

Liberty

January–February 2008

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The Ron Paul Surge

My Home Was Invaded by Drug Thugs

by Peter McWilliams

The Unnecessary War

by Jon Harrison

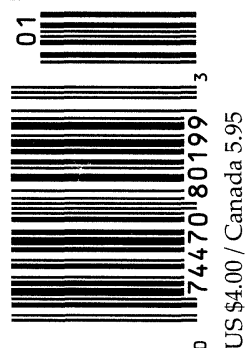
Laissez Faire: R.I.P.?

by Bruce Ramsey

An Angry Man, Back From the Dead

by Matthew Bandyk

Also: *John Hospers* contemplates the problem of God, *Leland Yeager* discovers the fun in language, *Jo Ann Skousen* finds Frankenstein still young, after all these years . . . plus other articles, reviews & humor.



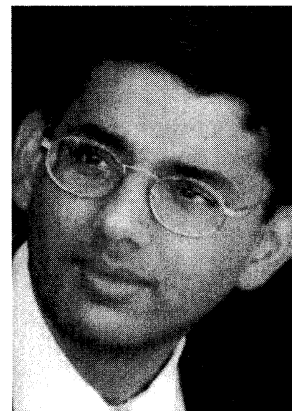
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Hitchens vs. D'Souza



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—Professor Clive Wynn
Professor of Psychology,
University of Florida

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Letters

Israeli Elephant

I was a bit startled by Jon Harrison's statement that "America could be sucked into a new Middle East war, this time as the defender of Zionism" ("Nine Days in July," October 2007). Excuse me, but isn't that what we're already doing in Iraq? The "elephant in the living room" in any discussion of the Iraq war is simply that it was not just about WMDs, or oil, or terrorism, but that the Iraqi regime was causing the Israelis intense discomfort (just as the Iranian regime is doing now), so it had to go. The regime in Iran is next on the hit list, and I imagine the U.S. military will be sent in to do the heavy lifting, as usual.

The Harrison article was excellent, by the way, and dealt with many important issues. But any further discussion of our foreign policy in the Middle East, in order to be realistic, has to come to grips with the fact that it is driven entirely by Israel's interests, hence by Zionism.

Dave Witter
Pittsburgh, Pa.

Harrison responds: Mr. Witter is correct concerning the metaphorical pachyderm referenced in his letter. Perhaps I should have said: "... this time as the direct defender of Zionism."

I would take issue with him on one point. I remain convinced that U.S. forces will not be used to attack Iran, at least not during the remainder of Bush's term. I have made this point many times, including in this magazine. War with Iran is not going to happen because we don't have the forces available for it. The drawn-out nature of the Iraq occupation, and the resulting overstrain on our military, prohibit it. Air strikes could be done, but the prospect of Iranian retaliation against our forces

in Iraq will I believe stay Bush's hand. I do not, however, rule out completely an Israeli strike along the lines of the Sept. 6 attack on Syria.

Overdrawn at the Energy Bank

Gary Jason makes a good stab at linking Americans' energy woes, including the resurgence of an aggressive Russia — and a whole assortment of other twirly-mustachioed foreign-baddy types — to dastardly environmentalists ("Back in the USSR," November 2007).

"For this dependence upon foreign oil and the consequent transfer of wealth to a flock of autocratic countries, we have to thank . . . the environmentalist Left. It has done a superb job of choking our domestic energy industries." At the risk of shooting down a lovely piece of "here's mud in yer eye" rhetorical ju-jitsu against a sometimes self-parodying environmental movement, alas, it isn't so.

Half of the United States' uranium comes from the decommissioning of former Soviet warheads — but it's more cost effective than digging it out of the ground, after all. While being so dependent on a former (future?) deadly rival in geopolitics may make sense to some economists, for example, I suspect they are the same ones writing those computer-trading programs that can never fail catastrophically, and when they do, it's only because reality has failed to live up to the axioms.

It's true that there has been no real building or replacement of oil refining capacity over the past couple of decades. Part of this may indeed have to do with environmental legislation.

First of all, considering what has been done by large oil-refining companies in the past as a matter of course (I'm thinking of things like flushing out the tanks and seepage pits into

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the river, or contaminating ground so that massive subsoil walls have to be installed to prevent the ruining of aquifers), environmental legislation can be an understandable collective reaction against collectively falling into third-world conditions.

Secondly, a rational firm of oil executives will hardly be expected to invest in massive sunk costs (with future liabilities) of refinery capacity, if they suspect that we are approaching either the inflection point or midpoint of global oil production.

And I'm not buying the idea, for example, that using 90% of Canada's natural gas (assuming they will be so nice, eh?) to cook oil out of tar sand, or assuming that the Kremlin will follow Harvard Business School axioms to effectively subsidize our uranium use, is inherently more efficient or sensible than strategic investment in renewable energy methodology. The key word is "methodology," because it involves cultural attitudes, overall design approaches, and forethought; no magic pills. I'm not saying we can't use coal-derived gas, for example, only that it becomes economical to use not because of environmental legislation effects on oil, but because of geopolitical and geological realities exogenous to typical economic assumptions.

Just because something can be done

through market mechanisms, that does not sanctify it. We do not have a God-given right to expect cheap energy on tap, and if we behave like irresponsible spoiled brats who burn through Mother Nature's petroleum trust fund (whilst trashing the house) so that we can party like there's no tomorrow, there's no point in blaming tree-huggers for raining on our parade.

Oisín Ó Conail
Wexford, Ireland

Jason responds: I thank Mr. Ó Conail for his letter. From the depth of his sarcasm, I suspect that I may have wounded another Green soul. Oh, well, as they say, the truth hurts. In order of his points:

1. It doesn't matter if at present some uranium is being purchased from decommissioned Russian warheads — they and we have a lot to decommission. We are not going to become dependent upon them, because in reality uranium is a fairly common element in the Earth's crust — more abundant than tin, mercury, or silver. There are about 5 million tons of proven reserves of high-grade ore, with an additional 35 million tons of proven reserves of lower grade ore. That's just what is known; with the death of nuclear power in the 1970s, exploration dropped off. Moreover, the Japanese have

shown that uranium can be extracted from seawater, which would provide an additional 4.6 billion tons.

The biggest known deposits by far are in Australia and Canada, which together are roughly half the known reserves. Neither of them is likely to use the inflow of our money to buy weapons to point at us, or fund terrorists trying to kill us, as the various Middle Eastern nations are doing. Nor are Australia and Canada likely to try to establish hegemony over Eastern Europe and arm Iran with nuclear weapons, as Russia seems hellbent on doing. By the way, the U.S. also has proven deposits — about one third of Russia's. This is just known reserves, even though exploration dropped off with the cessation of new nuclear plant construction 30 years ago.

2. But all this is minor. Ó Conail ignores my main contention: that the environmentalists were central in killing off nuclear power, finally ending (under Clinton and Gore) even research into closed fuel cycle reactors. Perhaps Ó Conail thinks that was a glorious victory for environmentalism. I was merely pointing to the unintended consequences — namely, increasing dependence upon malign powers. My apologies if pointing out the obvious hurt Ó Conail's feelings.

