls fretfully around issues and ideologies, then courses happily downward toward the votes that are most easily obtained (and no truly *ideological* vote is ever *easily* obtained).

Again, this does not mean that ideas are wholly without influence, even electoral influence, in American life. They

have a chance of gaining influence, but their chances often improve when they don't have to carry an entire political party with them. This is what supporters of minor parties usually do not understand. Almost every minor party is an ideological party, and that explains why such parties either remain minor or cease to exist. Even the Republican Party, the only example of an ideological party that succeeded in becoming a major one, was supported by much more than

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*The best that a minor party can do is to keep itself in business as a continual advertisement for its ideology. The worst it can do (and the best and the worst are in this case inseparable) is to advertise its continual failure to win public office.*

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antislavery sentiment. It offered protective tariffs, internal improvements, western land, municipal reform, and a variety of other ostensible benefits, especially to people of the North. It also retained much of the old northern Whig power structure; i.e., politicians who were experienced in taking votes from Democrats. But the social welfare movement, the feminist movement, the African-American movement — none of these movements had to constitute itself as a political party in order to get its way. Had it done so, it would have had to take on many more issues than the ones that primarily interested it, and it would have alienated more people than it did in its quest for single-issue legislation.

In 1916, the Prohibition Party achieved 1.19% of the popular vote. A little over two years later, a prohibition amendment was added to the Constitution. Obviously, A was not the cause of B. It is frequently suggested that minor parties lose with issues that major parties later use to win. But the mere fact that the Democratic Party has adopted many of the proposals once offered by the Socialist Party does not indicate that the Socialist Party itself had any considerable influence on the process. It was people within the Democratic Party who saw the appeal of socialist ideas, and used them, despite the simultaneous, somewhat embarrassing advocacy of those ideas by the Socialists.

The same might be said about most of the issues that reputedly mobilize "the" Democratic Party and "the" Republican Party of today. Issues mobilize some people. But if all that a studio executive in Hollywood and an auto-parts worker in Cleveland have in common is their friendship for "the environment," then the Democratic Party is in serious trouble. The two people in question will have as much in common, on that score, with many Republicans, and with very many people who see no occasion to vote at all. And that is precisely the problem with the current Democratic Party: it's hard to keep a party together when many of its participants share just one reason for supporting it, and the reasons themselves vary so wildly that many Democratic voters might just as easily be in different parties.

Now suppose, as is actually the case, that one or both

major parties were disliked and distrusted by a majority of voters, or that neither major party were courageous enough to address certain issues of wide popular concern. This still does not imply that a minor party would be able to intervene successfully in electoral politics. A minor party invariably has a well-disciplined set of ideological positions, but it lacks the wide array of personal identifications that are necessary to unite a large proportion of American voters over a substantial period of time.

It is noteworthy that the Democratic Party's electoral votes in 1952 and 1956 came exclusively from Southern states, despite the fact that its presidential candidate, Adlai Stevenson, was the quintessential northern liberal. Even voters' traditional loyalty to a party label can keep a party going for a decent period of time. (Or it can delude the party by masking other sources of political identification. In several north Florida counties, as many as 75% of voters consider themselves Democrats, but those counties went overwhelmingly for Bush this year.) Minor parties, however, have few or no such nonrational means of retaining their voters. The best that a minor party can do is to keep itself in business as a continual advertisement for its ideology. The worst it can do (and the best and the worst are in this case inseparable) is to advertise its continual failure to win public office.

It is quite possible that many of the Libertarian Party's leading ideas are shared by a substantial majority of Americans. But that isn't enough for a political party. There is not even the hint or seed of a "mandate" here. Most Americans do not derive their electoral identity from that particular set of ideas, nor do they share most of the other identity markers that tend to unite political-party libertarians. Most Americans are not rationalists, deists, or atheists, chronic dissenters, or owners of small businesses; most are not even college-educated, as virtually all (upper case) Libertarians are.

Even if the national economy collapsed tomorrow as the obvious result of government interference with the marketplace, the Libertarian Party would never come to power on that issue, or any other. Americans would simply turn to one

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*Libertarians would do better to climb onto a major party, taking their position on the back of an animal with many feet to bear it to victory, than they would to set out toward the next election with only their own legs to carry them.*

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of the two major parties, to an entity whose vast, unruly identities. It would be well if there were libertarians within that lucky party, people who could draw it in a direction more favorable to their own ideology. At any time, from the point of view of sheer practicality, libertarians would do better to climb onto a major party, taking their position on the back of an animal with many feet to bear it to victory, than they would to set out toward the next election with only their own legs to carry them.

It grieves me to say this. I am a registered Libertarian. I

think that, by and large, the Libertarian Party has done a good job advertising ideas of individual freedom. The Libertarian Party in my home county has done a magnifi-

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*I would like to see the Libertarian Party sweep the country, elect a president, and organize both houses of Congress. That's not going to happen. American electoral politics just don't do things like that.*

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cent job at that. And there is nothing wrong with using a party for purposes of intellectual advertisement. The question is whether, from a political point of view, another medium would be more effective.

As I have indicated, and as everybody knows, even the major parties have serious problems. It might even be possible for a major party to die, if it ceased to offer large segments of the electorate the multiple identity connections that allow them to adhere to one political entity. Already the Democratic Party, by exchanging the South for its largest donor base, the Hollywood film industry, has forfeited what used to be a major point of political identification for an enormous segment of traditional voters: we're from the South; we've always been Democrats.

But anyone with a brain — and a major political party is bound to have some people with brains — can figure out a way to maximize Hollywood donations without losing even more votes in Georgia. I believe that the Democratic Party, in some form, will be with us for a long, long time, whatever turns its official ideology takes from moment to moment. The same can be said of the Republican Party.

They're not going away. If you want to accomplish something in electoral politics, you have to work with one of them.

Is this picture of American politics too cynical, too dispiriting? Consider the alternative. We might live in the kind of country that is washed by recurrent waves of political ideology and "idealism," a country (like France in the late 18th and 19th centuries) in which lopsided plebiscites or parliamentary elections continually change the basic form of government, sweeping past all local attachments, professional loyalties, inherited ideas, and practical considerations — all the "little" things from which the little margins of American elections are made. No, I'd rather live with the politics of small adjustments than with the politics of revolutionary upheavals; even though my advice is not solicited by either major party.

Despite all that, I admit that I would like to see libertarianism become an electoral movement. I would like to see the Libertarian Party sweep the country, elect a president, and organize both houses of Congress. That's not going to happen. American electoral politics just don't do things like that. But being elected yourself isn't the only way to affect the political system. The fact that both major parties attempt to appeal to an enormous variety of people gives libertarians a clear invitation to do so too, to increase the sentiment for liberty within the major parties by connecting that sentiment with the interests or personal identifications of the major parties' constituents. The libertarian idea really does offer something for rich and poor, black and white, male and female, gay and straight, Christian and atheist, doesn't it? Perhaps in 2008 we will hear that "opposition to big government," "the decriminalization platform," "free school empowerment," and "the minimal taxation movement" have produced the next presidential "mandate" for one of the two major parties. □

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## Letters, from page 6

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an uncritical rehash of arguments that have been raised elsewhere.

Luther Jett  
Washington Grove, Md.

*Clubb replies:* Unfortunately, Jett appears not to understand what I said. My "central premise" was not simply the use of the terms "anti-Semitism" and "anti-Americanism" to silence critics of two governments and that "in this context" the meanings amount to snarl words. The essay was an exercise in linguistics, or semantics: Noam Chomsky has described a small set of words, such as "terrorism," "defense," and "democracy," which have dual meanings in political discourse: a dictionary meaning and a propaganda meaning. I added "anti-

Semitism" and "anti-Americanism" to this group and went further to point out that these expressions also belong to a subgroup which mean little more than "I don't like what you say or what I read." I don't think what I said is particularly tired or old hat, for I cited a 2002 statement by the president of Harvard, and a 2004 statement by the prime minister of Great Britain, among others, to illustrate one of my points.

I was not interested in Zionism as such in my essay. Today, of course, the meaning of Zionism is indeed complex, but at the beginning it was not "largely a cultural and religious movement." I know I am rehashing a tired, old story when I point out that in the late 19th century, political

Zionism was quite distinct from older religious Zionism. The father of political Zionism was Theodor Herzl, whose book "The Jewish State" (1896) asserted that Jews throughout the world constituted a nation and that a Jewish state should be established for all Jews somewhere. Herzl's picture hung on the wall behind David Ben-Gurion when Ben-Gurion read the Declaration of Independence to establish Israel as a Jewish state in Palestine on May 14, 1948. From the beginning, particularly with the second wave of political Zionist immigrants, which included Ben-Gurion, and through the '20s, '30s, and '40s, political Zionism meant establishing a Jewish state in Palestine, or of Palestine, or for some

*continued on page 26*

# How Badnarik Avoided Disaster

*by R. W. Bradford*

The Badnarik campaign got a respectable vote count because it picked up more than 80,000 additional votes by getting on the ballot in states where Nader did not, and another 8,000 votes by advertising on television.

In the election just past, the Badnarik campaign focused its efforts (and spent most of its meager resources) in four “battleground” states, in hopes of taking enough votes from incumbent Bush to swing the election to challenger John Kerry. The move was a failure: Bush carried three of the states with margins that dwarfed Badnarik’s vote, and in the other state, Kerry won by a margin greater than the LP candidate’s vote.

Worse still, as I noted in the January *Liberty*, the LP vote share fell 17% from 2000 in the states where the Badnarik campaign concentrated its resources, while falling only 8.4% in other states that the campaign had pretty much ignored. This suggested, as I observed, that “perhaps the more voters know about the Libertarian candidate, the less likely they are to vote for him.”

This conclusion, despite the data supporting it, seemed preposterous. Another explanation occurred to me: perhaps the “why waste your vote” argument had greater impact in battleground states than in other states, accounting for Badnarik’s poor showing there. I mentioned this possibility in my article, but didn’t pursue it.

I am embarrassed to confess that it didn’t occur to me until the day we went to press that there was a relatively simple way to verify or falsify the theory that the Badnarik campaign had actually had a negative impact. With the magazine laid out and undergoing final proofing, there was no time to compile the data and rework the article.

But here’s the idea. My theory could be checked by comparing how Badnarik did in the battleground states where his campaign focused its efforts to how he fared in the other battleground states. I did a Web search and came up with a list of 13 states that were widely identified as battleground

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states by experts. Four of these states had to be eliminated from the comparison because either the LP nominee or Ralph Nader had failed to achieve ballot status in both 2000 and 2004. This left three battleground states where the Badnarik campaign had concentrated its advertising and six in which it had not.

In the three battleground states that the campaign concentrated on, Badnarik’s vote share fell 17.6% behind LP nominee Harry Browne’s share four years earlier:

State	2000 vote	2004 vote	Change
Nevada	0.55%	0.39%	-29.60%
New Mexico	0.37%	0.31%	-15.60%
Wisconsin	0.25%	0.22%	-14.80%
Average	0.32%	0.26%	-17.60%

In the six battleground states that the campaign more or less ignored, Badnarik’s vote share fell 36.3%:

State	2000 vote	2004 vote	Change
Florida	0.32%	0.16%	-49.50%
Iowa	0.24%	0.19%	-19.90%
Michigan	0.31%	0.22%	-30.10%
Minnesota	0.22%	0.16%	-26.30%

Washington	0.51%	0.39%	-24.60%
West Virginia	0.30%	0.18%	-39.40%
Average	0.32%	0.20%	-36.30%

So the impact of the Badnarik campaign's spending about \$186,270 was favorable: the LP vote share fell less than half in battleground states where the money was spent than in battleground states the campaign more or less ignored.

How many votes did the campaign win over with its advertising and candidate appearances in its favored battleground states? Simple extrapolation suggests that if the campaign had saved its money, it would have won a total of 13,336 votes in those chosen battleground states. In fact, Badnarik captured 21,483 votes in those states. This suggests that the cost of gaining each of the 8,137 votes was \$22.89. Actually, the cost of each vote gained in those states was a bit higher than this, since the campaign also concentrated candidate appearances in those battleground states.

The last time it was possible to calculate the cost of gaining votes by television advertising was the 1988 campaign, in which advertisements purchased on behalf of the LP candidate by the party in Kansas were able to increase LP votes at a cost of about \$1.86 per vote. The cost in the 2004 elec-

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*The Badnarik campaign's advertising in battleground states won the candidate an additional 8,137 votes at a cost of \$22.89 each.*

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tion was more than twelve times as high. Whether the difference is entirely the product of the higher costs of television advertising, or is partly the product of the higher cost of swaying voters in battleground states than in uncontested states, is a matter for conjecture.

The 8,137 votes that the Badnarik campaign got for its \$186,270 investment were dwarfed by the votes it got from another identifiable source. In 2004, Ralph Nader failed to

appear on the ballots of twelve states on whose ballots his name had appeared in 2000. In those states, the LP vote share went up 17.4%. In the 33 states where Nader and the LP nominee appeared on the ballot in both elections, the LP vote share fell by 30.4%. If Nader had not been denied ballot access in those twelve states in 2004, it is virtually cer-

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*If Libertarians have anyone in particular to thank for their non-disastrous finish, it is the election officials who kept Nader's name from appearing on the ballot in those states.*

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tain that the LP vote would have been substantially less: simple extrapolation suggests that those who kept Nader off the ballot in those twelve states increased the LP vote total by 83,489 votes.

That's more than ten times as many votes as the LP candidate won by campaigning in battleground states. If Libertarians have anyone in particular to thank for their non-disastrous finish, it is the election officials who kept Nader's name from appearing on the ballot in those states.

In most cases, Nader was kept off by people with motives curiously similar to the Badnarik campaign's strategy of focusing on battleground states: state officials believed that most voters who would have otherwise voted for Nader would vote for Kerry, increasing his chances of winning those states. Similarly the Libertarians running the Badnarik campaign hoped to attract votes that would otherwise go to Bush, thereby increasing Kerry's chance of winning.

It is curious that those who kept Nader off the ballot failed to sway a single state for Kerry. Had Nader been on the ballots of those twelve states and performed comparably to how he performed elsewhere, and every one of Nader's votes came out of Kerry's total, the outcome would not have been changed in a single state. □

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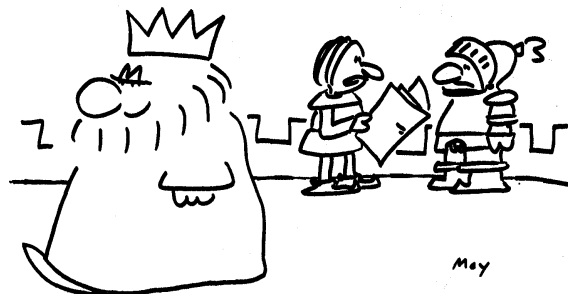
Greater Palestine, and there are many quotations by prominent Zionists to support this.

Also, in my article I was not interested in the population of Jerusalem, although it is true that Jews outnumbered Arabs there. But in 1900, although population estimates for Palestine as a whole vary quite a bit, estimates by demographers are in the range of 500,000–700,000 Arabs (Arabs could be Christians, and Bedouins were generally considered Arabs whatever Bedouins themselves thought) and 50,000–70,000 Jews — a small minority.

As for my not writing an article

with a "uniquely libertarian slant," although I am not a libertarian (or a Democrat or a Republican either, for that matter), I would say that no magazine or journal should limit itself to publishing only articles written from the same point of view; it would be boring. I have enjoyed reading many articles in *Liberty* written from a libertarian point of view, but I have also read numerous others which do not self-consciously follow any particular point of view, except perhaps that of truth. Insisting that every article published in *Liberty* should be written

with a "uniquely libertarian slant" would not be liberty. *Liberty's* editorial policy is to publish articles of particular interest to libertarians, and apparently *Liberty's* editors think my work qualifies.



"The press is really beating up on him — It's a good thing he's illiterate."



# The President and Mr. Bush

*by Craig J. Cantoni*

George Washington and George Bush square off in a cross-epochal presidential debate.

I have obtained a secret copy of a transcript of a debate that was moderated by a medium earlier this year between George W. Bush and George Washington. Although the transcript would have hurt Bush, the establishment media sat on it during the presidential campaign because Washington's comments also would have hurt their left-liberal agenda. Here are excerpts:

*Medium:* The first question is on Social Security and Medicare. President Washington, what would you do to fix the programs?

*Washington:* What programs are those?

*Medium:* They are programs by which the federal government takes 15% of the income of workers to pay the retirement and medical bills of retirees. It's projected that by 2060 the combined deficit for both programs will be over \$70 trillion, a tab that will be picked up by our grandchildren.

*Washington:* You're pulling my leg, aren't you?

*Medium:* No, the Social Security Act was enacted in 1935, and Medicare in 1965.

*Washington:* [Looking stunned]

*Medium:* Mr. President, are you okay?

*Washington:* [Sighing] Yes, sorry. Putting aside the immorality of having some people pay other people's bills and consigning children to indentured servitude, my answer is that there is no constitutional authority for such programs and that they should be ended as soon as possible. Besides,

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this nation was founded on the noble ideas of personal responsibility and morality — of family members helping family members, of neighbors helping neighbors, and of churches and charities helping the unfortunate. It wasn't founded on the ignoble notion of the government replacing personal responsibility and morality. It doesn't take a genius to understand that when the government tries to replace personal responsibility and morality, society will end up with less of both.

*Bush:* [Whispering to Karl Rove off stage] Psst, Karl, help me out here. You didn't prep me on this constitutional thing. [Speaking to medium] Oh, is it my turn? What was the question again?

*Medium:* What would you do to fix Social Security and Medicare? President Washington says that there is no constitutional authority for the programs.

*Bush:* [Blank stare, and long pause] Ah . . . uh. Oh, yes . . . hmm . . . I've . . . uh . . . added a prescription benefit to Medicare and authorized Health Savings Accounts, and I'll be proposing something or other about letting the good American people put some of their Social Security money in private accounts, which is something that liberal Sen.

Kerry opposes. On the constitutional thing, I think this went to the Supreme Court under DRF, er, RFD. No, it was FDR. Yeah, I'm certain it was FDR.

*Medium:* Next question: President Bush, what will you do about income taxes and the deficit?

*Bush:* [Smirking] Read my lips: T-A-X-E C-U-T. Oops, that's T-A-X. [Sheepish grin] On the deficit thing, I'm going to continue spending more money than any president since JBL, er, LBJ, but less than what Sen. Kerry will spend. That's what compassionate conservatism is all about: being compassionate with other people's money.

*Washington:* Income taxes? There's no provision in the Constitution for taxes on income.

*Medium:* The federal government got the authority to levy income taxes in 1913, when the 16th Amendment was ratified.

*Washington:* [Sobbing uncontrollably] Tell me . . . please tell me, good sir, that what you say is not true.

*Medium:* No, it's true. In 1914, the year after the ratification of the 16th Amendment, the income tax per capita was \$69 in inflation-adjusted dollars. Today, it's over \$2,500. The tax rate on a median family was zero in 1914, versus more than 25% today.

*Washington:* But an income tax will lead to the tyranny of the majority, once Americans understand that they can petition the government to tax the minority.

*Medium:* We're already there. A majority of Americans now get more back from the government in services and entitlements than they pay in taxes.

*Washington:* [Sinking to his knees, weeping] Give me a moment, please.

*Medium:* Take all the time you need.

*Washington:* [Getting off his knees and wiping his eyes] How is this tax collected?

*Medium:* First, the tax is taken from workers' pay before they even get their checks. Then people file an income tax return every year, and send the return to an organization called the Internal Revenue Service, to make sure the government took enough out of their paychecks. In 1914, less than 1% of the population had to file, versus 45% today. There were 4,000 IRS agents in 1914; there are 110,000 today. And in 1914, there were four pages of IRS forms. Today there are more than 4,000 pages.

*Washington:* [Shaking his head in disbelief] Hamilton must have been behind this. Satan must have given him a furlough from hell, where he shares a bunk with Burr, to return to the United States and destroy individual freedom through a centralized government of unlimited power. On the deficit question, let me quote from my Farewell Address of 1796:

"As a very important source of strength and security, cherish public credit. One method of preserving it is to use it as sparingly as possible, avoiding occasions of expense by cultivating peace, but remembering also that timely disbursements to prepare for danger frequently prevent much greater disbursements to repel it; avoiding likewise the accumulation of debt, not only by shunning occasions of expense, but by vigorous exertions in time of peace to dis-

charge the debts which unavoidable wars have occasioned, not ungenerously throwing upon posterity the burden which we ourselves ought to bear."

*Medium:* I have two more questions. The second to last question is for you, President Bush. What will you do to improve public education?

*Bush:* I'm going to expand my No Child Left Behind initiative from grade schools to high schools, using the full force and financing of the federal government, under my strong leadership — and I'm a strong leader, you know, someone who would have never let the British push the Revolutionary Army out of New York, New Jersey, and Alaska — to make sure that local school districts have the money and incentive to educate children the way they should be educated; that is, the government way. [Silly grin.]

*Washington:* Has there been a constitutional amendment in my absence that gives the federal government the authority to intervene in what is clearly a local matter? If there has been no such amendment, then President Bush is violating his oath of office to uphold the Constitution and should be impeached. Let me repeat what I said about this in my Farewell Address of 1796:

"The basis of our political systems is the right of the people to make and to alter their Constitutions of Government. But the Constitution which at any time exists, till changed by an explicit and authentic act of the whole people, is sacredly obligatory upon all. The very idea of the power and the right of the people to establish Government presupposes the duty of every individual to obey the established Government."

*Medium:* Last question. President Washington, what is your foreign policy?

*Washington:* Most of my Farewell Address was devoted to foreign affairs. I said that the way to spread our values is through example and commerce, and I warned about getting involved in foreign wars and intrigues, especially European ones. To quote once again from the address:

"Observe good faith and justice towards all Nations; cultivate peace and harmony with all. Religion and Morality enjoin this conduct; and can it be, that good policy does not equally enjoin it? It will be worthy of a free, enlightened, and, at no distant period, a great Nation, to give to mankind the magnanimous and too novel example of a people always guided by an exalted justice and benevolence. Who can doubt, that, in the course of time and things, the fruits of such a plan would richly repay any temporary advantages, which might be lost by a steady adherence to it? Can it be, that Providence has not connected the permanent felicity of a Nation with its Virtue? The experiment, at least, is recommended by every sentiment which ennobles human nature. In the execution of such a plan, nothing is more essential, than that permanent, inveterate antipathies against particular Nations, and passionate attachments for others, should be excluded; and that, in place of them, just and amicable feelings towards all should be cultivated. The Nation, which indulges towards another an habitual hatred, or an habitual fond-

*continued on page 53*

# An Evening with the NSA

*by William E. Merritt*

No flash photography, please: the inhabitants are easily startled.

Like all healthy 16-year-olds, my son is a natural libertarian. He doesn't have any theoretical basis for his beliefs, he just knows that if Authority says Do Something, he doesn't want any part of it. Last summer, I thought it would be a good idea to help fill in some of the gaps in his theory. My plan was to take him to Washington, D.C., and check out some of our more flagrant national institutions. In Washington, D.C., we could share the warm, fuzzy, Dad-Dude kind of experience upon which lasting memories are built, while I explained in a conversational sort of way what our government was meant to do, and what it actually does.

When my daughter got wind of the trip, she wanted to go. She was 23 and back in town after four years working, mostly, for libertarian organizations. I was glad to have her along. Her grounding in libertarian theory is a lot more solid than mine, and her facts considerably more numerous and more compelling. So, the Saturday we found ourselves driving down the Gladys Spellman Parkway from Baltimore to D.C., she was in the back seat. We were on the Gladys Spellman Parkway because, for reasons that must make sense to somebody at the airlines, it's a lot cheaper to fly into Baltimore than into Reagan or Dulles.

That's when we happened upon a sign announcing we were approaching the exit to the National Cryptologic Museum. Now, before any of you who work at any prestigious spy agencies take offense at anything that might appear in the rest of this article, I ask you, whose fault was it, anyway? I mean, what American wouldn't want to visit the National Cryptologic Museum? Especially if he had a 16-year-old boy riding shotgun and a libertarian in back. As

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clear a case of entrapment as you could want, if you ask me.

To get to the National Cryptologic Museum, you take the Canine Road exit. For some reason, this seemed appropriate. What the sign on the Gladys Spellman Parkway didn't point out is that Canine Road doesn't actually lead to the National Cryptologic Museum. Where it really leads is to the National Security Agency. The National Cryptologic Museum is around back. You get there by driving to the gate of the National Security Agency, deciding you don't want to go there, then swinging left around a parking lot until you come to the National Vigilance Park (no kidding!), where you find the entrance to the National Cryptologic Museum.

If you've never been to the National Vigilance Park, don't make the trip just for that. It's just a little outdoor air museum displaying a handful of not-very-sexy spy planes left over from the Cold War. There aren't any U-2s or SR-71 Blackbirds. In fact, when you look closely, there may not even be any spy planes. As the NSA's website explains, "The centerpiece of the exhibit is a C-130 aircraft, refurbished to resemble the reconnaissance-configured C-130A which was downed by Soviet fighters over Soviet Armenia on 2 September 1958." In other words, it's not a spy plane at all, it's a regular airplane disguised to look like a spy plane.

What this means in the shadowy world of international vigilance, I have no idea.

The National Cryptologic Museum may actually have real spy stuff inside, but I wouldn't know, because it was closed. We would have felt more disappointed about that if it hadn't already occurred to my son and me that, just down the road was something way cooler than a museum filled with what might, or might not, be real spy stuff.

Now, despite certain remarks I may have made from time to time regarding who should have won the Civil War, I am a reasonably loyal American. And as anybody who has caught even the most fleeting glimpse of my lifestyle can tell you, I sure don't live like I'm in the pay of a foreign government, at least not any foreign government with the resources to threaten the United States. For that matter, I don't even know what goes on inside the National Security Agency.

The fact is, nobody knows what goes on in there, except that they are the spiest of spy agencies. They're the guys who are supposed to intercept and record every electronic communication on the planet — every email, every phone call that's routed by satellite, everything that's broadcast through the air or through outer space or beneath the ocean. And they are the guys who have the underground rooms filled with daisy chains of supercomputers, all wired together in parallel, to read this stuff — at least if you believe the rumors going around Portland a few years ago when the NSA bought an entire train carload of Pentium III processors from the local Intel plant to use on the other side of the very gate we were heading back to. Talk about your flagrant national institutions, I thought. My son can get a real civics lesson here.

My daughter, who had given a lot more thought than I had to the implications of being anywhere near the National Security Agency, wasn't so enthusiastic. "No," she yelled from the back seat. "Don't get *close* to that place." But she spoke too late. The 16-year-olds in the front seat were in con-

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*I handed them the digital camera that we'd used to snap pictures of ourselves in front of their gate, and they erased the pictures. That's how easy it was for the NSA people to get what they wanted out of me.*

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trol of the car and, not much later, we were frolicking around the gate of the National Security Agency, photographing one another lounging against the big, sky-blue, circular concrete seal with the words

NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCY  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

written around the outside of the circle, and a rather out-of-sorts looking eagle perched on an enormous skeleton key in the center. Why the letters used to spell out NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCY should be so much larger than those used for UNITED STATES OF AMERICA is not explained.

For a place where there hadn't been any patrol cars a few

seconds earlier, there sure were a lot of them a few seconds later. And the men who jumped out weren't rent-a-cops. They were big, buff guys with ostentatious pistols strapped to their sides. Looking at those guys, I got the impression that nobody at the NSA had let any artsy-fartsy EEOC rules or

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*They didn't have nearly as much luck with my kids. That is to say, they didn't have any more luck getting my kids to cooperate than I do. In the first place, my son doesn't carry ID.*

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Americans-with-Disabilities-Act legalisms get in the way of their staffing objectives. When those guys came on board, the employment standards had been all about physical presence and, when they asked for my driver's license, I forked it over.

Looking back, I wish I hadn't. But I wasn't thinking about standing on principle just then, I was thinking about what was the quickest way to get the hell out of there. So, even though I was on foot and wasn't even particularly near the car, I gave them my license. Then I handed them the digital camera that we'd used to snap pictures of ourselves in front of their gate, and they erased the pictures. That's how easy it was for the NSA people to get what they wanted out of me.

They didn't have nearly as much luck with my kids. That is to say, they didn't have any more luck getting my kids to cooperate than I do. In the first place, my son doesn't carry ID. He's too young for a credit card, at least none that I know about and . . . well, even though he had officially turned 16 in December, it's going to be a long time before he'll be able to cough up a state-issued ID in the form of a driver's license, not after the evening when he was discovered at 2:00 a.m. — back when he was still 15 — expressing his libertarian impulses a little too assertively regarding the rules governing how old you are supposed to be before you can operate a motor vehicle. The National Security Agency Security People were out of luck in the ID department as far as my son was concerned.

They were even more out of luck in the oral-interview department. Whoever these guys who had come swarming up were, they were *the cops*, and my son knew from years of slipping around after curfew what you do with *the cops*. He stood with his hands in his pockets, looking like a teenager who's made up his mind not to talk. I knew the drill. This was not a confrontation the National Security Agency was likely to win.

My daughter was a good deal more forthcoming. She told them right up front that she wasn't going to show them any ID, thank you very much, or tell them her name, either. What she would tell them was, "I'm an American citizen lawfully minding my own business on a public road. I don't have to tell you anything."

That was a new one on the NSA people, and they had a little huddle about it. Important principles were at stake, and they knew it. When they had figured out how to protect the important principles they had in mind, they told my daughter they would be keeping her in a holding cell while she rethought her opinion of what Americans can and cannot do

on public roads.

That would have worked on me. But they weren't reckoning on dealing with someone who'd once brought an entire Tri-Met bus to a halt for the better part of rush hour while a supervisor drove out from headquarters to straighten out the situation that arose when one of his drivers tried to claim my then-teenaged daughter had slipped aboard without paying.

"So then," my now-grown daughter asked in her chirpiest voice when they explained the thing about the holding cell, "there'll be a hearing on Monday?"

This resulted in another huddle. These guys had been hired for physical presence, not for an easy understanding of criminal procedure. After a while, one of them climbed into a patrol car and made an emergency radio call. When he climbed back out, nobody ever mentioned holding cells again.

There have been plenty of next-days in my life when I've figured out what I should have said the day before. But not that day. That day, what I should have said spooled out in real time as my daughter said it instead of me, and hearing her say it made me feel ashamed of myself. To salvage a bit of self respect, I walked over to give my son some encouragement in keeping his mouth shut. But he was way ahead of me. He'd seen his sister in action, too. And he was more than just an instinctual libertarian, he was 16, and wasn't about to be out-machoed by anybody, especially not a girl. And certainly not his sister.

The guy who had been grilling him saw me coming, went from confrontational to subtle, and jerked his thumb in my direction. "Who's this guy?" he demanded. "Your dad?"

My son didn't say anything.

"Maybe," the National Security guy insinuated, "he's your *grandfather*." Wow, that stung. These people were masters at gaining the psychological edge.

While I was trying to figure out how to respond, an unmarked car sped up. Then an unmarked — at least, an ununiformed — middle-aged white guy popped out. He was,

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*Whoever these guys who had come swarming up were, they were the cops, and my son knew from years of slipping around after curfew what you do with the cops.*

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I think, the Head of Security at the National Security Agency, and he wanted to know what the problem was.

My son didn't have an opinion on that, certainly not of the sort he was willing to express to anybody in authority, and he just stood there. My daughter and I didn't think there was a problem, at least not of our making. We thought we were just being Americans on a public road, and we told him so. Since it was my daughter who was being the most American of the three of us, he gestured toward her. On the ride over, he had figured out what to do. "We'll have to handcuff her," he informed me with a straight face. "For officer safety."

To get the flavor of what this guy was trying to tell me, you've got to picture the scene. My daughter is a relatively short, very curvy, sweet-faced, soft-spoken young lady. She is not one of your testosterone-riddled, helmet-wearing, opera-

singing, scary females. Meanwhile, every one of the guys who needed protecting from her could have bench-pressed the patrol car he drove up in. They all had guns strapped to

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*My daughter was a good deal more forthcoming. She told them right up front that she wasn't going to show them any ID, thank you very much, or tell them her name, either.*

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their hips, and one was sporting a brass badge that said Pistol Expert. Another had his Pistol Expert patch sewn permanently onto his uniform.

I still had the digital camera around my neck, and I told the Head of Security that if his men thought they needed to handcuff my daughter to protect their own safety, I was definitely going to get pictures of it.

This did not defuse the situation. Instead, I became the focus of my own little lesson in civics while he pointed out how absolutely forbidden American citizens are to photograph uniformed federal officers in the course of their duties on public property. Then, as a sort of intellectual consolation prize, he explained that he wasn't really worried about my daughter overpowering his men but, "Who knows what she has in her purse?"

When she heard that, she handed them her purse. "You have my permission to search it," she said. Or, at least, she tried to hand them her purse, but nobody would take it. So she laid it on the street.

The purse was about the size of a paperback book, if a paperback book came equipped with a shoulder strap. Lying in the street, it didn't look threatening. But those National Security guys couldn't have stepped around it more gingerly if it had sprouted rattles and fangs. "Pick up your purse, lady," they told my daughter. "Lady. *Pick up your purse.*"

After a while she did.