3. Ó Conail grudgingly allows that "part" of the dearth of refining facilities may be due to environmental regulation, but claims that what has stopped new refineries from being built is that oil companies realize the peak of oil production is past. Nonsense. First, the environmentalists killed off drilling for known reserves offshore in Florida and California, as well as ANWR (another brilliant Clinton-Gore decision). Second, more than "part" of the blame for the lack of refineries is due to the environmentalists. Their regulations, together with the crazy-quilt number of different state formulas for gasoline, have been major obstacles. Ó Conail displays inconsistency here: first he denies that the enviros are the major cause of this, but then he brags that these environmental roadblocks are "an understandable collective reaction" to the ecological damage caused by refineries. Which is it?

4. Ó Conail scolds me about market

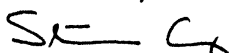
This edition of *Liberty* is a "double issue." We publish *Liberty* eleven times a year, providing a bonanza in the January–February combined edition.

At *Liberty* headquarters, however, "January–February" happens a little early. The journal goes to press just before Thanksgiving, and it hits the stands in December, thus celebrating both a successful conclusion of 2007 and a hopeful beginning of 2008.

Liberty's founder, R.W. Bradford, thought of this journal as an ever-recurring celebration of libertarian thought, a "banquet" of the best we can bring to the perpetual holiday table that is individual freedom. He set no limits to *Liberty*'s interests, because he had discovered no limits to libertarians' intellectual appetites.

As you can see by a glance at this issue's table of contents, *Liberty* continues to offer a vast and varied menu. Pull up a chair — you're welcome to the party.

For *Liberty*,


Stephen Cox
Editor

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mechanisms not sanctifying everything (as if I ever contended they did). He then urges investment in what he views as inherently more efficient and sensible renewable energy sources (i.e., he justifies renewable energy sources by — market mechanisms!). Moving past the inconsistency, I would make the point that solar and wind power have hardly proven economically superior. Please note, Mr. Ó Conail, that I certainly hope they do one day prove superior. This world needs an increasing energy supply if the poorer countries are ever to achieve living standards comparable to our own — which I fervently hope they do. But then, I'm more of a people-hugger than a tree-hugger.

Let me put the matter as plainly as I can. I certainly don't hate environmentalism as such. I certainly do favor a clean environment. What I oppose are those extreme environmentalists who simply refuse to take into account the need for a decent level of prosperity, and oppose absolutely oil, coal, and especially nuclear power. Such extremists not only exist, they seem to me to be driving the environmentalist movement.

The Return of the Goldwater Republicans

David Beito's "Splitting the top tier, helping Ron Paul" (Reflections, November) reminded me of the modern-day conservative movement's founding father, the late Arizona senator and 1964 Republican presidential candidate Barry Goldwater.

Goldwater believed that what consenting adults consume, inhale, perform, read, or view in the privacy of their own homes or private social clubs isn't the concern of government. Individual economic and civil liberties prosper most when government stays out of both the bedroom and marketplace. Limited government meant that taxpayers' dollars should be spent prudently with the least amount of confiscatory taxation accompanied by real balanced budgets, no deficits, and actual surpluses.

He would never support the massive deficit spending that has resulted in today's \$9 trillion debt. He also would have opposed the thousands of congressional earmarks supporting tens of billions of dollars in pork-barrel

spending each year. He was no fan of corporate welfare or spending billions on useless weapons systems funded by Congress but not requested by the Pentagon.

Remember Goldwater's stand concerning gays in the military? He said, "You don't have to be straight to be in the military; you just have to be able to shoot straight." About the so-called Moral Majority: "I think every good Christian ought to kick Jerry Falwell right in the ass."

If Goldwater were alive today, he would say "In your heart, you know Dr. Paul is right!"

Larry Penner
Great Neck, N.Y.

National Socialism

I thoroughly enjoyed Bruce Ramsey's review of "The Wages of Destruction" ("Could Hitler Have Won?", November).

Regarding whether Nazism was "socialist," in "A World at Arms," Gerhard Weinberg defines the Nazi economic aims on page 478: "The economy would be directed by the state with industry strictly controlled and regulated — insofar as it was not actually owned by the government or by the growing empire of the SS." I don't know what that could be called outside of "socialist."

Nazism began with largely privately held means of production and moved toward the opposite, while Red China pretty much started with "public" ownership of same and migrated the other way; at some time or other the paths intersected.

Why Nazism is seen as right-wing is a mystery to me; both seem to have had the same results in mind, both economically and as regards personal freedom.

Ron LaDow
San Francisco, Calif.

Letters to the editor

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Reflections

Sex or power? — Ed Henry has reported for CNN that, according to a soon-to-be-released book based on off-the-record talks, former President Gerald Ford thought that former President Bill Clinton was addicted to sex. No comment by Henry as to whether or not Ford gave his opinion as to the sun rising in the east. Why is it that no politician ever admits to thinking that another politician is addicted to power? Is it for the same reason that, big as it is, fish cannot see the ocean? — Ross Levatter

Fa ra ra ra ra — According to the AFP: "Ten doctorate students from China's elite universities are calling for a boycott of Christmas and urging people to revert to Chinese traditions. In a statement carried by many Chinese Internet websites, they lamented the loss of Chinese traditions and morals, amid what they said was the widening invasion of western popular culture."

Fortunately, in a nation of 1.3 billion people, the opinions of ten are highly irrelevant. Were their ideas not directly in line with American multiculturalists, such a protest involving only 0.8 millionths of a percent opinion would have been completely ignored. (Libertarians routinely poll somewhat higher than 0.8 millionths of a percent, and rarely get the kind of press this story received.)

It also shows that the grand Western tradition of ivory-tower elitism is thriving in China. Perhaps these kids are seeking tenured positions in American universities.

They aren't being very sensitive to the plight of the working man either. How many of their cousins are gainfully employed stringing together Christmas lights, or hot-seaming snow globes?

Here's a fun game to play at home: reach into your box of Christmas decorations, and start pulling out ornaments. See how long it takes before you grab something that doesn't say "Made in China." Unless you have some pretty old heirlooms from Japan or Germany, you're going to work your way down to the bottom of the box pretty quickly. And unless you have a clothespin ornament your kid made, or something you got from your grandparents, you'll probably never come across anything Made in the USA.

Christmas is a half trillion dollar per year industry, and probably at least 90% of that money ends up in China. It's not

just the ornaments either, since most of the clock radios, foot massagers, and ties you'll find under the tree are Chinese as well.

These protesting retro-communists have to realize: it's not Christ who is being worshipped, it's Santa Claus. To them, he is the big fat god of American capitalism, who each year brings wealth and prosperity to the Chinese people.

— Tim Slagle

We suck young blood — One of the terrors of writing on the depredations of government is that of seeing one's metaphors become flesh. When Lysander Spooner wrote of the government being "like a highwayman," surely he did not picture federal agents blockading the road and seizing money from American citizens; yet, money laundering

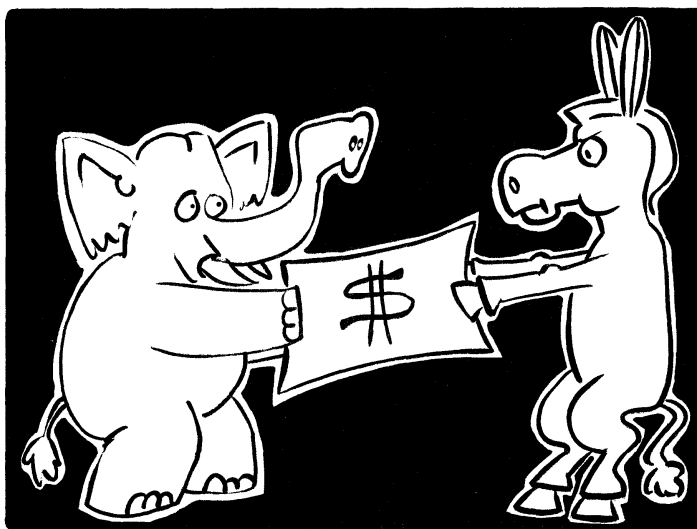
laws now allow them to do just that. Likewise, one doubts that the thousands of pundits and frustrated taxpayers who have referred to their elected rulers as "bloodsuckers" never imagined that the enforcers of the legislative will would accost them in order to forcibly extract blood.