That ended the threat of exploding purses. And of handcuffs, too. Instead, the National Security People decided to write my daughter a summons. That way, she could explain to a judge why she thought she had the right to be in a public place without having to tell anyone who she was or why she was there. The only thing was, they couldn't fill out the summons without writing in her name.

To everybody's surprise, she agreed to give them her name. On two conditions. First, that they guarantee they would use her name only for the purpose of filling out the citation, not for finding out who she was.

Confronted with a legal hair the United States Supreme Court would have had trouble splitting, the National Security People called another little huddle. Before agreeing to any deals, they announced a few minutes later, they wanted to know what the second condition was.

"Show me the statute you plan to base the summons on," my daughter told them.

That should have been easy. All they had to do was . . . well, what *did* they have to do?

They had a follow-up huddle about it. Then, one of them made another emergency radio call.



Somebody inside the bowels of our darkest, most feared spy agency radioed back a legal opinion. The National Security Security People nodded to themselves when they heard what they needed to do. Then, one of them turned over his ticket pad and showed my daughter what was printed on the back.

What was printed on the back was a list of the eight or ten things NSA people get to write tickets for — things like driving faster than 35, or parking in the wrong place, or driving a motorcycle without a helmet. The back of the pad didn't say anything about taking family portraits on a public road in front of the NSA gate.

What they were allowed to write tickets for seemed pretty clear to us. But the National Security Security People weren't as convinced. While they were discussing among themselves

how to persuade my daughter that the back of their ticket pads really did give them authority to issue her a ticket, she pulled a scrap of paper and a pencil out of her purse and began writing.

Her name, they must have all been thinking. Finally, this is over and we can go back to busting the foreign terrorists trying to take pictures of each other in front of our gate. One of them was so relieved, he even handed her a legal pad. "Here," he said, "no need to use that scrap of paper." Then, as my daughter began to write on the pad, he circled around to look over her shoulder, wanting to be the first person at National Security with the scoop on who she was.

"Lady," he said in an almost plaintive wail when he saw what she was actually writing, "you're supposed to be writing down *your* name. Not *our* names."

## Your National Security Agency Is a Responsible Citizen

On the website of the NSA, along with high quality pictures of the NSA's front gate, there is a web page setting out their commitment to protecting the privacy of American citizens. Reading what they had to say, I came away with the feeling that the people who created their web page are the same ones who hung the sign over the security checkpoint at the Portland International Airport.

Since I do a modest amount of travelling, I spend more time than I'd like looking at that sign while I'm snaking along in line, waiting for my chance to prove my innocence to the lowest-level employees at the Transportation Security Agency. The electronic sign announces in bold letters:

### Your Rights as a Passenger

It continues:

1. You may have your personal search conducted in private.

Good start, I remember thinking the first few dozen times I read that sign. Now, what are my other rights?

2. You may speak to a supervisor.

It could come to that, I have thought more than once. Now, about those other rights.

### Your Rights as a Passenger

the sign says, again.

1. You may have your personal search conducted in private.

2. You may speak to a supervisor.

After 40 or 50 times watching that splashy technology flicker through the same, dreary loop, I began to get it. Those are my rights. I can have my personal search conducted out of the sight of my fellow citizens, where God knows what might happen without John Q. there to keep an eye on the searchers, and if I don't like it, I can have somebody in authority explain to me that that's how it is. And then, no doubt, add my name to the no-fly list alongside Ted Kennedy's name, and Ozzie and Harriet's boy, David's.

The NSA's web page is entitled "Responsible Citizen." I called it up, cynic that I am, thinking it would lay out

the rules that I, as a responsible citizen, am required to follow. I was wrong: the Responsible Citizen the NSA is referring to is none other than the National Security Agency itself. And the responsibilities it's concerned with are its responsibilities to respect the privacy of the rest of us.

In four short paragraphs, the NSA tells us how it goes about this. The very first paragraph lays it on the line:

"Americans expect NSA to conduct its missions within the law. But given the inherently secret nature of those missions, how can Americans be sure the Agency does not invade their privacy?"

Yes!, you say to yourself, the NSA gets it. They really do understand what worries the rest of us.

Next, they set out their complete plan to protect our privacy. The ellipses are part of the text on the website. I haven't left anything out to try to make this article more readable. What you see here is the entire NSA privacy-protection policy.

"The 4th Amendment of the Constitution demands it . . . oversight committees within all three branches of the U.S. government ensure it . . . and NSA employees, as U.S. citizens, have a vested interest in upholding it. Respecting the law is only part of gaining America's trust."

So what, exactly, is the plan to protect our privacy? Maybe it's in the third paragraph:

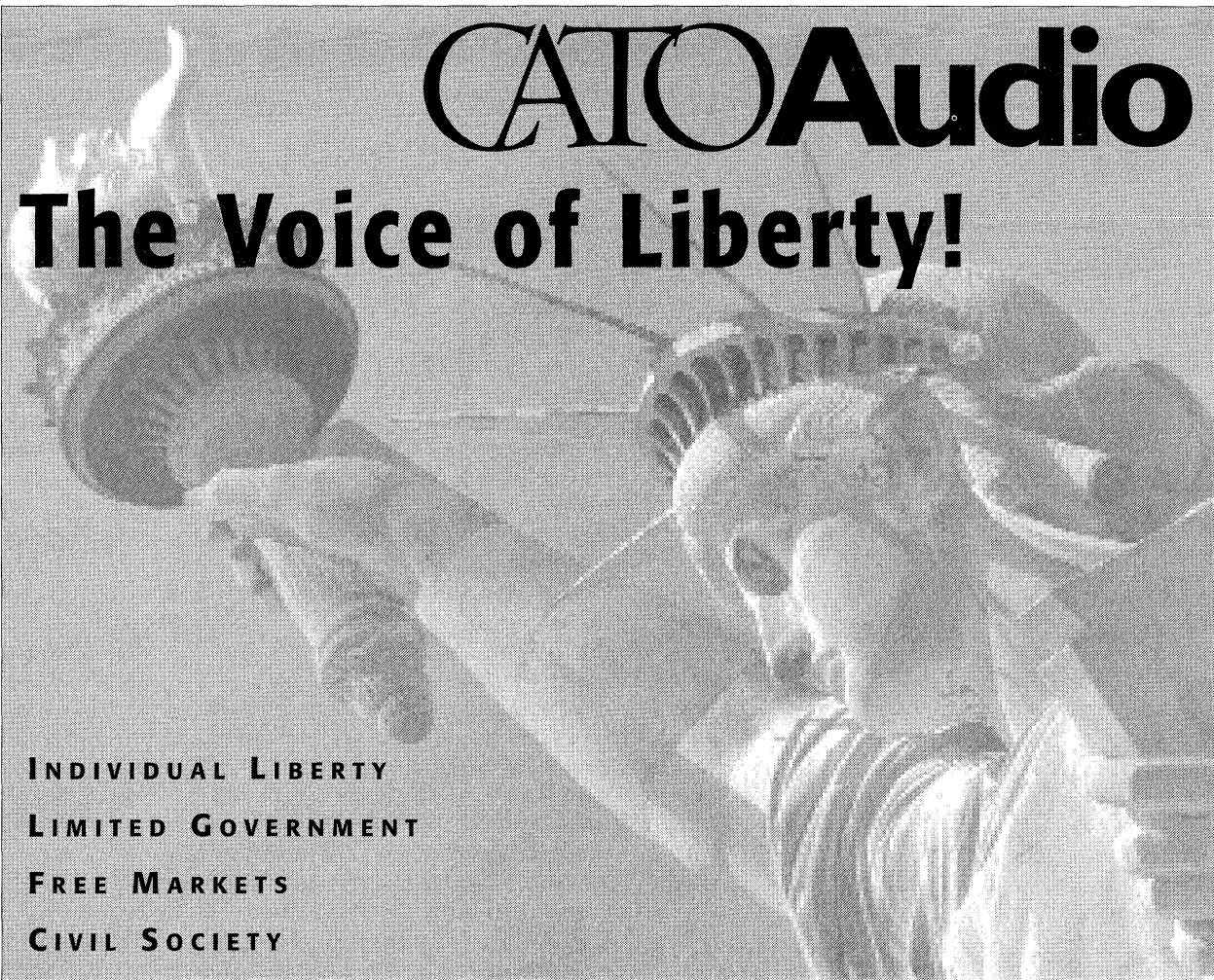
"The American people need to know, within the bounds of operational security, what NSA does and why they do it, and how they work within the intelligence community and the Department of Defense to protect the Nation's freedom."

It's not just privacy, anymore. It's freedom itself. But what is the NSA doing to protect it? You can almost hear the strains of uplifting music as you read the final four sentences of the Responsible Citizen page of the NSA's website:

"With each new day, NSA is writing new and unexpected chapters. The missions have never been clearer. The challenges have never been greater. The stakes have never been higher."

And the freedoms have never been more endangered.

— William E. Merritt



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The reason you are reading this now, the reason the three of us didn't just vanish from Canine Road — locked away from public view, and lawyers and telephones, as enemy combatants — is that my daughter, who had already proved she has a lot more presence of mind than I have, went on to prove that she's also a lot more conversant with the loopy

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*What she would tell them was, "I'm an American citizen lawfully minding my own business on a public road. I don't have to tell you anything."*

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psychology of the bureaucratic brain, and reached into her wallet and pulled out a compromise that got us out of there, and got the NSA security apparatchiks out of the stupid corner they had backed themselves into.

What she pulled out was a plastic card that was the same size and shape, and the same kind of plastic for all I could tell, as a driver's license, or an American Express card, or a United Mileage Plus card, or a Costco Wholesale Executive Member card, or any other piece of plastic ID a citizen might have in her wallet. It was, in fact, a Multnomah County library card.

The front of a Multnomah County library card lists the branch libraries. On the back is the card-holder's signature attesting, "I accept responsibility for all materials charged on this card." And that's it. Nowhere is there a picture. Nowhere is there a printed version of the cardholder's name, address, rank, serial number, or any other information to tie the card to any particular human being. But the National Security Agency's Security People were happy to pretend it was a real and bona fide piece of identification.

One of them disappeared into a patrol car with the library card. A few seconds later, he reappeared and handed it to the head of security, who returned it to my daughter. "You can go, now," the head of security announced, all smiles.

Anybody else would have gone.

My daughter wasn't so hotfooted. "Why," she demanded before she would budge, "are you letting me go?"

"We checked you out." The head of security was still smiling. "You're okay."

"You checked me out? What did you check me out against?"

"Our database." Now go, you could almost hear him thinking to himself. Just go.

I was with the head of security on that one, but my daughter wasn't quite through. "You have a *database* on American citizens?"

"Oh no, lady. Nothing like that." The head of security started to back up. "Not on Americans."

"No data bases, unh *unnnh*," the other guys were coming to his defense. "Not on Americans."

"No, ma'am. No databases here."

"Not on Americans, that's for sure." By now they were all backing toward the gate. "No way."

"Not at the NSA."

"Not us. No databases *here*."

As the rapidly developing criminal mind of my son put it a few minutes later while we were driving away, "Gee, Dad. If we ever did want to break into the National Security Agency, we've sure found out how to create a diversion."

Still, I'd feel a lot better about what happened that afternoon if I had a better fix on what went on in the patrol car with my daughter's library card. Were those guys really as incompetent as they seemed? That doesn't sound right. The easy explanation is that they were basically decent folks who realized pretty quickly that she was no threat to national security, but didn't have any way to turn off the nonsense they had turned on until she came up with something to give them the excuse to let us go. In a lot of ways, that fits. They certainly seemed decent enough. They didn't raise their voices. They didn't shove anybody. They didn't really even do any physical menacing, outside of carrying guns and looking big. For the most part, they just talked to us one-on-one, keeping a comfortable social space, while the guys who weren't talking watched from a few yards away in case any of us made any sudden moves. So it's easy to believe they were looking for a way to end the standoff.

The other explanation, which I don't think I buy, is a good deal more sinister. Still, one thing everybody has heard about the NSA is that your explanation can never be sinister enough to capture the reality of what goes on in there, so there might be something to it. The thing is, there's another bit of identification on Multnomah County library cards, one that I didn't think about until later. There's a bar code that has enough personal information to let you check out books. It's hard to imagine that NSA patrol cars are equipped with bar-code scanners, or the sort of optical character readers that would let them check my daughter's signature, or are somehow so tied into the library systems around the country that they can run a scan on a library card and come out with everything they need to know a few seconds later. But, if any patrol cars anywhere on the planet could do this, the NSA would have them.

I felt bad about losing the pictures. I would have really liked photographs of the National Security Agency's gate. But, as the head of security at National Security took pains to point out, pictures of the gate might reveal something to the

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*They told my daughter they would be keeping her in a holding cell while she rethought her opinion of what Americans can and cannot do on public roads.*

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enemies of our nation. Besides, some of the pictures had the NSA building in the background, and who knew what terrorists might learn from something like that. Still, if I had only hung tough, I told myself, I might have gotten away with the pictures. Or, maybe, I would have gotten my camera smashed. Or, perhaps, like the last dozen or so people who tried the same stunt, nobody would have ever heard from any of us again — at least until a few months later when my kids and I were featured on an episode of "Without a Trace,"

*continued on page 53*

# How Urban Planners Cause Congestion and Death

*by Randal O'Toole and Michael Cunneen*

For planners, “pedestrian-friendly” means streets conducive to more accidents, property damage, and deaths.

Converting one-way streets to two-way traffic is one of the latest fads of urban planning. Such conversions will increase congestion, pollution, and traffic accidents, but planners ignore these problems and talk about how they will lead to more “vibrant” streets, whatever that means. The debate over one-way streets in Austin, Columbus, Denver, and many other cities calls attention to recent urban transportation trends as planners have gained power at the expense of traffic engineers.

A few decades ago, engineers made most urban transportation plans and decisions. Their first priority was safety and their second priority was efficient movement of traffic. The engineers carefully studied the effects of any changes or improvements they made to see if they were good or bad, and they published their results for other engineers to see.

“Practical Traffic Engineering for Small Communities,” published in 1958 by Pennsylvania State University, offers numerous examples of the engineers’ method. The guide presents hundreds of case studies asking such questions as:

- Will traffic signals reduce pedestrian accidents?
- Are there more accidents where there is parallel parking than where there is angle parking?
- Will putting grooves in pavement reduce accidents?

Notice the heavy emphasis on *reducing accidents*, in keeping with the engineers’ first priority of safety. Improving traffic flows and reducing congestion are important, of course, but only if they can be done without reducing (and preferably by increasing) safety.

Most of the studies began with the engineers gathering

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data for a year or more. Then some action — installation of a traffic signal, grooving of pavement, etc. — was taken and, sometimes after an adjustment period, data were gathered again. The data from the two periods were compared.

Sometimes two similar streets — say, one with parallel parking and one with angle parking — were compared. Sometimes a control street was used for comparison, or perhaps the city as a whole was used as a control. For example, accidents on a particular street might decline after the pavement was grooved even though accidents increased in the city as a whole. In any case, the point was to evaluate carefully whether the action produced benefits and perhaps whether those benefits were worth the cost.

After World War II, Americans who lived in cities began a rapid movement to the suburbs, and they were followed by retail shopping malls. Downtown retailers worried that this competition would have an advantage over them because the suburbs were less congested.

Traffic engineers offered a solution: convert two-way streets to one-way. This would produce several benefits.

First, one-way streets with the same number of lanes as two-way streets can move 20% to 50% more cars because of fewer turn delays. According to one estimate, seven lanes of a two-way street are needed to move as many vehicles as four lanes on a one-way grid because people turning left or

right impose fewer delays on people behind them.

Second, traffic signals on a one-way grid can easily be coordinated so drivers can proceed at a continuous speed without stopping frequently for red lights. Third, as engineers would prove over and over again, one-way streets are safer for both auto users and pedestrians. Finally, because traffic moves more smoothly on one-way streets, they produce less air pollution than two-way streets; frequent stops and starts are a major source of pollution. This point became important after 1970.

One study found that converting two-way streets to one-way led to a 19% increase in the amount of traffic the street could handle, and that the average speed was 37% faster. This wasn't because the maximum speed limit on the one-way streets was any greater than on two-way streets, but because drivers experienced 60% fewer stops. To top it off, there was a 38% decrease in accidents.

Engineers reported similar results in city after city:

- Portland found 51% fewer accidents at intersections and 37% fewer between intersections.
- The Oregon State Highway Department found that one-way streets in a dozen Oregon cities, ranging from Astoria to Eugene, led to an average of 10% fewer accidents and 23% more traffic — meaning the accident rate per million vehicle miles declined by 27%.
- Sacramento found 14% fewer accidents on streets converted to one-way operation despite a 17% increase in accidents in the city as a whole.

In Sacramento, there were 163% more pedestrian accidents on two-way streets than on one-way streets. In Portland, Ore.; Hollywood, Fla.; and Raleigh, N.C., the pedestrian accident rate was double on two-way streets. One study called one-way streets "the most effective urban counter-measure" to pedestrian accidents.

Many downtown businesses initially resisted one-way streets, worrying that customers going in the other direction would miss them or not bother to drive around the block to shop. But after some streets were converted, most businesses saw the benefits of increased traffic — meaning more customers — and became believers.

"Of course, there were some retailers who opposed" one-way streets, wrote the director of the Portland Retail Trade Bureau in 1953. "Today, those very same people would not go back to two-way traffic." Around the same time, the

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*Because traffic moves more smoothly on one-way streets, they produce less air pollution than two-way streets.*

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director of the Retail Merchants Association of Sacramento wrote that, while there was some initial skepticism, Sacramento businesses "are now almost 100% in favor of" one-way streets. "There was a feeling on the part of filling station and apartment owners that the one-way system on 16th would hurt their business. This has proved to be the exact opposite. Business has improved in this area and prop-

erty values have risen substantially."

In 1949, the Traffic Engineering Department of Fresno, Calif., made a nationwide survey of cities with one-way streets. A questionnaire to traffic engineers and police came back with unanimous responses in favor of one-way streets. This was so striking that the city worried that "officials might have been prejudiced." So it sent a second survey to merchant associations, and it came back almost as favorable: only 10% reported opposition to one-way streets.

Engineers in Sacramento and Olympia, Wash., compared retail sales before and after one-way streets. Olympia found that businesses on one-way streets were doing better than comparable businesses on two-way streets. Sacramento also found that businesses grew faster (or, in some cases, shrank less — the study was done at the beginning of a recession) than similar businesses in the city as a whole.

The only dissenting voices seem to have come, ironically, from auto dealers and possibly some other auto-related businesses. No study ever found that one-way streets hurt these businesses, but some auto-related businesses continued to resist one-way streets. "The only vehement opposition we have had lately," said a Portland merchant association, "has been an automobile concern that happens to be on a through artery and still feels that [switching from two-way to] one-way streets has hurt its business."

In the 1960s, a flurry of books appeared that criticized automobiles and highways. Ralph Nader charged that poor auto design led to many fatal accidents. Others worried that air pollution was darkening skies and making people sick. There was substance to both claims, which led to federal legislation requiring safer and cleaner cars. The legislation proved successful. Fatality rates per million vehicle miles today are 75% lower than they were a half century ago. Total auto emissions have declined by more than 60% even though we drive 2.5 times as many miles as we did in 1970.

Despite these successes, animosity toward the automobile has only increased. One reason for this is the inflation of the 1970s, during which highway construction costs grew dramatically but were not matched by growth in highway revenues. Since most highway user fees came from gas taxes, which were based on the number of gallons sold rather than the value of those gallons, the revenues did not grow with inflation. Though states and the federal government raised gas tax rates, they lost the race to inflation and more fuel-efficient cars: after adjusting for inflation, auto drivers today pay only half as much gas tax for every mile they drive as they paid in 1960.

As a result, highway construction after 1970 could not keep pace with demand. This meant urban roads got more and more congested. Yet people continued to drive more, with per capita driving growing by about 2% per year. While this growth briefly slowed during the energy crises of the 1970s, the long-term response to higher gas prices was that people bought more fuel-efficient cars and then drove more than ever. This further reduced gas-tax revenues so that, after adjusting for inflation, revenue per vehicle-mile in 2000 was only half the revenue per vehicle-mile in 1960.

When roads became too congested, many people drove at different times, found different routes, or used other modes of transportation. This meant there was a large pent-up



demand for highways during peak periods, so when a new highway did open, it was almost immediately congested as people changed times, routes, or modes — a phenomenon economist Anthony Downs calls “triple convergence.” This led to the myth that “building roads simply leads to more

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*Having failed in their efforts to close streets to autos, planners began trying to reduce auto flows through various forms of so-called traffic calming.*

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driving,” when in fact the increased driving was taking place whether the new roads were built or not — just not at times or on routes most convenient to drivers.

One result of the increasing criticism of the automobile was that transportation engineers began to lose the favor of city officials. Elected officials turned instead to urban planners, who promised a more holistic view of transportation.

Urban planners wanted to assess the effects of transportation on land use, air quality, housing, employment locations, the size of retail shops, and a host of other variables. This made their job far more complex than the engineers’ simple criteria of safety and efficient traffic flows. Attempts to assess too many variables, weighed using different and incompatible types of measurement, quickly became overwhelming. To make their jobs more manageable, planners resorted to following fads.

One fad was to “revitalize” downtowns by closing streets to auto traffic and turning them into pedestrian malls in a conscious attempt to compete with suburban shopping malls. Starting in the mid-1960s and accelerating in the early 1970s, more than 70 U.S. and Canadian cities tried this out.

Far from revitalizing retail districts, most of the pedestrian malls killed them. Vacancy rates soared, and any pedestrians using the malls found themselves walking among boarded up shops or shops that had been downgraded to thrift stores or other low-rent operations. Despite these failures, cities continued to create pedestrian malls as late as 1980, and might still be doing so were it not for intense opposition from retailers who had seen the failures elsewhere.

By 2002, more than three out of four pedestrian malls had been partly or entirely reopened to traffic. In most cases, this led to an immediate and often dramatic decline in retail vacancy rates. Five more cities were considering such reopenings.

Only nine pedestrian malls (12%) were considered successful, and seven of these were in university or resort towns, which have higher-than-usual concentrations of pedestrians. In other words, malls could not create pedestrians out of auto drivers. They only worked when the pedestrians were already there.

Why did it take planners 15 years to realize that pedestrian malls rarely worked? Why did it take another 20 years for most cities to reopen their streets to autos? One answer is that planners are resistant to reality. They told themselves

and everyone else that their projects were successful no matter how badly they turned out in reality.

Having failed in their efforts to close streets to autos, planners began trying to reduce auto flows through various forms of so-called traffic calming. This means putting barriers in roads that force cars to slow down or turning one-way streets back to two-way operation.

Planners argue that converting one-way to two-way streets will make them more pedestrian friendly and better for business. Not surprisingly, they offer no evidence for these claims, since they were disproved by engineers 50 years ago. But few people remembered the benefits gained from converting two-way to one-way streets, so many believed the planners.

As early as 1976, Denver officials considered converting several one-way streets to two-way operation. The city’s director of traffic engineering wrote a lengthy memo predicting that this action would increase accidents, congestion, and air pollution. He could find no evidence to support claims that property values on two-way streets were greater than on one-way streets. He concluded that “the benefits to the total neighborhood [of converting to two way] would be negligible.”

The report may have delayed one-way conversions in Denver, but it did not stop them. About a decade later, Denver converted several one-way streets to two-way operation.

A 1990 review of the conversions found that virtually all of the engineer’s predictions had come true. Accidents increased an average of 37% “as is expected with two-way operations.” Congestion increased as well, as did the pollution that accompanies congestion.

The report claimed that downgrading some one-way collector streets to two-way local streets “strengthened the residential status of those streets.” It did not provide any evidence for this or even offer a way to measure it, but, of course, any local street will be more attractive to residences than busy collector streets, regardless of whether they are

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*Planners demonize the automobile for killing people and polluting the air, then promote transportation policies that increase accidents and air pollution.*

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one- or two-way. The only benefit the report could find for turning other one-way collector streets to two-way collectors was “a perceived preference for two-way operations” (emphasis in the original). Again, the report did not document the supposed preference or suggest how it could be measured. Denver continued to convert one-way streets to two-way.

Other cities have gone through similar experiences. In 1993, Indianapolis converted a major route to two-way operation. After three years, accidents on that route had increased 33%. In 1996, Lubbock, Texas converted several one-way streets to two-way. Two years later, monitoring found a 12% decrease in traffic on those routes, but 25% more accidents causing 34% more property damage.

Despite these results, proposals to convert one-way streets to two-way are being taken seriously in Austin, Berkeley, Cambridge, Chattanooga, Cincinnati, Columbus, Louisville, Palo Alto, Sacramento, San Jose, Seattle, St. Petersburg, and Tampa, among other cities. Though the benefits are meager — and may be limited to a “perceived preference” for two-way streets — the proposed conversions are costly:

- St. Petersburg estimates that restriping, signal changes, and other changes required to convert streets from one-way to two-way cost more than \$140,000 per intersection.
- Conversion of nine one-way streets to two-way in downtown Austin is expected to cost \$15 million.
- San Jose spent \$15.4 million converting ten streets to two-way.
- A plan to turn a one-way couplet in Hamilton, Ontario to two two-way streets is estimated to cost about US\$2 million.

Conversions are costly in other ways as well, namely in terms of accidents, congestion, and pollution. Austin planners admit that their plan of converting nine streets will increase traffic delays by 23% and downtown air pollution by 10% to 13%.

Conversions of one-way streets to two-way are also often accompanied by other traffic calming measures, including reducing the number of lanes of auto traffic, narrowing lane widths, removing right-turn or left-turn lanes, and adding median strips or other barriers to streets.

As with two-way streets, these actions will increase accidents, congestion, and pollution. To the extent that they succeed in “slowing” traffic, they will also succeed in killing businesses that depend on a regular flow of customers. Even if slowing traffic were a sensible goal, it can easily be done on one-way streets by simply retiming traffic signals, thus maintaining safety and reducing delays caused by cars turning left.

Clearly, planners and engineers think in dramatically different ways. Engineers think in terms of safety and efficiency. Planners demonize the automobile for killing people and polluting the air, then promote transportation policies that increase accidents and air pollution. Engineers experiment and publish their findings. Planners implement policies and declare victory no matter what the outcome.

Planners apparently believe they are thinking on a higher level. “A pedestrian-oriented hierarchy of transportation promotes density, safety, economic viability, and sustainability,” say planners in Austin, Texas. While the first three claims are wrong or at least questionable, the most important word is “sustainability,” which in transportation planning is a code word for “anything but automobiles.”

To support a program that involved converting downtown one-way streets to two-way streets, Austin planners convinced the city council to pass a resolution identifying a “transportation hierarchy” in which pedestrians were given first priority, public transit second, bicycles third, and private motor vehicles last. “The safety and comfort of pedestrians is of greater concern than the convenience of a driver,” says the resolution. This assumes that pedestrian safety and comfort is incompatible with the convenience of drivers. At least in the case of one-way streets, the reverse is true.

Planners fantasize that mixing housing with commercial uses will lead to more walking and less driving as people find

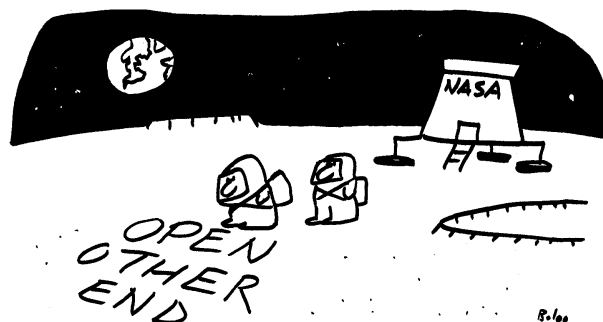
stores, restaurants, and even jobs within walking distance of home. While there is a market for this kind of development — mainly among young singles or childless couples — it can be quickly saturated. Planners try to attract more people to such developments through subsidies, or forcing more people to live in such developments by using urban-growth boundaries or other land-use regulation to drive up the cost of single-family housing. There is no evidence this will lead people to reduce the amount of driving they do.

Portland, Ore., for example, boasts of the Pearl District, just north of downtown, where several thousand housing and office units have been developed in the past five years. To attract people to the area, the city spent more than \$170 million on subsidies, including \$50 million on a streetcar connecting the district with downtown.

“Yet during the peak commuting hours of 6:30 a.m. to 8:30 a.m., the streetcar averages fewer than 120 passengers per hour,” says John Charles of Portland’s Cascade Policy Institute. “The most common sight in the Pearl District during those hours is an underground garage door opening for another private vehicle to emerge from an upscale loft or condo complex.”

One study by smart-growth advocates found that people in neighborhoods that were denser, more pedestrian friendly, and had better transit service drove less than people in other neighborhoods. The authors concluded that this proved that smart-growth planning reduces driving. They do not consider the possibility that such neighborhoods attract people who want to drive less, leaving other neighborhoods with more people who drive a lot. This alternative hypothesis is supported by their own data, which shows that, of the three urban areas they compared, the one with the highest density, most pedestrian-friendly design, and most intensive transit service also had the most per capita driving.

On just about any ground imaginable — safety, congestion, pollution, and effects on most businesses — one-way grids and one-way couplets are superior to two-way streets for moving people and vehicles. The idea that building pedestrian-deadly environments can create pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods is a planning fantasy. Cities that want to create livable, safe environments for pedestrians and businesses should return transportation planning to the engineers, whose programs are grounded in reality, not fantasy. In the long run, American cities need to rethink their support for urban planning. Why should cities employ members of a profession that advocates policies that reduce safety, increase pollution, and waste people’s time? It is time to return to the methods and vision of the engineer. □



# Reviews

**"The Progress Paradox: How Life Gets Better While People Feel Worse,"** by Gregg Easterbrook. Random House, 2003, 400 pages.

**"The Paradox of Choice: Why More Is Less,"** by Barry Schwartz. Ecco, 2004, 288 pages.

**"Happiness Is Overrated,"** by Raymond Angelo Belliotti. Rowman and Littlefield, 2004, 192 pages.

## *Life, Liberty, and the Treadmill*

David Ramsay Steele

I can remember the day I learned to ride a bike. I must have been about eight. In those days, at least in that part of England, there were no such things as training wheels and the smallest bicycles had twenty-four-inch wheels. I just kept pushing, wobbling, and gliding along, and suddenly, I could do it!

The sun came out from behind a cloud and the entire world shone with warm and radiant delight. Every day for the next few weeks, I spent hours just cycling up and down or round and round in circles. Could there be anything to beat this?

Six months later I was still pleased I could ride a bike, and I still got some direct fulfillment out of this activity, but I would not have dreamed of riding around just for the sheer pleasure of it — not for more than a couple of minutes, anyhow. Cycling had become about 98 percent instrumental, a way to get from one place to another, and only about two percent intrinsically gratifying.

This well-known phenomenon,

called "adaptation," is key to the thinking of psychologists who maintain that our level of happiness is a "set point" to which we always tend to return, largely irrespective of our circumstances. Typically, we look forward to some consummation, and when we achieve it, we're pleased. From that moment on, the glow of gratification dims like dying embers. It's essential to being human that the joy resulting from the attainment of any goal starts to fade as soon as it begins.

Most people believe that if their real income were to be suddenly doubled, they would feel a lot happier. And so they would, for the first week or two. After that, the happiness would have perceptibly diminished, and six months or a year later, they would be only slightly happier than before their financial improvement.

And it works in reverse. People who go blind or deaf, lose their limbs, or become paralyzed are usually acutely miserable for a month or two, after which the gloom begins to evaporate. A year later, they are approximately as happy as they were before

they were afflicted. Research indicates that people with extreme physical disabilities are, on average, slightly happier than the general population.

We were made by millions of years of natural selection of genes. From a gene's point of view, the happiness of the organism which temporarily houses the gene is not an end in itself. The gene "wants" its host organism to reproduce, which entails surviving for at least a while, the longer the better if repeated reproduction is possible.

It's advantageous for pleasure to be associated with successful action, and pleasure often tends to promote happiness. But pleasure too intense and too prolonged might be detrimental. If we now have something we have wanted, and we know we can keep it, what would be the point of perpetual euphoria? It could distract us from the immediate tasks of survival and reproduction. Continual misery would be pointlessly distracting too. It's entirely authentic, as well as poignant, that the slave-labor camp inmate-protagonist at the end of the harrowing "One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich," reflects

that, all in all, this has been a pretty good day.

### Is Progress Pointless?

All this is straightforward, and not even controversial, but it does raise an interesting issue with political implications. Liberals, and especially that sub-species of liberals known as libertarians, tend to accept as a premise that *it's good for people to be able to get what they want*. If asked why, we are apt to say, with the framers of the United States Constitution, that only then can people pursue happiness. This can easily lead to the reasoning: *it's good for people to be able to get what they want, because if they get what they want, they will be happier than if they don't*.

But what if having more of what we want does not ultimately add to our happiness? What if the pursuit of happiness is a "hedonic treadmill," as some psychologists have contended? In recent years a lot of research has gone into finding out how happy people actually are and what makes them happy or unhappy. Some of the conclusions of this research suggest that increasing real incomes — increasing ability to get what we want — does not make us very much happier, once we

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*There prevails a strong tradition for intellectuals to believe that ordinary people are incapable of happiness, or at least of "true" happiness, as well as being wretched and not even truly alive.*

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have passed a certain minimum level of comfort. What, then, is the point of further industrial and technological progress?