Yet, in a number of states, this is now the case: the Wisconsin Supreme Court recently ruled that police officers could force suspected drunk drivers to give blood, in order to bolster evidence collected through notoriously unreliable breathalyzers. The New

Jersey Supreme Court went further, ruling that officers who used "extreme force" (inflicting permanent physical damage) on a DUI suspect were authorized to do so, and thus immune from prosecution.

Combine this with, as Reason's Radley Balko reminds us, the U.S. Supreme Court decision from a while back that sobriety checkpoints are constitutional, and it is conceivable that those checkpoints will soon include the extraction of blood from every motorist passing that way — with, if one is unwilling or unlucky, a bit of extreme force to boot. Which brings to mind another old image, in danger of incarnation: "a boot, stomping on a human face — forever." — Andrew Ferguson

Nanny state and mother love — The parade of televised U.S. presidential debates is ridiculously long, especially so early in the process — before even the first primaries. With so many candidates on one stage, style inevitably



S.H. Chambers

trumps substance. But I watch a lot of these things — as a kind of civic penance, for not making complete textual analyses of every Cato and Brookings Institute policy paper as I should. I'm sure you're the same.

Anyway, as I was slogging through the Nov. 15 Democratic candidates' debate from Las Vegas, something different occurred. One segment involved supposedly undecided voters asking the candidates questions directly. (This was

the integration of a favorite post-debate TV ritual: sticking a microphone in front of ordinary people and asking their impressions.) Cynical political professionals call the segments "peasants under glass" — they also sometimes feed the peasants scripted questions.

At least three of the supposedly undecided voters were women in late middle age who were concerned about their adult or near-adult male children. One babushka wanted

Word Watch

by Stephen Cox

I know it's a movie-house cliché, but it's scary nonetheless — the story of the demon twin, the entity that seems identical to some nice, normal person but is actually a Satanic monster, determined to suck the life out of its charming and pious host, and probably all the neighbors, too.

There is an ornithological equivalent: the cowbird, a parasite that lays its eggs in the nests of other birds. Of the cowbird, Wikipedia, the Miraculous Oracle, opines: "The cowbird eggs do not look much different from the hosts' eggs, and the host will normally incubate the eggs. The cowbird chicks grow quickly, and may consume most of the food the host brings. If starvation does not kill the other birds, in some species the cowbird will use its large size to push the other chicks out of the nest."

Some words are like the cowbird and the demon twin. They look like other words; they appear to be well reared, well behaved, with useful roles to play in our society; but their real role is to destroy those other words, to seize their nests, annihilate their young, and permanently usurp their place.

Many of these demon words were launched into the world by the genius of political obscurantism, the devil that keeps transforming himself into an angel of light. An obvious example is *peace*, as in the Nobel Peace Prize, *fight for peace*, or *peace out, man!* Such phrases may sound better than "the Nobel Prize for *Political Activism*," or "*fight for nation building*," or "*stay with the gang or else, man!*"; but when you find out more about the specific activities being celebrated, you see that the cowbird or the demon twin has triumphed. There's a difference between "peace" and peace, and when "peace" predominates, peace is very much the loser.

Another kind of triumph occurs when the television or the newspaper reports on trouble in an *inner-city* or a *downtown* school. Those words appear to be about geography. They're not. They convey something very different from the innocent message that Malcolm X Middle School doesn't happen to be in the suburbs. Their purpose is to whisper secrets of racial identity, to communicate the information that the students who attend that school are black or Hispanic, and are therefore (supposedly) condemned to lives of violence. So why not just say "black" or "Hispanic" instead of *inner-city*? Oh, that would be racist! The trick is to use racial code words to assure your audience that you are antiracist, to use the terms of racial consciousness while asserting your own racial sensitivity. It's a fixation on race, disguising itself as a respectful avoidance of any thought that race exists. It's the strategy of the cowbird and the evil twin.

We've seen worse. The term that was formerly used in these cir-

cumstances, as adjective as well as noun, was *ghetto*. That word is now nearly extinct, ethnic politics having grown much more sophisticated than it was in 1965. *Ghetto*, which flourished in the badlands of the Great Society, was even more ravenously determined than *inner-city* to eliminate its rival, plain description. Before its territory was destroyed by gentrification, *ghetto* managed to exterminate a number of useful species, including *slum* and *bad neighborhood*, which formerly had been in daily and accurate use by every resident of the *ghetto*. Those terms, apparently so similar to *ghetto*, were too objective and specific to compete with the politicized metaphor. They didn't come down on one side or the other on the question of who was to blame for *crime* and *poor housing*. They left open the possibility that there might be certain conditions for which no one was to blame, or if someone was, perhaps it was a lot of different people. The goal of *ghetto* was to kill that thought, substituting the idea that poor people in 20th-Century America are treated in the same way that Jews were treated in Nazi Europe.

The whole thing was *infamous* — but please observe that this is not an adjective that can be allowed to wander loose, impersonating other adjectives. *Infamous* has its proper function (as, I am sure, or almost sure, the cowbird has), but when it escapes from proximity to a lighted dictionary, it immediately becomes a demon twin. *Infamous* means "evil, wicked, of evil fame." It does not — as popularly supposed — mean "very famous." If you read an email that says, "We went to the church social today and enjoyed Aunt Sally's infamous fruit cobbler," you are witnessing a dread manifestation of the evil twin. God help Aunt Sally, and her cobbler. When Franklin Roosevelt said that Dec. 7, 1941, was "a date which will live in infamy," he did not mean that it had become, like, really famous and sort of, well, admirable, you know. He meant that it was an evil date.

What happens to the Aunt Sallies of this world is as nothing compared to what happens to political discourse, once the cowbirds land on it. Then *divisive* becomes a replacement term for *dissenting* (at least in regard to dissents that we don't like), while the *weird*, *strange*, and *downright nutty* people who have somehow arrived at our own conclusions become *controversial* and *provocative*. But no matter what the news writers and the editorialists (groups increasingly hard to distinguish) choose to call someone, there really is a difference between a raving lunatic and an eccentric person who stirs up a little controversy. Maybe the controversy is helpful and interesting; maybe it's just sort of dull, after all. But *controversial* has been used so frequently to mean *he's a nut, but he's our kind of nut* as virtually to annihilate the idea of the truly controversial. As

a promise that none of the candidates would ever draft her precious boy into the military and send him into harm's way. Another was angry that her son was poor and wanted to know what the candidates would do about it.

One such woman would have been unremarkable; but several suggested design. Either CNN or the Democratic Party was making a point to showcase aging soccer moms expressing mother love.

for *divisive*: it is entirely possible to cause debate and division — it is entirely possible to speak as a minority of one, and try to attract a second person to your side — without becoming unhinged or socially destructive. The constant reiteration of *divisive* has almost obliterated that distinction. It's a cowbird word.