This question has been raised in a number of recent writings, most influentially in Lane's book, "The Loss of Happiness in Market Democracies."<sup>\*</sup> Easterbrook's work is a more popular treatment of the same issues. Both Lane and Easterbrook start from

the finding that Americans in the 1990s were no more happy, and perhaps even a bit less happy, than they were in the 1950s, although real incomes had way more than doubled in that period. Lane refers to the "paradox of apparently growing unhappiness in the midst of increasing plenty" (Lane, p. 4), a theme echoed in Easterbrook's more popular work. Contrast this with the 1930s complaint of "poverty in the midst of plenty." It's hard to uncover real old-fashioned poverty in 21st-century America, but it's easy to find any amount of dissatisfaction.

Ascertaining how happy people are is mainly a question of asking them, and it may be doubted whether this is always perfectly reliable. However, the results of numerous questionnaires, painstakingly designed and scrupulously interpreted, exhibit a consistency, a stability, and a clear pattern which suggest that people's happiness self-ratings are generally quite accurate.<sup>\*</sup> Various attempts have been made to check the results (for instance by comparing individuals' self-ratings with the ratings of those individuals by people who know them) and they look quite solid. I'm convinced that the data emerging from these studies do indeed measure happiness (or SWB, subjective well-being, as it's known in the trade).

If these studies of SWB are at all accurate, then there has been little, if any, gain in happiness in advanced industrial countries of the West over the past half-century. In the United States, people are no happier than they were in the 1950s. To be more precise, the percentage reporting themselves as just "happy" is close to identical in the 1990s and the 1950s, while the percentage in the "very happy" category has fallen slightly, and the percentage classified as "depressed" has increased.

### The Specter of Futility

Easterbrook starts out with impressive boldness and clarity. He makes two assertions: (1) that in almost every measurable respect, life for nearly everyone in the Western world has been getting better at a spectacular rate, and (2) that people's happiness or

satisfaction with their lives has stayed about the same or slightly diminished. Both of these claims are well documented by an accumulation of interest-

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*The bigoted "Just Say No" zealots of our day strive to replace drugs which give people enjoyment with drugs which deaden people's sensibilities.*

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ing and often surprising facts, which Easterbrook presents skillfully and entertainingly.

Easterbrook poses his "paradox" bravely, but as his argument proceeds, its thrust falters. Just over halfway through the book, Easterbrook switches to throwing out a number of conjectures about influences which might account for the loss of happiness, along with his policy solutions. He voices the usual leftist gripes about consumer capitalism, though the relation of these to the findings of SWB research may be tenuous. He is furious at greedy CEOs, and favors raising the minimum wage, imposing universal health insurance, and increasing foreign aid. These chapters are still well-written and they contain nuggets of fascinating information, but they do not resolve or even seriously confront the ominous "paradox" he has laid out at the beginning.

Easterbrook, like Lane, makes the most of the startling juxtaposition of declining happiness and increasing affluence, and doesn't want to spoil a good story by drawing too much attention to considerations which might blur the stark drama of this incongruous outcome. Neither author gives the reader even an outline of the basic facts from which a few items have been plucked for close attention.

Lane actually volunteers that he does not place any reliance on the declining SWB trend, and wouldn't be surprised to see it reversed.<sup>\*</sup> This

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<sup>\*</sup>Robert E. Lane, "The Loss of Happiness in Market Democracies" (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

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<sup>\*</sup>Ed Diener and Eunkook M. Suh, eds., "Culture and Subjective Well-Being" (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2000), pp. 5-7.

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<sup>\*</sup>"My argument does not depend on the evidence of growing unhappiness in the post-war period (which may be a mere blip in a long-term curve)" (Lane, p. 5). The rhetoric

admission contrasts strangely with the strident rhetoric of *decline* and *loss* in Lane's book. Granted, the fact that the amount of happiness has been roughly the same and has not increased, while incomes have made spectacular gains, is notable enough to be well worth discussing. But if we take "The Loss of Happiness in Market Democracies" and substitute some word like "conservation" or "stability" for "loss," it would not have the requisite quality of "man bites dog." The same applies to Easterbrook's subtitle, "How Life Gets Better While People Feel Worse." "How Life Gets Better While People Feel About the Same" would be more defensible, and still quite intriguing, though less of a shock.

### Most People Are Happy!

By far the biggest and most imposing fact to emerge from the empirical studies of SWB is that a substantial majority of people in advanced capitalist cultures are happy.\* In Easterbrook's and Lane's books, and a number of other writings, there is so much emphasis on the disquieting fact that the amount of happiness has not increased, and may even have slightly declined, that one is apt to lose sight of the mundane fact that *over 80% of people in advanced industrial countries rate themselves as more happy than unhappy.*†

This is worth emphasizing because it is so frequently denied. Down the centuries, innumerable sages have opined that most people were not happy. In his 1930 classic, "The Conquest of Happiness," Bertrand

of "growing unhappiness and depression" is heavy throughout his book, but if his argument really does not depend on this, it must depend on the mere fact that there is some remaining unhappiness in "market democracies," even though this is less than in any other kind of social order.

\*A good source for recent findings in this area is Diener and Suh, which I draw upon freely in the text. Useful background for some of the psychological and methodological issues is Daniel Kahneman, Ed Diener, and Norbert Schwartz, eds., "Well-Being: The Foundations of Hedonic Psychology" (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1999).

†Eighty-five percent of people in the U.S. are above the neutral mid-point between unhappiness and happiness (Ed Diener and C. Diener, "Most People Are Happy," *Psychological Science* 7 [1996]), and the corresponding number for several European countries is higher.

Russell asserted that very few people were happy, a fact he inferred from the expressions on the faces of people in the street.\* From all that we know now, it seems inescapable that the majority of the readers of that book were happier than its author, at least in the 1930s. (In his 90s, convinced that the world was overwhelmingly likely to be destroyed in a thermonuclear conflagration, Russell became extremely happy, illustrating both adaptation to a set point regardless of perceived circumstances and the common pattern of individuals growing steadily more serene with age.)

Thomas Szasz has famously defined happiness as "[a]n imaginary condition, formerly attributed by the living to the dead, now usually attributed by adults to children and by children to adults."† Most readers take this as an amusing overstatement of a truism. There prevails a strong tradition for intellectuals to believe that ordinary people are incapable of happiness, or at least of "true" happiness, as well as being wretched and not even truly alive.‡

### Facts About Happiness

Another downplayed fact is that *people in rich countries are, on average, much happier than people in poor countries.*§ How many readers of Lane or Easterbrook come away with a clear grasp of the fact that "market democracies" are way more conducive to happiness than any other known form of society?

Surely it is in the light of these huge general findings — that the great majority of people are happy and that people in developed countries are happier than people in less developed countries — that we ought to look at the extremely interesting possibility that aggregate happiness in the United States may have declined slightly.

\*Bertrand Russell, "The Conquest of Happiness" (New York: Liveright, 1930), p. 13.

†"The Untamed Tongue" (Chicago: Open Court, 1990), p. 139, though this *bon mot* had appeared in print earlier.

‡See John Carey, "The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice among the Literary Intelligentsia, 1880–1939" (Chicago: Academy Chicago, 2002).

§Diener and Oishi, in Diener and Suh, pp. 198–201.

Here are some other assorted facts to emerge from the SWB research.

Older people have higher SWB than younger people,\* a fact all the more significant because it is an aggregate outcome which presumably has to include gains in SWB more than enough to compensate for some cases of acute misery caused by terminal disease. Men are almost exactly as happy as women, though women experience more extremes of happiness and misery (one of the exceptional cases where women go to extremes more than men do). American blacks are just about as happy as American whites.

Consistently cohabiting married people of either sex are happier than the divorced, the separated, or the never-married. Analysis of the data suggests that the causality runs in both directions: being married makes you more happy and being happy makes you get and stay married. Churchgoers are slightly happier than non-churchgoers. Ethnic diversity within a country is not associated with higher or lower happiness.

The happiest populations in the world are the people in Scandinavia, Netherlands, and Switzerland, though the United States and most other wealthy countries are not very far behind. From all that we know, it seems a reasonable surmise that the

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*Substituting these newfangled concoctions for the tried and trusted intake of good old alcohol, good old tobacco, good old cocaine, and good old opiates does not increase happiness.*

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present populations of Scandinavia, Netherlands, and Switzerland are very close to being, and may actually be, the happiest sizable populations that have ever existed in human history, and not very distant from the maximum

\*According to some studies, older people are slightly less "happy" but more "satisfied with life." SWB usually averages different entities like this. I skip over these distinctions here.

aggregate happiness attainable in any large population, absent some future biological or other revolutionary breakthrough.

Both within and between countries, high-income people are happier than low-income people, though the advantage becomes very slight above a quite modest level of income.

*Veenhoven classified three kinds of freedom: economic, political, and private. He found that all are correlated with happiness, but economic freedom much more so than political or private freedom.*

Although "more money" is definitely associated with high SWB, individuals preoccupied with money-making tend to be less happy than those who seek fulfillment in other ways. Gregarious, extroverted types are happier than loners.

There are wide variations in SWB among different populations, independent of income. Some very poor tribal cultures, such as the Masai of East Africa, are not far below the affluent world in SWB, while within that affluent world there are very sizable differences between countries. The populations of Japan, Italy, and France are distinctly less happy than their level of income would predict. People in the Irish Republic have been consistently happier than people in Germany, which until recently had twice Ireland's real income per head. (Rapid growth in Ireland and slow growth in Germany have been closing the gap in incomes.) Adjusting for income, Hispanic people are the happiest broad segment of world population, while Asians are the least happy.

#### THE DRIVER

Good-plus reading copy of the rare 1922 novel of a capitalist named Galt by paleo-libertarian Galt Garrett. \$95 postage paid. Mail to Bruce Ramsey, 411 N. 61st St. Seattle WA 98103.

Within countries, very low-income people are on average decidedly less happy than people of modest income or above, but high-income people are not tremendously happier than middle-income people. The very rich are indeed happier than the average for the population, but only by a small margin.

A common prejudice among intellectuals is that people generally want higher incomes primarily because this will improve their status relative to other people. While many writers are so convinced of this theory that they often assert it in blithe disregard of the facts, the SWB research does not afford the theory much comfort. For instance, poor people in rich countries are decidedly happier than poor people in poor countries. In fact, living in a rich or poor country has a stronger effect on your SWB than being rich or poor yourself. "Inequality" does not reduce happiness (Diener and Oishi, in Diener and Suh, pp. 205-07).<sup>\*</sup> Detailed studies show that, for example, people of moderate income are equally happy whether they live in predominantly poor or predominantly affluent areas.

A view compatible with the data is that if you're poor, more income will enable you to become appreciably happier, but once a quite modest level of income has been achieved, further increases will bring very little greater happiness. (Money does buy happiness, but for most people in advanced industrial cultures, it takes a lot of money to buy a tiny increment of happiness.) This general result could be explained in a number of different ways. For instance, it could be that all the components of real income begin to plateau, as regards conduciveness to happiness, once a modest income level has been reached. Or it could be that one or two key components of income do all the heavy lifting with respect to happiness, and once consumption of these goods has reached a certain point, any further income increments go to goods which don't add to long-run happiness. As with so

<sup>\*</sup>The data actually show that there is more happiness with greater inequality. Diener and Oishi decide to abstain from any casual inference on this point.

many puzzles in this area, empirical work may soon provide a definitive answer.

#### Liberty Promotes Happiness

It used to be thought that people in "individualist" cultures are happier than people in "collectivist" cultures, but one major study has failed to confirm this and it is now in doubt, though most SWB theorists still seem to hold to it. Individualism and collectivism in this context do not relate to the system of industrial ownership or administration. They are terms employed by sociologists and social psychologists to distinguish cultures which value individual self-realization from those which lay more emphasis on group solidarity. Thus, Japan and South Korea are classed as collectivist cultures.

At any rate, people in individualist countries, contrary to the folklore of intellectuals, don't appear to be any less happy than people in collectivist countries (though it could reasonably be contended that people in collectivist cultures would be more inhibited about highlighting their own feelings, and would therefore tend to have a downward bias in rating their own happiness).

Freedom generates happiness. Veenhoven classified three kinds of freedom: economic, political, and pri-

*Rich or poor, people feel better if they are more free. They do not suffer by being cut loose from traditional folkways or from the kindly direction of their betters.*

vate. He found that all are correlated with happiness, but economic freedom much more so than political or private freedom. Veenhoven candidly remarks: "This is a pleasant surprise for the right-wing free market lobby but a disappointment for liberals like me" (Veenhoven, in Diener and Suh, p. 276).

Economic freedom does not merely contribute to happiness by



raising incomes; controlling for income, economic freedom still clearly promotes SWB, a fact that seems to puzzle Veenhoven. To most people economic freedom is the very substance of their lives as creative, purposive beings. Compared to the option of living and working where you please, at whatever occupation you wish, doing what you choose to do without permission from anyone on high, the liberty to vote in elections or to pass out leaflets on the street is, for the great majority of folks, rather a minor consideration, especially in poor countries.

As Veenhoven suggests, the strong positive association between freedom, especially "economic" freedom, and happiness will very likely turn out to be even stronger, because his results are heavily affected by the temporary situation in post-Communist countries, which possess some freshly-won freedoms but are currently undergoing a historically brief, acutely painful industrial transition.

Veenhoven's results refute the familiar conservative contention that freedom reduces human well-being by atomizing individuals, by inducing anomie, by imposing a crushing burden of responsibilities, by removing the security of fixed status, or by offering a vertiginous variety of choices. The findings also refute the related view that people cannot benefit from freedom until they have been sufficiently prepared. Rich or poor, ready or not, people feel better if they are more free. They do not suffer by being cut loose from traditional folkways or from the kindly direction of their betters, or if they do, they somehow find more than adequate consolations for these losses.

Some popular legends have become casualties of the SWB research. The "midlife crisis" is a myth: on average, emotional crises get steadily fewer and less severe as people grow older, and there is no blip at midlife. Neither is there any such thing as an "empty nest syndrome": middle-aged people whose children have moved out are, in fact, happier than those whose children stick around.

## Happiness and Economic Growth

The fact that joy of attainment always fades suggests that happiness may be pursued by keeping a succession of new attainments coming, just as the fact that every note sounded on a piano declines in volume very rapidly from its inception does not prevent a piano piece maintaining a high, or even an increasing, level of volume. This would mean that at any time some attainments were close to their maximum in terms of contributing to subjective well-being.

That line of thought might suggest that the rate of growth of income is more relevant than the current amount of income. Some such notion may have influenced the great proponent of economic growth, Adam Smith, who evidently held that higher incomes do not make people happier, but that fast-growing incomes do. Before reading any of the recent research I would have bet on this Smithian view, but the facts now appear to be exactly contrary: there is a high correlation between absolute level of real income and happiness, and no significant correlation between rate of economic growth and happiness (Diener and Oishi, in Diener and Suh, p. 203).

All the same, I still feel that something like this ought to be true. Perhaps, for instance, people in countries with positive GDP growth are happier than those in countries with zero growth, who are in turn happier than those experiencing negative growth. Few countries have experienced zero or negative growth over the last few decades and SWB research has not made a special effort to focus on these places, so there is presumably insufficient data to test this. But thanks to the valiant efforts of helpful souls like Hugo Chavez, we will not run out of examples of countries with falling incomes, and per-

haps this theory can be tested before long.

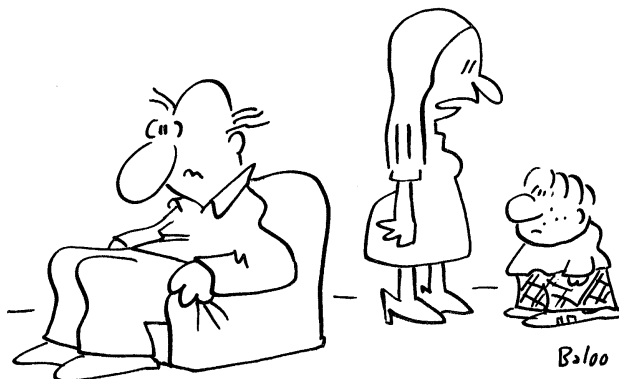
## In Defense of Progress

What are the implications of SWB research for those who favor progress, and in particular for libertarians? I believe that the liberal, progressive, and libertarian commitment to advancing technology and indefinitely expanding material prosperity can be defended against the new attack based on the SWB findings.

My defense is in two parts. First, I claim that these findings, properly understood, are less disturbing for advocates of progress than the popularizers of SWB research have reported. Second, I point out that happiness, though important, isn't everything, and I maintain that modern, high-income, capitalist cultures score higher on most of the other salient values than do traditional or pre-industrial cultures.

We should separate two theses: (1) that for comparatively high-income people the level of happiness has remained approximately the same while real incomes have expanded enormously, and (2) that there has been a slight, long-term decline in happiness in the more affluent countries. While the first of these now seems to be strongly indicated by the data, the second looks dubious.

Most of the evidence for the decline in happiness over the past half-century comes from the rising incidence of "depression." This invites the obvious response that what 50 years ago was called being down in the mouth is now called "depression," "depressive disorder," "unipolar



"Don't bother Daddy — he had a defining moment today."

depression," or, forsooth, "clinical depression." Easterbrook dismisses such objections as follows (p. 165): "though the rising rate of Western depression may relate to some extent to better diagnosis and the loss of taboo associated with this topic . . . a tenfold increase in two generations is far too great to be an artifact of improved diagnosis alone."

This is the reader's first introduction to the statistic of a "tenfold increase" in depression (no source is cited for the factor of ten). Easterbrook later discloses (p. 181) that "tenfold" is the upper limit of a range of controversial estimates, the lower limit being twofold (or, as he puts it, "on the order of two- or threefold"). Twofold still sounds like a lot, but the likelihood that an increase is due to "better diagnosis" (meaning greater readiness to apply the label "depressed") has little to do with the size of the increase as a multiple of the starting point and much to do with the size of the increase as a proportion of the total population. This, of course, is small.

It's often claimed that 25% of Americans undergo an experience of depression at least once in their lives, and that 6-7% have experienced depression at least once in the past year. These numbers can't easily be compared with the statistics for SWB, which tend to focus on how people are feeling at one point in time or how they feel on average over a period of time. We typically don't ask people whether they have been blissfully

happy at least once in their lives or at any time during the past year. And someone who currently feels fine but at one time felt sad and fell into the clutches of the mental health profession may now be classified as depressed and "managing" his depression.

Where such small shifts in numbers are at issue, it's remarkable that so little attention is paid to two great demographic trends: aging of the population and immigration. How many of those labelled "depressed" are over 80?\*

Millions of people from the less developed countries have come to the United States recently, and have prodigiously amplified both their real incomes and their SWB. Still, they are genetically and culturally products of countries with much lower levels of SWB than the United States (all the data point to a major genetic component in the determination of SWB). These folks might well be immensely happier than they would have been in Guatemala or Cambodia, and still embody a decline in United States SWB. Improvement could thus possibly masquerade as deterioration.

Another element usually undiscussed in this connection is the enormous growth in the ingestion of mood-modifying substances like Prozac. At first blush, we might suppose that this collective swilling of antidepressants and tranquilizers must be counteracting a powerful tendency for misery to increase. I am more inclined to the view that these drugs, on average and in the long run, do not increase happiness, or more precisely, that substituting these newfangled concoctions for the tried and trusted intake of good old alcohol, good old tobacco, good old cocaine, and good old opiates does not increase happiness. The bigoted "Just Say No" zealots of our day strive to replace drugs which give people enjoyment with drugs which deaden people's sensibilities, and regrettably they have had some success.

I discount the suggestion that there's an inherent tendency for happiness to decline in industrially advanced countries. But I think it has to be admitted that the level of happiness

in these countries is either roughly stationary or climbing very, very slowly. This does raise the question of whether further increases in incomes can be defended as additions to human well-being.

It won't be a practical issue for at least another couple of centuries. There are still hundreds of millions of people in the world who are desperately poor, and whose SWB will be greatly aug-

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*Thanks to the valiant efforts of helpful souls like Hugo Chavez, we will not run out of examples of countries with falling incomes.*

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mented by raising their incomes. It's not a feasible option to increase the incomes of the poor while holding the incomes of the well-off at a constant level: hold down the rich and you ineluctably hold down the poor. It's not possible to have economic growth in the less developed countries while halting it in the more developed.

Since modern, affluent, high-tech lifestyles are demonstrably highly conducive to human happiness, to oppose further gains in material prosperity from free trade and globalization is objectively to favor the perpetuation of wretched misery for hundreds of millions of poor people. Extrapolating from the SWB data, the conversion of the entire Third World to First-World standards will generate an enormous gain in happiness.

At a more general level, it's fallacious to conclude that because increases in already high incomes yield only very slight benefits for SWB, therefore only those very slight gains would be lost if we froze incomes at some arbitrarily high level (supposing this were feasible). Humans are plan-pursuing entities who achieve fulfillment from striving to improve their condition. What happiness they have now is an attribute of this broad purposive framework. If this framework were to be destroyed, there could be a major reduction in happiness. That this might be so is corroborated by Veenvhoven's demonstration that eco-



"Okay, just don't be impatient — It could take *months* before they learn to obey these."

\*Both average overall life satisfaction and the small percentage of "depressed" increase with age.

conomic freedom confers happiness independently of its income-raising role.

On this argument, then, the very existence of free-market capitalism would in itself add substantially to long-term happiness, and it's just an inseparable concomitant that free-market capitalism indefinitely increases median real income, which does not add very much to long-term happiness for the already well off. In short, even if *having* more of what we want does not add greatly to our happiness, *being able to pursue* more of what we want may still add greatly to our happiness.

What certainly has to be acknowledged is that it is false to suppose that every increase in GDP represents an actual gain in the joyfulness of daily experience, or that in some future high-income world every quotidian moment will be lived in a perpetual state of bliss. But I do not know of anyone who has ever held this view.\* Probably those who came closest to it were Marxists around 1890.

### Happiness Isn't Everything

The second part of my defense is to point out that happiness, though important, isn't everything. As many have insisted, happiness is not the *summum bonum* (all-important good). Other values are vital in setting our requirements for a good social order.

Easterbrook repeatedly states that it is "far better" to have high incomes even if these are not matched by high

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*People in rich countries are, on average, much happier than people in poor countries.*

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SWB. He even says that it's better to have high rates of depression than to have a world so poor that people are so caught up with survival they have no time to become depressed (Easterbrook, p. 165). I agree, and I applaud him for saying it, but he does not make explicit the values which

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\*"Utility" in economic theory is not happiness. It is an abstract concept defined as want-satisfaction. This is not unconnected with happiness but shouldn't be identified with it.

may legitimately compete with happiness.

If you could convince me that a return to a world of recurring plagues and famines, children without shoes, their ribs poking out because of malnutrition, most of them dead before the age of ten, and the average woman requiring to give birth about nine times to maintain a stable population, would somehow leave people no less happy than today, I would still feel that you had not made a case for returning to that pre-industrial world. Dignity, charity, intelligence, and exploration of new opportunities are values which, though of course most often conducive to happiness, are in principle independent of happiness and may occasionally clash with it. The realization of these values is far more in evidence in today's Europe and America than in medieval Europe, medieval Islam, or the Third World.

Although happiness is extremely valuable, it is not the only thing of value, nor can it measure the value of every other thing. The arguments here are as familiar as they are sound. A cheap and infallibly happiness-inducing drug, added to the water supply, would not make us lose all interest in justice or human betterment. Most people would not choose to undergo a kind of brain damage which would make them simultaneously a lot happier and a lot more stupid. "Ignorance is bliss" can be uttered with many shades of emotional tone, but never admiringly. As Nozick's argument from the "experience machine" brings out,\* most people do not want a happy life in a state of comprehensive delusion. A survey has found that less than 1% of people would choose to be plugged in to an experience machine.

Possibly neither "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" nor "The Bucket Rider" could have been written by a happy person — at any rate they weren't — yet the creative lives of John Keats and Franz Kafka are enviably worthy. It can even plausibly be argued that a certain modicum of suffering is essential to the best possible life, though I would add that one can get too much of a good thing, and I have it on the

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\*Robert Nozick, "Anarchy, State, and Utopia" (New York: Basic Books, 1974), pp. 42-43.

best authority that my suffering quota has been filled.

### Happiness: The Final Frontier

How much further can we go in raising SWB in affluent modern cultures? My view is that people do have a set point which is most often on the happy side of neutral, but which varies individually, and which is largely but

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*It's better to have high rates of depression than to have a world so poor that people are so caught up with survival they have no time to become depressed.*

---

not entirely genetic. Once certain sources of acute misery are removed, which they generally are by industrial development, the set point rules. Thus, although I see abundant opportunities for augmenting happiness, I don't see the scope for anything that could again repeat the staggering achievement of free-market capitalism in raising SWB to its present high levels.

Modern society is a marketplace for lifestyles, religions, psychotherapies, and interpersonal arrangements. There's a continual process of discovery by trial and error, which may lead over a long period of time to an approach to the optimum in these areas, yielding some gains in happiness.

In the area of religion, I see much hope in replacing the Abrahamic creeds (which, in one of their recent manifestations, can make millions of people think it inspiring to watch a movie of a man being tortured to death for a couple of hours) with a new synthesis of Buddhism and other

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\*See the remarks by Andrew Rawlinson in his "The Book of Enlightened Masters: Western Teachers in Eastern Traditions" (Chicago: Open Court, 1997), pp. 33-36.

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religions of enlightenment.\* The Abrahamic religions, aside from being composed mainly of untruths about nonexistent entities, are not well-suited to a culture of real abundance, security, and glorious opportunities.

In psychotherapy, which I expect to eventually become one with religion, all psychodynamic doctrines, derived from Freud, which seek to terrify people by imagining a world of inscrutable unconscious forces, are rapidly being replaced by an effective cognitive-behavioral approach of the sort pioneered by Albert Ellis, which effectively teaches people how to reduce their sources of unhappiness.

It's unclear whether the general tone of the culture or the reigning ideology can have much effect on people's happiness, but if it can, there is certainly room for improvement here. To take one simple example, the modernist movement in the arts, and its various offshoots and successors, have driven a wedge between music, fiction, drama, and pictorial representation as readily appreciated by the mass of the population and as sanctified by the approval of intellectual elites. This wedge was not always there, and will not always be there. It's

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*The Abrahamic religions, aside from being composed mainly of untruths about nonexistent entities, are not well-suited to a culture of real abundance, security, and glorious opportunities.*

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largely a matter of intellectual fashion. But as long as the wedge is there, opportunities to develop great works of art with a popular audience tend to be closed off, and a potential avenue to the enrichment of the lives of the

majority of people is not explored.

Ultimately, drugs may be helpful for some, not because of the questionable notion that "depression" is an "illness," which can be "treated" by "medication," but rather because of the fact well known to Fitzgerald's Khayyam and to countless others down the ages, that taking drugs can make you feel better. If you belong to the 1%, or 5%, or 10% of the population genetically most prone to melancholy, maybe some drug or other will help you to be happier.

### Surfeit of Options

Barry Schwartz is an avowed enemy of the free market (one of his earlier books is subtitled "How Market Freedom Erodes the Best Things in Life"). But most of "The Paradox of Choice" is advice about making the best decisions within a free market. To the extent that people take his advice and find that it works, his antimarket complaints lose some of their force.

He thinks that we are overwhelmed by too many choices. But he accepts that how many choices confront us is itself a result of our choices. It's easy, for example, to adapt our shopping habits so that the number of purchase decisions is greatly reduced. It would even be feasible to join a club, like a book or record club but concerned with all kinds of consumer goods, so that we had to make almost no further choices at all — we would simply accept the groceries and other provisions selected for us each week by the club. Perhaps this is why some people join cults with apparently absurd dietary and other restrictions, because in this way they reduce the need to consider too many options.

Schwartz begins the book with an anecdote about his visit to The Gap in search of a pair of jeans. The salesperson asked: "Do you want them slim fit, easy fit, relaxed fit, baggy, or extra baggy? . . . Do you want them stone-washed, acid-washed, or distressed? Do you want them button-fly or zipper-fly? Do you want them faded or regular?"

I didn't expect the Spanish Inquisition! What a burden to drop onto the shoulders of a mere college

professor! Buying the jeans, he says, became "a daylong project." The jeans he ended up with "turned out just fine." But, reports Schwartz, "it was a complex decision in which I was forced to invest time, energy, and no small amount of self-doubt, anxiety,

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*It used to be thought that people in "individualist" cultures are happier than people in "collectivist" cultures, but one major study has failed to confirm this and it is now in doubt.*

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and dread." Forced? He could have just left and gone to Penney's.

People can choose to make fewer choices. Schwartz gestures a few times in the direction of the brainwashed zombie theory, the victim of consumer capitalism who cannot choose to make fewer choices because he's addicted to consuming. But it wouldn't do to elaborate that theory, as it would undercut 80% of Schwartz's book, which gives you advice on how to choose to make fewer choices.

Much of this advice is quite sound. There's plenty of experimental evidence that most people typically make wrong-headed decisions. For instance, they erroneously count sunk costs. Schwartz gives many of these examples, some of which have no bearing on overabundance of choices. There's certainly scope for educating people in fallacies of practical decision-making, but this aspect would be more helpful if detached from his preaching about the baleful influence of too many choices.

Another anecdote refers (pp. 18–20) to a study in which either 24 or six varieties of jam were displayed. Schwartz says that 30% of people who visited the display of six varieties bought jam, while only 3% bought jam from the display of 24. Problems of this kind tend to solve themselves: sellers of jam have an incentive to display the smaller range. Managers of stores as a matter of course do limit

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the number of varieties of all goods they offer for sale.

Schwartz is perturbed (p. 9) that his local supermarket carries 285 varieties of cookies, but evidently if all 285 keep taking up shelf space, all 285 are selling. Anyone upset by the spectacle of 285 types of cookie can go to a corner or specialty store where the range is far more limited. Costco or Sam's Club attracts people prepared to buy in bigger quantities at bargain prices, from a more limited range. What many people do, of course (p. 19), is to settle on a cookie they like, and then always look for just that one, tuning out the other 284. Atkins dieters tune out all 285. Taking this further, you can request the supermarket to send you the same list of groceries every week, and give no more thought to choices. Some busy yuppies use services like Peapod in this way.

Schwartz's advice is to adopt a "satisficing" rather than a "maximizing" strategy. Settle for what's good enough without looking for the very best. Most people do this anyway, instinctively adjusting their searches among goods to take account of the opportunity cost of their own time (satisficing is only a special case of maximizing). Some others, mainly women, seem to derive intense gratification from the actual activity of researching what's available. Who, aside from the Taliban, would want to deny them this indulgence?

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*Money does buy happiness, but for most people in advanced industrial cultures, it takes a lot of money to buy a tiny increment of happiness.*

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If some people find the multiplicity of options irksome, the benefit they derive from having that many options may more than compensate them for the irksomeness. Therefore, it's possible for people to dislike the situation of having so many choices and still be net gainers from the availability of those choices, a possibility Schwartz never mentions. He thus confounds

some specific loss from more choices with net loss from more choices, and wrongly supposes that by making a case for the prevalence of the former, he automatically makes a case for the prevalence of the latter.

For those stressed-out shoppers who really do find choosing oppressive, much of Schwartz's advice may prove helpful, and the free market will

then work even better. Thank you, Barry Schwartz!

## Happiness in Its Place

Raymond Belliotti evidently started out to write a work with the challenging title, "Happiness Is Overrated," and when he was well into it, suddenly realized that his crucial argument is misconceived. Instead of scrap-

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ping that book or turning it into a different kind of book, he went ahead and published the thing.

The problem becomes clear when we ask: just who has overrated happiness? It turns out that there are two broad ways of defining "happiness," the way it is defined in ordinary English, as subjective contentment or good feeling, an enduring pleasant state of mind, and the way it is defined by some philosophers, as encompassing much more than that, perhaps a *merited*, or *worthy*, or *virtuous* pleasant mental state.

As Belliotti must have realized late in his composition of the book (see Belliotti, p. 93), those philosophers who have defined the word "happiness" in the normal vernacular manner have generally stated that happiness is not the *summum bonum*, but that other values are independently important, and may trump happiness. And those philosophers who have proclaimed happiness as the *summum bonum* have generally proposed an expanded definition of the word "happiness."

Consequently, Belliotti cannot name anyone around today who really overrates happiness, in the sense he specifies. A possible historical exception is Bentham, but on this point Bentham has no following. Belliotti's own views, while often correct, are equally often much more commonplace than he supposes them to be. In an effort to come up with a real "target" for his "thesis," he finally identifies "those who formally define happiness as a relatively enduring, positive state of mind and who take happiness to be (at least) a great good" (p. 94). This is indeed a popular position — I

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*At any rate, people in individualist countries, contrary to the folklore of intellectuals, don't seem to be any less happy than people in collectivist countries.*

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adhere to it myself — but I cannot find any arguments in Belliotti's book directed against it. The most he seems able to claim is that happiness is "not

always a personal good," which presumably means that there are some situations where happiness is not a relevant value.