One common function of cowbird words is to fog up political and moral debate, so that people have trouble thinking beyond the most superficial, commonplace conceptions. But these words do other things. Consider the word *issues*. As I observed in a previous Word Watch column, *issues* has a political history and is often used for politically obscurantist purposes. If I say I *have issues* about something and am agitating for a law to *resolve* those *issues*, the implication is that I should be respected for *engaging the issues* — as opposed, for instance, to merely *stating an opinion, sounding off, griping, grouching, or being a stupid nag*. This goes a long way toward demanding that other people just surrender to the *issues I advocate*.

But now the *issues* bird is raiding other nests. A recent news report asserts that Reggie Bush, the football player, needs to “clean up his issues.” Once again, of course, the “issues” aren't subjects that are up for free debate, as in: “The issue is, should the U.S. get out of the UN?” That's the old sense of the word “issues.” But neither are they *political causes* or even *personal feelings about political causes*. This time, they're just some alleged infractions of footballish rules. *Issues* has become a cowbird word for *personal problems* or *mistakes of any kind*. I could also comment on the ludicrous image of *cleaning an issue*, a job that must be about as hard as cleaning a cowbird — but I won't. That would be piling on.

In aesthetic terms, one of the worst of the cowbird words is *squash*. It's a good enough word, when it stays in its own nest; but it just can't seem to do so. What it wants is to confuse itself with *quash*, as in “The governor *quashed* the highway tax” or “The teacher *quashed* the students' proposal.” And it succeeds, apparently because even intelligent people are too illiterate to know that these are two different words, or that one of them *exists*. My favorite political talk show, “John and Ken,” now describes judges as *squashing* referenda. Friends complain that their bosses often *squash* their ideas. I even hear of marriages being *squashed* by unsympathetic parents.

Now, picture a tomato. What do you do when you want to destroy it? You *squash* it. You put your foot on the thing and flatten it. Its insides spurt out, and there's a mess on the sidewalk. End of tomato. Fine. That's how *squash* ought to be used. But is that what happens when you reject a law, turn down a proposal, suppress a debate, irritate your children? Do the insides of the law spurt out? Does the debate leave a stain on your shoe? The answer is No, it doesn't; but that's what you're saying when you use the word *squash*.

The fact that so few people notice this kind of thing is a bad omen. It means that they feel at home with the evil twin. It means that they're content with the cowbird's kids. And it means that worse will follow.

That wasn't the final effect. Instead, it sounded like the women were overprotective and their grown-up sons were — as a result? — morons.

— Jim Walsh

Mailer's Ghost — Norman Mailer is dead at 84. Demosthenes, when told of the death of Alexander the Great, said it could not be — for else the world would stink of the corpse. One might say something similar about Mailer and the world of letters. If egos rather than flesh stank, then surely we would have smelled Norman's departure before it made the news. The man's astounding self-regard was on parade for the near six decades of his public life.

He was probably the greatest killer of trees in our time, except for Isaac Asimov. His product, generally, was both prolix and second-rate. And most of the exceptions were third- or fourth-rate. That he was so lionized bespeaks the lionizers' poor taste, nothing more.

Then there is the matter of Jack Henry Abbott and the long-forgotten waiter he killed, thanks to Norman's getting Abbott sprung from prison. That should have been the last we heard of Norman. Alas, he carried on for another 25-plus years.

It has been a long-held belief of mine that even the worst poseurs will express a deep truth once in their lives. This was so of Norman. “A man must drink until he finds the truth,” he told Playboy magazine an eon or so ago. Then, recently, he came up with another: “I think the novel is on the way out,” he said at a National Book Awards ceremony in 2005. On the other hand, perhaps this latter observation is too obvious to be rated profound.

Mailer's humor and his willingness to flout convention were sometimes admirable. His opposition to the war in Vietnam was rooted in a feeling for his fellow human beings that I certainly would not deny. But his reputation stands or falls as man of letters, an artist. He was already unread; in ten years he will be completely forgotten.

— Jon Harrison

Federal bureaucracy causes insanity — The September issue of Scientific American reports that the Federal Emergency Management Agency's “failed rebuilding after Katrina [has] set off a mental health crisis in the Gulf.” And the crisis has actually been made worse by successful relief efforts, which are considered by mental health experts as shamefully inadequate.

Referring to the free temporary housing that FEMA has provided, Scientific American reports that “trailer life . . . has incubated feelings of isolation and despair.” Let's hope and pray that this malignant virus doesn't spread. Unfortunately, reports already indicate that “distress . . . depression, anxiety and sleep disorders” have taken strong root in Mississippi, where over 68% of female caregivers are suffering. I wonder how the care receivers are doing.

— Robert H. Miller

Latter day slaughter — You have to give some grudging admiration to the teachers' unions: in the cause of single-minded, unscrupulous protection of their turf, they will do whatever it takes to deny people free choice in education. They spent a bundle of money (obtained from members' dues) to run an off-year referendum on the recently-passed Utah voucher program. And they won by a large majority.

Of course, off-year elections typically favor public-employee unions, because general public participation is

pathetically low, and the organized turn-out of union members becomes decisive. Never mind that the Utah voucher program was modest and specifically designed *not* to reduce state funding of public schools by even one nickel. No, the very idea of any competition to the public monopoly had to be destroyed.

In this the unions were helped, shamefully, by quite a few suburban voters, who often fear that allowing minority students free choice will mean — horrors! — that some may show up at those (relatively better) suburban public schools. This is a short-sighted self-interest, indeed.

Some libertarian commentators have drawn the conclusion that the Utah election was a welcome defeat, because it will hasten the day when all government involvement in schools will cease. Oh, please. The real meaning of the Utah vote is that the day when government gets out of schools has been put off to infinity. The teachers' unions feel invincible.

As to the suggestion by some commentators that we should now support tax credits for parents who send their kids to private schools, well, while I enthusiastically support that idea, we need to be clear on two things.

First, the teachers' unions and the educational establishment oppose tax credits or deductions for private school tuition no less than they oppose vouchers, and they have fought against them successfully.

Second, tax credits won't touch the heart of the problem — that poor kids in failing public schools are stuck there. Giving parents a tax credit won't help when their parents don't earn enough to pay tuition or even file for taxes — unless the commentators envision a tax credit for people who don't file taxes, which sounds suspiciously like a voucher by another name.

I favor continuing the fight. The teachers' unions and the educrats need to win every state, every election, whereas we need to win in only one state, to start showing what can happen. And each election hits their coffers hard — telemarketing propaganda isn't cheap.

But we need to be savvy. To begin with, we need to push for initiatives only during general elections, when the unions can't game the system by getting their voters out while the vast majority sits still.

We also need to get real about enacting laws to stop unions from freely spending members' dues to screw minority kids. Washington state just passed and upheld such an initiative;

we need to start pushing those initiatives in all other states.

More importantly, we need to target the message to the parents of minority students (who already favor vouchers) that they need to get out and vote. And we have to make the case to suburban parents that self-interest needs to be enlightened. Letting kids rot in failing schools produces people who are at higher risk for government dependency and criminal behavior, and you and your kids will pay a price for that. If you let half the kids in failing schools drop out, you shouldn't be surprised when jobs move to other countries where the educational system works, leaving your own kids out of luck.

— Gary Jason

At least he's no girlie man — The AP release out of London, headlined on AOL News Oct. 29, says it all: "Schwarzenegger Calls Pot 'Leaf,' Not Drug." The story did not clarify whether Schwarzenegger went on to say, "Now, steroids. *There's a drug!*"

— Ross Levatter

Moguls and a model dis the dollar — Well-known fashion model Gisele Bundchen announced recently that she would no longer accept her day rate in U.S. dollars. Sounding like a currency trader, she preferred the euro.

Bundchen's sister, who's also her agent, quickly said the model's comments were made as a joke during an off-the-record exchange with a journalist. But the story "had legs" and stuck around for several news cycles.

Various media outlets compared the Brazilian Bundchen to the Nebraskan Warren Buffett and other financial mandarins who are short the greenback.

So, joking or not, Bundchen made an impression. The response from mainstream U.S. media was quick — and angry. On his Fox News Channel television show, populist rabble-rouser Bill O'Reilly called her a "pinhead" for disrespecting the dollar. He predicted that the fat U.S. market for cosmetics would reject the leggy Brazilian for her rejection of its currency.

Like so much O'Reilly says, that seems like wishful thinking. And vesting American power in its appetite for overpriced consumer goods is a pathetic thing.

The American consumer's penchant for consuming isn't a promising foundation for economic growth. In fact, it's exactly the problem that worries Buffett and others who *aren't* joking about the dollar. As a country, we borrow more than most and save less than many. This creates activity — but not necessarily wealth.

And, if models are joking about the dollar, it must be in trouble. Currency traders (better educated but usually less attractive than Brazilian blondes) seem to think so. They've trimmed the dollar of more than half its value against a basket of G-8 currencies between 2002 and the end of 2007.

According to Bill Gross, manager of the world's biggest bond fund and the chief investment officer at California-based Pacific Investment Management Co.: "We've told all of our clients that if you only had one idea, one investment, it would be to buy an investment in a non-dollar currency."

Buffett, ranked by Forbes magazine as the world's third-richest person, told reporters in South Korea recently that he is bearish on the U.S. currency: "We still are negative on the dollar relative to most major currencies, so we bought stocks



"You're old enough to know now, son — your mother and I are weirdos."

in companies that earn their money in other currencies.”

In order to keep the U.S. out of recession, the Federal Reserve Board has consistently kept interest rates low. Of course, low rates have made yields on U.S. debt less attractive, so fewer foreign investors are buying it. Recently, U.S. two-year Treasuries yielded a third of a percentage point less than German government bonds of similar maturity. And the Germans have recently absorbed their economically dysfunctional Eastern relatives.

The model and moguls see what ordinary Americans don't — that the country is borrowing and manipulating its way to ruin. The piper must always be paid. Sometimes he's paid in bankruptcy court, sometimes at the World Bank, sometimes in the currency trading pits. The U.S. has never had to beg the world's help to support the dollar. But that time may be coming. And, when it does, remember that Gisele Bundchen was a canary in this particular coal mine.

— Jim Walsh

Click, read, learn — I have waxed lyrical before about independent thinktanks. Given the increasing uniformity of opinion on campuses, where humanities and social science faculty are now typically 95% liberal or leftist in orientation, having venues for classical liberal, libertarian, and conservative scholars is vital in keeping some semblance of intellectual debate alive.

Several recent scholarly contributions illustrate this. All the reports I will mention here are downloadable from the respective institutional websites.

First, from the Fraser Institute of Canada comes a report by the distinguished economists Nadeem Esmail and Michael Walker on the increasing problem of wait times in the Canadian National Health System, the inspiration for so many contemporary liberal nostrums for the problem of the uninsured in the U.S.

The report, entitled “Waiting Your Turn: Hospital Waiting Lists in Canada,” is the 17th annual report that the Fraser Institute has produced on the subject. It shows that, despite a massive recent infusion of money into the system by the Canadian government, wait times for medical treatment are longer than ever. For example, the time between seeing a GP and then seeing a relevant specialist increased from 8.8 weeks last year to 9.2 weeks now. And the time between being referred by a specialist for a hospital procedure and finally receiving the hospital treatment increased from 17.8 weeks last year to 18.3 weeks now.

The nearly 90-page report documents the problem in meticulous detail, graphing the widening disparity between reasonable and actual waits, both by province and for the country as a whole. Naturally, not a peep about these wait times has been mentioned in American mainstream news media — but then, the mainstream media are as dominated by leftist orthodoxy as the academy itself.

I found especially useful the authors' discussion of the inferiority of non-price rationing to price rationing as a way of allocating scarce resources. They make the point I wish were made in business ethics texts — that pricing has the merit of conveying information. In a free-market system, if the price of a drug or medical procedure is high, it informs both the consumer and the producer that they need to modify their behavior. The consumer learns to buy less of this technology,

or work more to afford the price, or consume less of something else. The producer learns to increase production. Others learn to make the same or similar products. All this is negated by government imposed rationing.

Moreover, non-price rationing often results in consumers who want or need a product less than others actually getting it, to the exclusion of those who need it more. And it can result in other sorts of unfairness, such as people with political pull or people in a lucky geographic location getting medical care before others do. One thinks here of the Canadian minister who, diagnosed with cancer, promptly flew to the U.S. for care. As the authors so nicely put it, “This evidence indicates that rationing by waiting is often a facade for a system of personal privilege, and perhaps even greater inequality than rationing by price.”

I turn now to the Heritage Foundation. Two of its recent reports make good reading. First is a study by Robert Rector, called “How Poor are America's Poor? Examining the ‘Plague’ of Poverty in America.” Rector looks at the living standards of America's poor, the 37 million that Sen. John Edwards keeps telling us live with chronic hunger, lack of shelter, and inadequate clothing. While not denying that real hardship exists, Rector surveys the data on the poor provided by the Census Bureau, and finds the picture quite different from the one that Edwards and his ilk have painted.

It turns out that 43% of the poor own their own homes, with the average having three bedrooms and one-and-a-half baths. Eighty percent of them have air-conditioning. Only 6% of them live in overcrowded homes; 66% have two rooms or more per person. Indeed, the average poor American has more living space than the average citizen of Paris, London, or Vienna. Moreover, 75% of America's poor own at least one car, and 31% own two or more. Ninety-seven out of 100 own at least one color TV, with over 50% owning two or more, and 62% have cable or satellite TV.

Also from Heritage is a report by economists William Beach and Guinevere Nell on the likely consequences of the new tax plan offered by Rep. Charles Rangel (D-New York) in the name of middle-class tax relief. The report, “The End of Pro-Growth Tax Policy: How the Rangel Tax Bill Could Affect the U.S. Economy,” estimated that the proposed Rangel tax hikes by themselves would cost 100,000 new jobs per year and lower household disposable income by \$30 billion per year. Add in the repeal of the Bush tax cuts, and you are looking at losing 600,000 new jobs per year, with a loss of \$200 billion per year in household disposable income. Rangel himself calls his bill (which the leading Democrats all seem to favor) “the mother of all tax bills.” He has the “mother” part right.

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Central to Rangel's plan is the imposition of a surtax and other new taxes on higher income earners, who (in the view of Rangel, Edwards, Obama, Clinton, and other such luminaries) are not paying their "fair" share of income taxes. Here a very recent report from the estimable Tax Foundation is pertinent.