While he does not advance happiness as the *summum bonum*, Belliotti does recommend an expanded definition of "happiness." His attempt to argue for an expanded definition is bedevilled by the problem that he apparently does not understand that the meanings of words are conventional, and therefore writes as though there is a correct meaning of "happiness," independent of actual usage or of usefulness in argument. So he sets

out on a wild goose chase to discover the true meaning of happiness or what happiness really is. He maintains, for example, that defining "happiness" in the normal way ignores or slights values other than subjective contentment. This is like saying that we had better define a car's "maximum speed" to include its comfortable seats or fuel economy, and if we don't, we are ignoring or slighting these other desirable attributes.

Belliotti provides a readable survey of philosophers' views on happiness and finding meaning in life, but sheds little new light on these topics. □

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**"How to Talk to a Liberal (If You Must): The World According to Ann Coulter,"** by Ann Coulter. Crown Forum, 2004, 368 pages.

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# The New Face of Conservatism

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Tim Slagle

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Can you keep a secret? I've got a big crush on Ann Coulter. She's the woman I always dreamed of meeting at Libertarian conventions. Blonde, slender, piercing blue eyes, whip smart, and a great sense of humor. She's educated, well versed in law (especially the constitutional variety), and not bad with a handgun. She's the kind of girl who attracts flocks of leering, lonely Libertarian men, and the kind of girl those same men always chase out of the Party.

Her fourth book, "How to Talk to a Liberal," has just been released. Like most popular conservative pundits, she uses the word "liberal" not as Jefferson did, but as an epithet for leftist members of the Democratic Party. She wants to teach us how to argue with these folks, and in the first chap-

ter she outlines her methods. She mentions the favorite tactics of the Left for getting out of arguments, like changing the topic. Ann also criticizes liberals for being champions of one-way dialogue: "Inasmuch as liberals can only win arguments when no one is allowed to argue back, they enjoy creating fictional worlds in movies and on TV where liberals finally get to win" (p. 3). She also lists ten rules for how to behave when arguing with a liberal.

Most of the book consists of reprints of her syndicated columns. If you've never read any of Ann's work, this is a great place to start. Even though I've read many of her columns before, it was a delight to have them organized by topic, so that I could follow the course her commentary took as each event unfolded.

She devotes a chapter to the col-



umns she wrote during the Elián González debate. Although the incident paled in comparison to other Reno-Clinton extravaganzas like Waco and Ruby Ridge, sending the little boy to Cuba was one of the more heinous things that administration did. I still remember looking at photos from the Miami raid and feeling rage. Ann shares my rage and offers solace by illuminating the one positive outcome from the biblically miraculous story of Elián's survival: "The presidential election that year was decided by less than 500 votes in Florida. If Elián González had never landed in America, Al Gore would have been in the White House on September 11, 2001. Thank you, Elián González for doing more for freedom in this country than Chuck Schumer, Nancy Pelosi, Tom Daschle, and the rest of that party combined has ever done" (272).

She devotes a chapter to her columns from the 2000 election. This is a must-read for anyone who still thinks that George Bush stole the election. Ann uses her skills as an attorney to analyze both state law and the Constitution, making a clear and convincing case that President Bush won the election fair and square.

Libertarians have a problem with Ann, because she is in favor of the Iraq war and doesn't think drugs should be legalized before the welfare system is abolished. However, she is a champion of capitalism. Libertarians share her views on the perfection of market forces: "Only a little over a decade ago, the centralized planning of the Eastern bloc was exposed as having created a squalid, poverty stricken abyss. Meanwhile, corrupt running-dog lackeys of the capitalist system here in America managed to produce a society in which the poorest citizens can have televisions, refrigerators, telephones, and the opportunity to appear on the 'Jerry Springer Show'" (134).

"For a brief fleeting moment," she writes, "I supported the NEA. I figured at least the rich are getting some of their tax money back" (240). She wrote a column about attending the Brooklyn Museum of Art's famous "Sensation" exhibit, in which the Virgin Mary was adorned with elephant dung.

Ann is one of the strongest defenders of gun rights in American public

life. "Too few people — girl people — appreciate the central point: Guns are our friends" (305). She believes the judicial system has eagerly defended

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*Coulter's sense of humor is so sharp that the opposition doesn't even see it coming.*

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the pornographers' First Amendment rights to a ridiculous extent while allowing individuals' Second Amendment rights to be compromised: "If the courts ever interpreted the Second Amendment the way they interpret the First Amendment, we'd have a right to bear nuclear arms by now." In defense of freedom and security, Ann observes, the freedom of speech has its limitations: "Some may be willing to rely on withering editorials in the 'New York Times' to preserve their liberty. I'd prefer a tasteful Sigsauer."

Ann once considered running for House of Representatives as a Libertarian. Her experience with the Libertarian Party of Connecticut was less than favorable. She was viewed as an outsider who didn't agree completely with the platform. She walked away from the campaign, jaded by her experience with Libertarians, and wrote a couple of negative columns about it. Too bad: her candidacy would have helped promote the LP far more than it would have diluted its message.

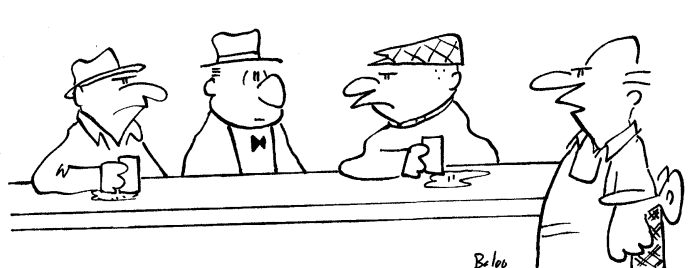
Like most of us, Ann has become increasingly frustrated with what passes for security in air travel. She writes at length about the idiotic regulations that have been implemented in airports nationwide: "The government's logical calculus on flight security has long been: Really annoying = safe plane (Does anyone not know how to use a seat belt?)" (76). She also offers an ultimate solution: "The single most effective thing we could

do in this country to protect travelers from terrorist attacks would be to abolish the Department of Transportation" (77).

But above all, Ann is funny. She writes: "According to an ABC poll, 48% of Americans have an unfavorable impression of Hillary, 53% of Americans don't want Hillary to ever run for president, and 7% of Americans have been date-raped by Bill Clinton" (253). And: "According to liberals, the message of Jesus . . . is something along the lines of 'be nice to people' (which to them means to 'raise taxes on the productive')" (162). On Phil Donahue: "Did people actually enjoy watching a man with the IQ of a bright chimpanzee who passed himself off as Bertrand Russell, or did they just want to watch something on TV?" (196). On the very senior senator from West Virginia: "[Robert] Byrd had to scrape by with billions of dollars forcibly extracted from taxpayers to build grotesque banana-republic tributes to himself" (124).

Her sense of humor is so sharp that the opposition doesn't even see it coming. Nor do they get the jokes. Al Franken thinks he's smarter and more knowledgeable than you are, and likes to tell you that; Ann Coulter probably is smarter than you. She refutes some of the allegations that Al Franken made against her in his book, "Lies and the Lying Liars Who Tell Them." In one short column, she exonerates herself on all charges except one. And she does it without a grant from the Kennedy School of Government or a staff of 13 researchers provided by Harvard University.

The one charge she justifiably ignores is that she might have had the wrong birth date on an old driver's license. How did Al Franken (or the Washington Post, which he cites as his



"Scram, buddy — we don't serve people with persecution complexes here!"

source) get a look at Ann Coulter's old driver's licenses? I thought that only government officials had access to those documents. One wonders how many other "private" documents were

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*She does it without a grant from the Kennedy School of Government or a staff of 13 researchers provided by Harvard University.*

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combed before that alleged inconsistency was discovered. However the Post came to see her old driver's license, I think she stumbled upon the reason they did it elsewhere in her book, while writing on a different subject: "[W]e're supposed to pretend this is the first time we've seen a rapid response team smear witnesses against the Clintons. . . . All witnesses against the Clintons are trashy people, looking for publicity, have a minor criminal offense in the past . . . and are part of a right-wing conspiracy to bring false charges against the long suffering, completely innocent Clintons" (244).

Ann can also write straight from the heart. Chapter 8, "The Battle Flag," is probably the most beautiful piece I have ever read on why the Confederate flag is an important part of our national heritage. It is often mistakenly called the Confederate flag, even though it was never the flag of the Confederacy. Rather than being the symbol of racism or slavery, "The battle flag symbolizes an ethic and honor that belongs to all sons of the South" (176).

"How to Talk to a Liberal" is the perfect book for your winter vacation. It is a great companion for things like airline travel. Because it is broken down into columns, it's easy to find your place again after a federal employee has ordered you to put it through the X-ray machine. It's also really fun to flaunt if you get seated next to a liberal. □

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Advertisement

**"The Godfather Returns,"** by Mark Winegardner. Random House, 2004, 448 pages.

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# The Family Business

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Clark Stooksbury

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In the mid 1960s Mario Puzo was a novelist in his 40s with a family and gambling debts to support. He set out to write a book that would solve his financial problems. The resulting novel, "The Godfather," was a best seller when it was released in 1969, and is still in print after 35 years. Had there never been a movie, Mario Puzo would have been able to pay off his bookie, and still have enough left for tuition and doctor bills, but his effect on American pop culture would have been negligible, and it's unlikely that Random House would have commissioned a sequel to the book. But of course, there was always going to be a movie. Puzo even worked out of an office at Paramount Studios while writing the novel.

"The Godfather," released three years after the novel, is a modern classic, ranked third on the American Film Institute's list of the top 100 films. It has often been called an Italian-American "Gone With the Wind." The struggle to make the film is the stuff of legend. Gangster Joe Colombo's Italian American Civil Rights League protested the making of the movie. The suits at Paramount were a problem as well. They didn't want either Marlon Brando or Al Pacino in the movie. Had Francis Ford Coppola not won most of his battles, it is not hard to imagine the result: a two-hour film shot on a backlot with white-bread actors like Ryan O'Neal and Robert Redford in key roles.

When "The Godfather: Part III" (which is better than its reputation) wasn't as successful as the first two

Godfather films, it looked as if the story was finally finished. Mario Puzo allowed Random House to commission a sequel to his book — but only after he'd gone to the great Sicilian hideout in the sky. In 2002, Random House notified a select group of literary agents about the project and enlisted their help to find a suitable author. The publisher selected Mark Winegardner, a novelist in his early 40s and the head of the creative writing program at Florida State University.

Winegardner's task was to build upon the story from the novel and square it with events from the movies. That story is about Vito Corleone's reluctant transfer of power to his reluctant son, Michael, and the son's attempts to change the family business into a legitimate enterprise. In the first movie, Don Corleone is visibly upset when he learns that Michael is in hiding because the son avenged the attempt on the father's life. Later, the Don tells his son that his desire was for him to be "Senator Corleone, Governor Corleone . . . something."

That quest for respectability continues in "Godfather Returns" which begins where the first movie leaves off, with Michael as the new don, who has just settled some family business only alluded to at the end of Puzo's first novel: the execution of traitorous *caporegime* Sal Tessio. A new character, Nick Geraci, is introduced to carry the execution out. Geraci is a prominent member of the Corleone family. He is a retired boxer, considered to be an excellent earner for the family, this helps in part to make up for being something of an outsider (from Cleveland, not New York). Since Geraci is a protege of Tessio, performance of this task helps

to demonstrate his loyalty to the family.

There are many loose ends in "The Godfather," so Winegardner has plenty of material to work with. A prime example is the family's move to Las Vegas, which becomes an issue both for those in the Corleone family, who question the wisdom of the move, and with Chicago gangsters, who see Las Vegas as their turf.

The twin daughters of the late Santino Corleone are starting college when "The Godfather Returns" begins. At Florida State, one twin, Francesca, meets preppy Billy Van Arsdale, the scion of a citrus empire. She brings him to a family Christmas in New York, where the Corleones still own property, and her sister explains why the young man came. "Can't you see Billy's just here to experience a gen-u-ine Mafia Christmas? To him, we're a bunch of dirty Guineas. Something for him to laugh about over highballs at the yacht club with Skip and Miffie, the year he saw real dago gangsters with tommy guns in their violin cases." Eventually, Van Arsdale knocks up Francesca. After some persuading by Corleone thugs, he marries the Mafia princess and eventually gets a Justice Department job in a Kennedyesque administration.

The family becomes heavily involved in politics when family lawyer, Tom Hagen, receives an appointment to the House of Representatives from Nevada only a few months after moving to the state. This allows Winegardner to examine the deeply cynical worldview of someone who buys and sells politicians, judges, and

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*If the studio had its way, "The Godfather" would have been a two-hour film shot on a back lot starring Ryan O'Neal and Robert Redford.*

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cops as part of his job: "The government was worse, which Hagen knew long before he took office himself. Remember 'Remember the Maine'? All a big lie concocted so the United States could go to war under false pretenses and the men in charge could make their

rich friends richer (including the newspaper moguls who self-servingly spread the lie in the first place). More people died in that trumped-up war than in every Mafia conflict put together. It's only negative stereotypes about Italians that make people think they're a threat to the average Joe. The government, on the other hand, wages nonstop war on the average Joe, and the suckers just eat their bread, go to their circuses, and keep on pretending to live in a democracy — a lie so cherished they can't grasp the self-evident, that America is run entirely via back-room deals involving the rich."

When Hagen runs for the seat he was appointed to he loses badly, thus ending a brief political career. Later, Michael Corleone serves on the transition team of president-elect James M. Shea. Shea is of Irish origin, the son of a former ambassador to Canada, who was a bootlegger in the depression. Shea also appointed his brother to be Attorney General. If you are not seeing parallels to JFK, then you just missed the two-by-four aimed at your head. At Shea's inauguration, Corleone fends off questions about his underworld ties, as does another family associate, Johnny Fontaine. When "The Godfather" was originally released, Frank Sinatra was incensed by the character, whom he believed to have been based on himself. In "Godfather Returns," Winegardner makes the vague parallels more concrete to the point of giving Fontaine a Sammy Davis-like sidekick and making him friends with the Kennedyesque President Shea.

Some events towards the end of the novel, which takes place in the early 1960s, seem vaguely familiar. Corleone, for example, becomes involved with the CIA against Castro. He also has Geraci, who has gone into hiding after falling out with his former don, begin to work on a confessional similar to the revelations of Joe Valachi, who told the feds about the inner workings of the mob in the early 1960s. Winegardner leaves enough loose ends to justify yet another "Godfather" filling the gap existing from the early 1960s until the third movie starts in 1979. In a few years, the Corleones may belong more to Winegardner than to Puzo.

Redoing Mario Puzo carries small risk to Winegardner. While the original novel is good, it is good pulp fiction.

Even negative reviewers of "Godfather Returns" will not accuse him of desecrating a shrine. However, the director who turns this book into a film, which seems likely if it sells well, will be

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*The director who turns this book into a film, will be treading on quicksand. The films made by Francis Ford Coppola have achieved a status in American culture far higher than the original novel.*

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treading on quicksand. The films made by Francis Ford Coppola have achieved a status in American culture far higher than the original novel.

Compared to films like the brilliant Scorsese-De Niro-Pesci gangster epics "Goodfellas" and "Casino," the "Godfather" movies have a tragic, operatic quality to them. In the third film, the final sequence (with most of the killings) even uses the opera "Cavalleria Rusticana" as a backdrop. The films are also rich in Catholic imagery, and not the guitars-and-folk-music variety of the post-Vatican II era. The three movies include a wedding, two funerals, a baptism, a first communion, and a bestowal of papal honors. In addition, Fredo Corleone is executed after saying a Hail Mary, a cardinal and future pope hears the confession of Michael Corleone in the Vatican, and an archbishop is assassinated in the Vatican. One of the most striking images from all three movies is the body of the archbishop falling from a gothic spiral staircase.

The director of the film version of "Godfather Returns" will be better off going in a completely different direction than Coppola. This will minimize the inevitable comparisons made by everyone from important cultural mandarins to fanatics.

Mario Puzo (with the help of his bookie) started it all. Francis Ford Coppola turned a hit novel into an institution. By breathing new life (and new death!) into the Corleone family, Mark Winegardner has brought that institution into the new millennium. As Michael Corleone keeps discovering, there is no way out. □

**"The Incredibles,"** directed by Brad Bird. Pixar Studios, 2004, 121 minutes.

# Truth, Justice, and the Aristocratic Way

A. J. Ferguson

Superheroes have taken a beating at the hands of democracy. The same costumed characters who constantly save the world from arch-villains and giant meteors have been humbled by the whims and envy of the common man — and why not? Our minds can summon imaginary champions to banish imaginary evils, but what good are they against gulags, gas chambers, and mass starvation?