This foundation, which has kept the country informed on tax policy at all levels of government since 1937, surveyed the IRS data released in October, and finds (again!) that the rich are indeed not paying their fair share — they are paying more than their fair share. The figures (for 2005) show an even greater contribution from the prior year. The top 1% earn 21% of national income but pay 39% of all income taxes; the top 5% earn 36% of all income but pay 60% of all income taxes; the top 10% earn 46% of income but pay 70% of all income taxes; the top 25% earn 68% of all income but pay 86% of all income taxes; and the top 50% earn 87% of all income but pay 97% of all income taxes.

In view of the fact that to make the top 5% of income earners one need only be earning about \$145,000 in total household income, it's obvious that hammering the upper income earners with more punitive taxes is outrageous.

The case for smaller government has to be continuously made, on the basis of data. Absent the contributions of the counter-academy, we wouldn't have it. — Gary Jason

The ugly truth — The president recently vetoed an SCHIP funding bill and the Democrats trotted out a "victim" to try to put a face on the issue. Twelve-year-old Graeme Frost spoke about how the SCHIP program — originally intended to help poor families afford health insurance — saved his life. The 12-year-old, who lives in the suburbs and attends private school, argued for the new bill — which not only expanded the coverage to families making over \$80,000 a year but allowed "children" to remain in the program up to age 25. The president opposed the bill for those reasons.

We want truth in politics. This issue isn't about kids like Graeme Frost, who was already eligible for SCHIP coverage anyway. The program's supporters should have found a more

representative spokesman — a 24-year-old, living in his parents' basement and complaining in between bong hits about the injustice of having to pay for Valtrex out of his own pocket because his ex-wife slept with the drummer in a Motley Crue tribute band.

You see, there really *are* two Americas.

— Tim Slagle

Gold in them thar seas! — Another year has passed, and I have enlarged my carbon footprint by attending the 2007 edition of the Annual Conference of the Libertarian Alliance, in association with the Libertarian International, an event held at the Liberty Club in London's Whitehall.

There was the usual wealth of high-quality lectures and discussions. Dr. Syed Kamal (Conservative Member of the European Parliament) spoke about the developing world and global capitalism. The chief battle on this front, of course, is the fight to convince politicians and members of NGOs that the world's poor can, indeed, survive without their "help." (On a similar note, the after-dinner speaker was the excellent Alex Singleton, president of the Globalisation Institute.)

Brian Micklethwait, of the blog Samizdata, and solicitor David Carr discussed the surveillance society, bringing forward the almost unbelievable statistic that Britain, while having 1% of the world's population, hosts 25% of the world's CCTV cameras.

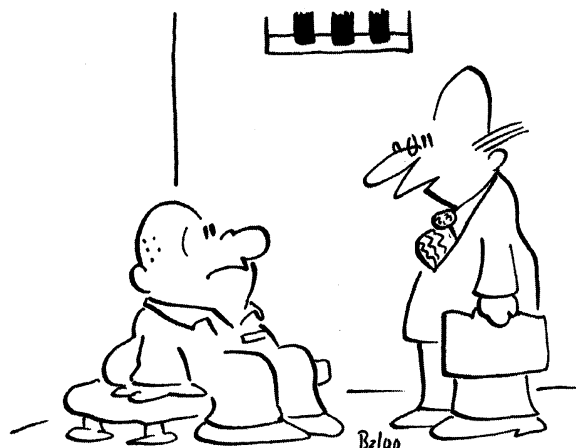
The closing talk — "Post-Modernity and Liberty" — was given by Marc-Henri Glendinning and the director of the Libertarian Alliance, Dr. Sean Gabb. Maybe it was a necessary dose of realism, but the speakers laid out a depressing analysis of the state of British politics, so valueless and devoid of debate has it become.

One lecture seemed especially original — the talk by Leon Louw, executive director of South Africa's Free Market Association, on "The Disaster of Water Socialism: Why the Sea should be privatised." At the core of his argument was the idea that the more private ownership, the more wealth, so the sea should not be left out of the private ownership system. At the moment, the oceans are *res nullius*, in that they are not yet the object of rights by any subject of any country and are, in a way, nationalized — claimed by nations to the extent they can make good their claims.

In considering the relevance of his argument, we must realize that water is three-dimensional, not two-dimensional. Once we do, we can see that the seas are much more important than the land. Any mineral wealth that is available on land may be there in greater amounts under the sea, despite the fact that its value may not yet have been tapped.

How can this value be claimed and used? States have done it in various ways. Much of the Netherlands is land "reclaimed" from the sea (although there is no good reason in law why one would need to "fill it in" in order to claim it). Further, nations with coastlines "own" up to about 200 kilometers off their shores. So, if states can do it, why shouldn't private organizations?

The usual caveats are thrown in the way. Some people find it hard to visualize clear distinctions and demarcations running across the seas. Contrary to popular myth, however, visually identifiable borders do not always exist on land. In the vast arid spaces of Australia, for example, there are farms hundreds of thousands of acres in size that have few obvious



"There were 37 eyewitnesses, so our best bet would be to use the 'performance art' defense."

boundaries. Moreover, most land that is owned and used isn't really occupied, any more than the seas are occupied.

Other people may wonder whether transoceanic voyages would be obstructed by private ownership of the seas. Yet in reality, the problem is no different from that of traveling over land. To fly, catch a train, or drive across many European nations or American states demands nothing more than voluntary cooperation, based on mutual self-interest. The post-WWII European order shows that there is no surer way of bringing peace than to spread commerce and wealth.

Alas, George W. Bush has been lobbying Congress to adhere to the Law of the Sea Treaty, which is a step toward nationalizing the sea. Indeed, some say that we should homestead the seas — but what have we seen from previous nationalizations of industries and resources? There would be no better way of driving whales to extinction than to relinquish control of the seas to a supernational body.

Indeed, the environmental bodies should — were they not so often socialist in ideology — be the first to agree with the proposal to spread private ownership to the oceans. Anyone concerned with the threat that certain marine species might go extinct should consider the “tragedy of the commons” — the tendency for economic resources to disappear when they are not owned and managed by individuals. (For an example, look to the environmentally irresponsible Common Fisheries policy pursued by the European Union.) While privatization is often seen as the domain of Exxon or Viacom, these are but one type of organization that would enter the market. The adoption of private ownership would result in the creation, en masse, of private conservation efforts.

What exists today is a primitive, seminal example of what could be in place. Some sections of the seas are privately owned, by way of concessions — e.g., for fishing and conservation — around New Zealand and Iceland. The system works, and, as with private ownership of previously delicate species of land animals in Africa, the numbers of animals grow when humans are allowed to own, farm, and preserve their property.

Louw strongly emphasized that it is not the responsibility of legislators and theorists to find all the solutions. Farmers in South Africa, to cite one instance, have found their own ingenious solutions to enhance efficiency and wealth. Why should distant theorists assume that they now have all the answers about the sea? We should be looking for legislation to establish property rights; if that happens, solutions to practical problems will follow in ways we cannot predict. — John Lalor

Fidel Castro: Requiescat in Limbo —

Reports of Castro's timely demise are only partially exaggerated. The Miami rumor mill has been so flooded with reports of his death kept secret by an elaborate conspiracy that *El Maximo Lider* himself had to come out of convalescence and grant a rambling public interview. The Economist even weighed in with a short piece about how such conspiracies are virtually impossible to carry through, in part because the perpetrators would be the beneficiaries of his demise.