Hell, they can't even handle their personal lives. Each time a comic breaks away from cataclysmic battle scenes, it's to show a masked hero's alter ego botching some routine social interaction. Since the mid-80s, every caped crusader has been outed as a social deviant of some sort: Superman's a fascist stooge who jilts Lois Lane for Wonder Woman; Batman's an obsessive monkey-wrencher with a penchant for young sidekicks; Spiderman's a pimply teen whose most formidable enemies are awkwardness and angst. They may think themselves selfless and altruistic, but their exploits serve only to gild their indiscretions and perversions; underneath the Spandex, they're the same as — no, worse than — everyone else.

Alan Moore's seminal comic "Watchmen" features the amoral Comedian, so called because he gets the joke: keep saving people, and they'll turn on you. The only way to avoid the mob is to lead it, and the only way to escape the firing squad is to be the guy with his finger on the trigger. Since democratism refuses to acknowledge the possibility that any

man can be better than any other, the public gets a kick out of seeing someone truly excellent brought low. We'll forgive anyone who proves himself grossly incompetent; failure is always the system's fault. But for those arrogant and hubristic enough to achieve, there can be no pardon. Of course, once they've been purged, inequality will remain, so we'll lift up and dash down a new straw-man elite. Repeat until reaching utopia; envy is nothing if not industrious.

In a country which exports democracy, the appearance of "The Incredibles" is thus even more astonishing. In Pixar's newest film, a small percentage of the population have superhuman powers, gained through a mechanism never explained (though likely as an inherited trait). The government pays these heroes a stipend to thwart evil as they see fit — until rising costs from property damage and lawsuits turn public sentiment against them, and they're shoved into a too-small world that, as ex-hero Mr. Incredible remarks to his superpowered family, continually devises new ways to celebrate mediocrity.

Of course, in a world where everyone is special, no one is, and "special" becomes a euphemism for "retarded." So the heroes settle into their secret identities, gaining families and paunches, with only magazine covers and outmoded uniforms to remind them of the old days. But some of them have difficulty adjusting to lives surrounded by deaths and disasters they could have prevented had society let them. One by one, they're lured to a remote island by the prospect of a new assignment: subduing a secret government robot gone rogue. One by one,

they're killed off by the robot's real creator: Syndrome, a deranged genius who has nursed a grudge against superheroes ever since Mr. Incredible refused to accept him as a sidekick.

Most would-be despots have to demonize hated minorities before carrying out their purges; with superheroes already exiled, Syndrome instead plays off the fear of the masses by turning his "unstoppable" killer robot loose on a major city, figuring that the man who knew how to defeat it would be hailed as a god. By eliminating the heroes with true powers beforehand, he plans to rid himself of any potential competitors for the mob's adoration. He's the quintessential demagogic dictator, callously sacrificing individual lives to feed his classless society, while hoarding the best technology to preserve his status as first among equals.

Thus does egalitarianism foster tyranny — and ghoulish humor: Syndrome's plan, if successful, would be like Hitler finishing off the Final Solution in time to rush down to Jerusalem, rebuild Solomon's Temple, and install himself in the Holy of Holies as the new high priest. Fortunately, costumed villains are prone to blunders, and the Incredible family exploits a classic gaffe to free themselves from Syndrome's clutches and save the day. For Pixar's world still has heroes, individuals willing to use their extraordinary skills towards the betterment of humanity, once freed from faddish public perceptions of an abstract common good. The moral? Some people are inherently better than others. If we get out of their way, society will benefit.

This is hard for Americans (and in fits and starts, Europeans) to swallow.

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*With their secret identities, the Incredibles at least have a respite from noblesse oblige: they don't have to be super all the time.*

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The thought of a natural aristocracy, or worse, hereditary nobility, calls up images of periwigged syphilitic fops, alienating the little folk through tiny

acts of cruelty and contempt. But with privilege comes responsibility (something nouveau-riche Hollywood starlets fail to grasp); an aristocrat's life is constantly on display, subject to the attention and expectations of the public. With their secret identities, the *Incredibles* at least have a respite from *noblesse oblige*: they don't have to be super all the time. Those without alter egos can't become "normal" in times of revolutionary fervor. They either abdicate, abandoning society for hermitic exile, or they fight and in time submit to the guillotine. Either way, they won't be around to lead when naturally gifted, thoroughly trained leaders are most needed — leaving history in the hands of the rabble-rousers and butchers.

Obviously, a major motion picture condemning democracy couldn't escape the notice of egalitarian culture critics. Reliably hyperbolic columnist Ted Rall even claimed the movie had "fascist overtones." But those who treated "*The Incredibles*" as more than a kid's film were usually content to stamp it as Objectivist and move on, as if any critique of institutionalized mediocrity in a fictional context would automatically be cribbing from Rand. Granted, the need for a PG rating

could explain the absence of the obligatory rape scene, but it's still a tough case to make. Mr. Incredible is not a ruggedly individualistic hero: he admits his weakness to his wife, saying that if she were killed, he wouldn't be strong enough to carry on. And he's not the type to pause in the middle of a fight to set forth the reasons for his ethical superiority; the movie lampoons "monologuing" as something villains indulge in to explain all the niceties of their diabolical plots. Syndrome is much closer to Rand's ideal: a brilliant self-made man who revolutionizes industries and prefers to form his own society on the margins rather than compromise his principles. A pity he's insane.

Still, those who skipped past the political message might have had the right idea: the joy of this film is that it can be enjoyed by anyone. With this film, Pixar confirms that they have overtaken Disney as the gold standard for animated films. "*The Incredibles*" will become a classic; like "*Toy Story*" before it, kids will continue to watch it as they grow, and continue to find new things in it to enjoy. The animation sparkles, intruding only in rare moments when it's *too* perfect. The sight gags, often playful twists on

timeworn Tex Avery and Warner Bros. jokes, draw laughs without resorting to gross-out humor. The backgrounds are filled with all manner of homages and minutiae that invite later exploration with a DVD and a quick thumb on

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*Syndrome is much closer to Rand's ideal: a brilliant self-made man who revolutionizes industries and prefers to form his own society on the margins rather than compromise his principles. A pity he's insane.*

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the pause button. Even the ending credit sequence is worth sitting through — though lacking the fake outtakes that have been a Pixar trademark — both for the Mancini-like soundtrack, and the boxy, vivid animation recalling Cartoon Network's "*Samurai Jack*" series.

Skip the stultifying "*Polar Express*" and the formulaic Christmas films, and take the kids to see "*The Incredibles*." They'll laugh so much they won't even realize they're learning a lesson. □

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## We Meet the Spooks, from page 34

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inspired by a true story. Who knows?

I shouldn't have felt bad about the pictures. What nobody at the gate mentioned that afternoon is that you can download the same pictures, minus me, my son, and my daughter, directly from the NSA website. Right there at [www.nsa.gov](http://www.nsa.gov) is a full-color photo, suitable for framing, of the same sky-blue, concrete seal my kids and I were caught mugging around. And right there, too, is a photograph of the same black-glass NSA building, looking like some kind

of shiny, impenetrable, tipped-over obelisk from "*2001: A Space Odyssey*." Except the picture you can download is a good deal more detailed than the ones the security people erased from my camera. Mine was from ground level, through a chain-link fence and across a sea of cars, with a few spindly, Levittown trees obscuring the view. Theirs was taken from overhead with a wide enough angle to show all the grassy knolls and clumps of nearby trees where you could set up an enemy listening post, or conceal a sniper, or hide an entire Iraqi mortar crew, if you really had it in for the NSA. □

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## The President and Mr. Bush, from page 28

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ness, is in some degree a slave. It is a slave to its animosity or to its affection, either of which is sufficient to lead it astray from its duty and its interest. Antipathy in one nation against another disposes each more readily to offer insult and injury, to lay hold of slight causes of umbrage, and to be haughty and intractable, when accidental or trifling occasions of dispute occur. Hence frequent collisions, obstinate, envenomed, and bloody contests."

*Medium:* Your turn, President Bush.

*Bush:* My foreign policy is to remove evil from the world, replace dictatorships all over the world with democracies,

exist and leave them in nations where they do exist, and win over the hearts and minds of Muslims and Arabs by killing Muslims and Arabs until they no longer want to become terrorists. That way, America will be safer. Onward Christian soldiers.

*Medium:* Time for closing comments. You first, President Bush.

*Bush:* Leadership and patriotism. I have both. My opponent does not.

*Washington:* I have always wondered what hell was like. Now I know. It's what America is being turned into by both political parties. □

## Seattle

Heroic efforts in defense of the Homeland, noted in the estimable *Seattle Times*:

Soldiers from the Washington National Guard are being tapped to help build a \$60 million sports complex. Use of the Guard's labor to build a nine-field soccer and baseball complex is said to be part of a training program. The GAO says that such projects have offered "no valid military training."

## Tokyo

Reassurances of good corporate citizenship, cited in the *Times* of London:

A spokesperson for Vodaphone reassured the public that the company "would never sell a phone that was enabling someone to see someone naked." She was responding to questions about a third-party device developed in Japan which allows cell phone cameras to take pictures through clothing.

## Hurlock, Md.

Advance in the culinary arts, from the menu of the Suicide Bridge Restaurant:

The menu offers "Suicide's Famous Crab Balls," and "Suicide Oysters," which are "topped with Suicide's special BBQ sauce, cheese & bacon."

## Santa Cruz, Calif.

An elementary school confiscates food, reported in *USA Today*:

Freedom Elementary School informed parents that as part of its nutrition program, "We will take away from students any non-nutritious foods."

## Boca Raton, Fla.

The struggle for psychiatric health in Florida continues, detailed in the *Boca Raton News*:

Mental health officials in south Florida blasted Rush Limbaugh, saying the conservative talk show host's offer of "free therapy" for traumatized John Kerry voters has made a mockery of Post-Election Selection Trauma, a valid psychological problem.

"The people here in Palm Beach County now in therapy or support groups are the canaries in the mine shaft," said American Health Association executive director Rob Gordon. "There could be thousands of others, even Republicans, who need to be in therapy over this election."

"Rush Limbaugh has no clinical qualifications to counsel anyone," clinician Sheila Cooperman said. "He's not only minimizing PEST, but he's bastardizing the entire psychological field and our clinical expertise."

## Austin, Texas

Good news for oenophiles, from a dispatch in the *Desert Mountain Times* (Alpine, Texas):

Texas Agricultural Commissioner Susan Combs announces Texas Wine Month: "Every year, this unique celebration gives our Texas wineries, growers and retailers a tremendous opportunity to let the world know about the fabulous wines being produced in Texas. And with all of the excitement building around the Texas wine industry, this year should be bigger and better. I encourage Texans to

make up their own minds about Texas wines."

## Manchester, England

Pedagogical note, from the *London Sun*:

Keith Hogan, headmaster of St. Matthews School, stood behind an unnamed teacher who attempted to motivate her pupils into making the most of each day by telling them a meteorite was about to smash into the Earth, and that they should all

return home to say good-bye to their families.

## Washington, D.C.

Absolute zero-tolerance reached, cited in the *Washington Post*:

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia upheld the arrest of a 12 year-old girl by Metro police for eating a single french fry in a train station in the fall of 2000. The court affirmed a lower court ruling that Metro's "zero-tolerance" policy and the child's subsequent arrest were constitutional.

## Moses Lake, Wash.

Dispatch from the front of the War on Obesity, from the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*:

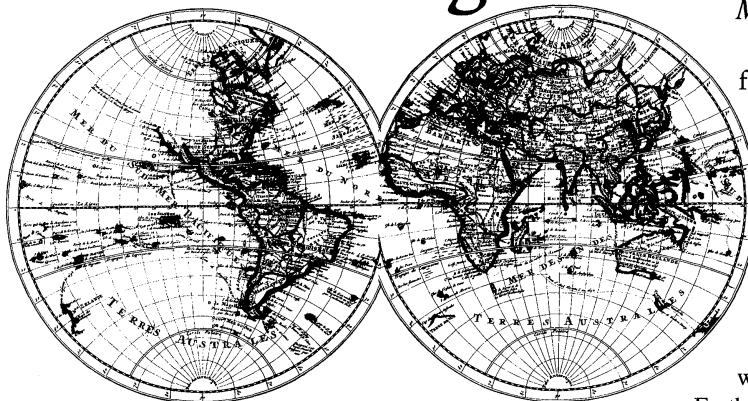
Moses Lake is the first city in Washington selected for a pilot fat-fighting program using \$135,000 in seed money from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It will use the funds to finance a community garden next to city hall and to "focus on breast-feeding."

## Mississippi

Curious development in higher education, from a dispatch in the *Washington Post*:

Three universities in Mississippi must increase white enrollments to at least 10% and maintain that level for three years before receiving a portion of the \$524 million in state funds for school improvements provided in a federal court settlement.

# Terra Incognita



Special thanks to Russell Garrard, William Walker, Michael Roberts, and Alexander Stephanopolis 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](mailto:terraincognita@libertyunbound.com).)



# Can anyone be happier than a Catholic libertarian?

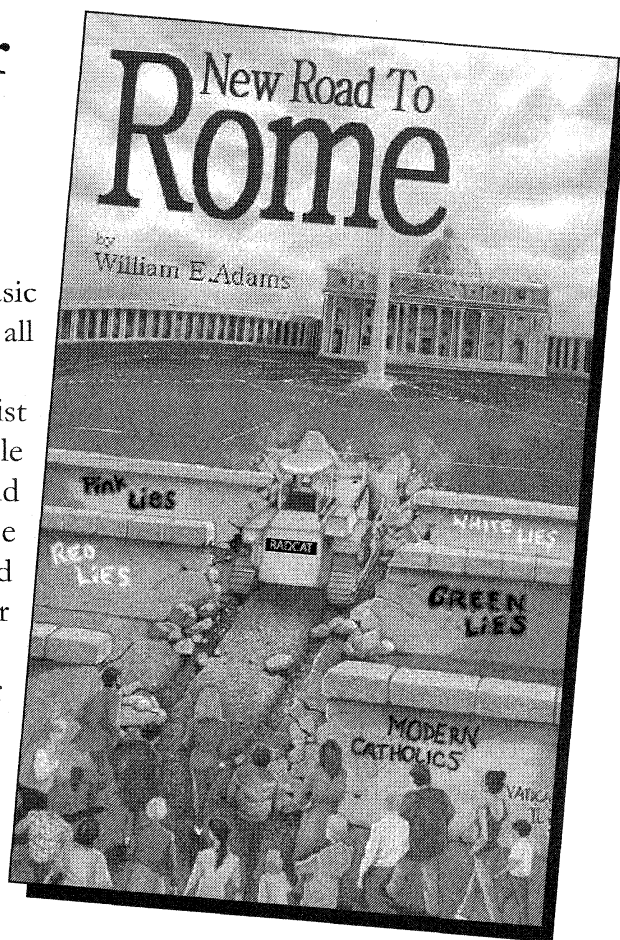
Libertarians and Roman Catholics share one basic teaching, the Doctrine of Subsidiarity. It teaches that all problems should be solved at the lowest possible level.

Moses got Aaron to do his talking for him. Christ appointed apostles. Bishops ordain priests. The people of God have practiced subsidiarity in theological and operational matters. God loves Libertarians because they believe in subsidiarity when it comes to politics, and that's a bigger step toward truth than many on the other side can take.

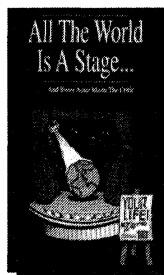
On the other side, control freaks want to do our thinking for us.

Should all libertarians be Catholics? Many already are, in that they feel God has given them the dignity and ability to think for themselves. It's a little harder to take the leap into full obedience, but a lot of smart people have.

You ought to explore this, especially if you're starting to be bitter and angry about how freedom is being destroyed a step at a time. Three books will cheer you up.



*Crats!* is a novel, halfway between Rand and Aquinas. It shows the relationship between reducing the size of government and God's great love for us. It shows that we can't fix government, even with armed rebellion, but we can fix ourselves.



*All the World is a Stage* is an easy read. It simplifies the world so we can see where we sit in our enemies' sights.

*New Road to Rome* explores a new theory of matter and human history. It helps us see that we live in God's world, which He programmed in place several thousand years ago. All human history (are you a child of Shem, Japheth, or Ham?) is boiled down to what our great-great grandparents believed. (They were largely right.). Learn about Catholic Fundamentalism and Radical Catholics, the theological soul-mates of libertarians.

Each book is \$6.95, plus \$2.00 s&h. The author has over a hundred patents, a sense of humor, and understands that, politically, libertarians are the salt that gives the world an important flavor. Order all three books for 19.95, plus \$3.00 s&h. If you don't like them, give them to your angriest friend, or send them back. We'll refund the purchase price.



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My family helped win the American Revolution.

But our fight against tyranny continues.

I am fighting wine wholesalers who use government's power  
to protect their monopoly and I am taking my fight  
to the U.S. Supreme Court.

I am a revolutionary.

*I am IJ.*



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