But he has actually — perhaps — politically died (somewhat). The Aug. 4 issue of the British journal declared that the post-Fidel era has already begun. Raul Castro, second fiddle and heir apparent, has now been in charge for over a

year, without his brother's intrusive micromanagement. Raul has made some considerable procedural alterations. He has announced “structural and institutional changes” to the economy, and he has called for an “open debate” on economic liberalization — though the “pure poison” of “neo-liberal formulae” is off the table. Fidel, recovering slowly and making a few public appearances (but not at the July 26 celebration of the birthday of the Cuban Revolution), is allowing his brother full rein, though he still hovers in the background like a prickly conscience.

Not only do the Cuban cadres sense a change; even internal dissidents believe “a turning point has been reached.” The Economist cautiously concludes that “Raul, not Fidel, is the man making every important decision” now. But only a trained pearl diver should hold his breath. — Robert H. Miller

Cycles of outrage — Westerners would prefer that Pakistan be democratic. But having watched TV and seen the rioting mobs on Pakistani streets, not to mention the faces of former Prime Ministers Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto, they also intuitively realize that Pakistan has been extremely lucky to have a decisive person who carries some honor — in the form of Pervez Musharraf. They also realize that whoever comes next is going to be worse, and is certainly not going to be in control of events there. Secretly, the Western nations would rather see Musharraf continue. After all, in that way nuclear weapons will stay in safe hands. But it is too politically incorrect to say this. Westerners will likely point to what the dissident lawyers in Pakistan are doing. Aren't they fighting for liberty and democracy, at the risk of their lives? Shouldn't we all love and support them? La Rochefoucauld said, “What we call virtues are often just a collection of casual actions and selfish interests which chance, or our own industry, manages to arrange [in a certain way]. It is not always from valor that men are valiant, or from chastity that women are chaste.” The Pakistani lawyers' fight for liberty is just a facade. It is garb for a new kind of totalitarianism. They are merely tired of the military or, more importantly,

Inside Joke

When I die, what will happen to our inside joke?

Will it blossom in your brow, or wilt
And lose its subtlety, having lost
The look that incited it?

If our joke is stroked by another's tongue,
Will you still seek and hear my laugh,
As the deaf fiddler hears his song?

Will you crack the only mirror to our plan,
The hollow cave of our conspiracy's ghost?
Could you raise it with a better man?

Will it evaporate into the public domain?
Or will it secretly collapse — a virgin sympathy
Undressed, an expired refrain?

Might you remember it the moment when
you die? Will our inside joke be safe again?

— Garin K. Hovannisian

realize that the power-equation no longer favors Musharraf. A few years later, they will be on the streets again, fighting to get the military, the favorite national institution, back into power, and claiming how corrupt the democratically elected government is, as they have done scores of times in the 60 years since independence.

— Jayant Bhandari

Hey, get that out of your mouth! — Aqua Dot toys have been pulled off retailers' shelves nationwide, after news reports claimed that the toys contained gamma hydroxy butyrate — also known as GHB or the "date rape drug." (Actually, the toys contained a different chemical that, when eaten and metabolized, converts into GHB.) These reports put regulators and parents in a tizzy.

I've always been suspicious of the media label "Date Rape Drug." It's like calling duct tape "Abduction Wrap."

Also, I don't want to dismiss the scare felt by the parents of the two children who were hospitalized after eating Aqua Dots — but, when I grew up, you were taught not to eat your toys.

There has to be some recognition that it's dangerous for children to put non-food items in their mouths and start chewing.

Perhaps we need more data. We can outsource the research — set up a laboratory in a developing country where we feed kids toys to make certain they're edible. "Poor Wang Phat. Last week, he was testing army men. Not so bad eating them — but the next day, ouch! Especially the guy lying down with the bayonet."

— Tim Slagle

Reflections in a time of war — No, I'm not responsible for this terrible war. I don't study foreign affairs, I don't write about foreign affairs, and I didn't recommend that we go into Iraq. But I did have the impression that nuclear weapons were about to be set loose on the world, possibly landing in New York or somewhere else on the East Coast. And I thought that going to war was probably okay to get rid of a horrible dictator. So, now that we are mired in this tragedy, I feel guilty.

I should have foreseen its consequences and not dismissed the Cato Institute's opposition as if it were just another knee-jerk rant against any war.

What actually brought me to realize the foolhardiness of our preemptive war was a 2005 commentary by economist Don Boudreaux, which I just found again. He suggested that people may be responsible for the kind of government they get. "Why was Saddam Hussein ruling Iraq?" he wrote. "Were Iraqis just incredibly unlucky that such a vile dictator somehow grabbed power and ruled ruthlessly for so long? Or was Hussein's tyranny at least as much a consequence as a cause of a dysfunctional cultural, political, and economic situation?"

Saddam Hussein, like Marshal Tito, kept enmity in his country from erupting into constant war. He did it brutally and viciously. Today, not just his enemies but potentially every Iraqi faces brutality and viciousness. Personally, I feel very much as though we are back in the Vietnam War. It was eerie like this, too. At the time, watching a war going on while one was eating dinner was new. I didn't

watch much; I just wanted it to be over; and eventually it was. I don't watch this one much; I want it to be over; and it will be, but (as they used to say) at what price?

— Jane S. Shaw

Our statist pastime — After many months of background maneuvering, the federal government has finally indicted baseball player Barry Bonds. Not for steroid use or for injecting himself with human growth hormone, but for lying to the government about whether he had done such things.

Let me be frank: I despise Barry Bonds, or at least the public persona Bonds elects to use in games and media appearances. I hate his showboating. I hate his body armor. I hate his race-baiting.

Most of all, I hate that his name now lies above Hank Aaron's on the all-time home run list. Aaron, who faced much greater racial hatred on his way to breaking Ruth's record, has always handled himself with dignity and aplomb.

But as much as I want to see Bonds disgraced, I don't want to see him toppled by a perjury charge. I don't want to see him sent to prison, period.

If, as alleged, Bonds knowingly injected himself with "performance-enhancing drugs" and if he did so at a time when such substances were prohibited under the rules of Major League Baseball, and if there is verifiable evidence to show that the injections did in fact take place (or if he admits to it, as track star Marion Jones did, even though she never failed a drug test), then he should be banned from the sport and stripped of any statistical records achieved while he was doping.

And there it should end. He shouldn't be jailed for injecting steroids or HGH: any adult should be allowed to do so, if he chooses. And he shouldn't be jailed for lying to federal prosecutors: they had no business meddling in baseball's affairs in the first place — and, upon being asked to meddle by baseball commissioner Bud Selig, they should have declined. But, having thoroughly messed with Mom and apple pie, Congress took the opportunity to complete the trio, thus ending the era when American professional sports leagues could reasonably expect to deal with their own problems: labor problems (yes, I know: set the antitrust exemption aside), substance abuse, disciplinary proceedings, so on. I suspect this will see us move toward a more European model, toward the conventions of commissions to study every conceivable aspect of sport, and produce fat reports recommending that further study be undertaken — at, of course, the public expense, since, after all, it is in the public interest — but taking no action unless it be diametrically opposed to prudent policy.

In the meantime, Bonds may well beat the rap. Perjury is difficult to prove to a jury's satisfaction. I, for one, hope he does. As hard as it is to feel pity for the man, I find it even harder to believe that he could ever be as much a showboat as the average congressman.

— Andrew Ferguson

Leftist sugar daddies — In a previous reflection, I noted that the environmentalists' favorite fuel — ethanol — has an unintended adverse consequence. It jacks up the price of corn, a staple of the diet of tens of millions of

poor folk across the world. Well, a recent Washington Post article reveals another illustration of the Law of Unintended Consequences as regards ethanol: deforestation.

It turns out that the world rush to embrace ethanol is threatening the Cerrado, a huge plateau in Brazil. The Cerrado is home to a large variety of species, some of which are endangered. Half of it has been plowed under for soybean farms and cattle ranches. This deforestation looks likely to quicken as sugarcane farms get underway. Sugarcane, of course, is the crop of choice for Brazilian ethanol.

Money is being pumped into the ethanol industry from a lot of sources, including American agro-biz companies such as Archer Daniels Midland and investors such as George Soros. The company Soros backs (Adecoagro) is now one of the biggest players in the Brazilian ethanol industry. Even with the tariffs our politicians have placed on Brazilian products, last year we imported 500 million gallons of ethanol from Brazil, roughly 75% of all the ethanol we imported.

I suppose it is purely coincidental that Soros is a lavish backer of leftist politicians, who typically oppose nuclear power and drilling in ANWR and offshore everywhere else. If you block nuclear and additional oil, you make the expansion of ethanol inevitable — so any billions you've invested in that industry pay off nicely. A convenient coincidence, indeed.

— Gary Jason

Thought of the Dane — I was in a meeting with European journalists on a foundation-sponsored tour of the United States. It was a generally placid group until the subject of Turkey came up — mostly Muslim and mostly in Asia — petitioning to join the European Union. Of the journalists in the group, the Dane was vocally in favor of this and the Frenchman, against.

The Dane argued that if Turkey came in, it would become a friendly state and — he didn't quite use this term — a more civilized neighbor. If it were blackballed, it could become a rogue state like Iran.

The Frenchman shook his head. If that was the argument, he said, "then Turkey is not fit to become a European state." And anyway, he said, Turks are not Europeans.

They let their army dominate their government, the Greek said.

We should let them in, the Dane said.

If you're going to let in the Turks, the Frenchman replied: "What about the Moroccans? The Tunisians?"

The Dane, not answering that question, asserted that it was better to bring the Turks "onto the boat."

They're in NATO, the Frenchman said. That's enough. Admitting them to the EU would be inviting them to join a future European state. "There are 80 million Turks — almost as many as there are Germans," he said. He seemed to cringe at the thought of the French being outnumbered by another nationality. The Dane did not worry about it. Danes expect to be outnumbered.

The Italian was not worrying, either. Only 20% of Europeans want the Turks in. Sarkozy, the new French premier, is against it. Won't happen.

The subject shifted to Europe's birthrate. The Italian, whose countrymen have one of the lowest birthrates on

earth, said, "I'm 30 years old, and I have no kids. Many of my friends have no kids."

But why? "Wealth," the Dane said, but he was really talking about a kind of tiredness. "We have procreational fatigue. Big companies closing down. Old art. That's Europe for you."

The news reports say Europe is doing well — at least, better than it was in the '90s. But this group — except for the Czech, who was as upbeat as a dot-com prince — was notably glum. Italy was in "a deep crisis of confidence," he said, worried that Italy was not well-positioned to compete in the global economy. France had unemployment of 9%. The Frenchman said that was not such a bad figure, "for us," though he was clearly not proud of it. The Hungarian said the unemployment rate in her country was at 9% to 10%, with 10% inflation, and heavy taxes for all the social programs. Half of her income went to taxes, she said.

The Dane sniffed. Sixty-four percent of his income went to taxes. There was a moment of silence. Nobody could top that.

— Bruce Ramsey

Rank and Russia — In the '30s and '40s, when the world was young and naive, Freud and his fellow psychotherapists had legions of followers. Theories of human behavior flourished like mosquitoes on summer nights. If we could just find its causal factors, human behavior would be as predictable as hydrogen and oxygen producing water.

One mainstream theory said the personality was structured by birth trauma — tough birth, tough individual. A psychiatrist, Otto Rank, popularized this theory.

I thought of this hypothesis the other day as I read "The Last Tsar," by Edvard Radzinsky: the story of modern Russia's birth and the assassination of the imperial family. The Marxists mowed down the tsar, his relations, and his retainers — Al Capone style. No trial, no constitutional or legal protocol. Just shot the whole shebang. And millions more. What kind of state could come from such origins? By comparison the French Revolution was namby-pamby.

Rank would have loved it. It would have bolstered his



"Cruel? Maybe. Unusual? Definitely."

theory that organizations, like individuals, take on the coloration of their birth. Here was the metaphorical spawn of a gangster nation — a bold philosophical proof of his theory. Almost a century later repression still rules in Russia: poisonings, media suppression, absence of legal justice.

One of the more amusing, less gory, Soviet slogans of the day was “let us drive mankind to happiness with an iron hand.” Has anything changed between Moscow and Vladivostok?

— Ted Roberts

Motives in the dark — Jan. 1, 2008 is the 145th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation freeing the slaves in America. There has always been a historical debate over whether Lincoln’s motivations were honorable. I find that irrelevant. The bottom line is, that Lincoln freed the slaves. It was a good thing and he should be remembered for it.

Let me add I understand that Lincoln also undermined a lot of the Constitution — and I’m not suggesting that he be

let off the hook for that. Nor am I suggesting that the trade of the Constitution for Emancipation was a good one.

In politics, things are never what they seem. A bad man may do a good thing, if only to save his reputation. Bill Clinton signed the bill rescinding the federal 55-m.p.h. speed limit. I know the Republican-led Congress had him over a barrel and, if he could have gotten away with vetoing the bill, he would have. But he signed it. And I am grateful every time I cross the border into South Dakota and see a sign saying “Speed Limit 75.” A victory is a victory, however it’s achieved.

Say, for instance, that you are in a D.C. public park around midnight being held up at gunpoint. At that very minute, Sen. Larry Craig ambles into the same park. Craig’s wide stance scares off the gunman. Would you be any less grateful to the senator, knowing that he hadn’t ambled in to save your life? Of course not.

Unfortunately, the debate over Lincoln deserving historians’ laurels still gets stuck on the issue of slavery. It forces people who disagree with the Civil War into the uncomfortable position of defending slavery.

While I understand that a lot of libertarians enjoy the opportunity for debate that such a ticklish subject spawns, I would discourage it. Especially if you’re in a D.C. public park around midnight.

— Tim Slagle

The delusion of competence — Several kinds of behavior fall into a pattern when we see them as examples of the delusion of competence. Political position, fame, celebrity, or supposed prestige feeds one’s delusion of being able to remedy bad conditions and promote good ones.

Authoritative pronouncements about injustices committed long ago suggest competence almost to undo regrettable history and to compensate long-dead victims while imposing the burden somewhere, somehow, even though the offenders are long dead also.

Examples include the state of Alabama’s apologizing for slavery, the Catholic Church’s apologizing for disparaging Jews and mistreating Galileo, and resolutions to label mass killings of Armenians during World War I as genocide. (In some European countries, even just denying that genocide, or denying the Holocaust, is a punishable offense.)

At Duke University, 88 and then 87 professors, apparently basking in supposed academic authority, signed letters drawing fashionable conclusions from mere unsupported charges that rape was committed by members of the lacrosse team.

Movie actors and other celebrities give congressional testimony and join public campaigns to promote conventional opinions about climate change or about the harm done to poor workers in poor countries when one buys their products.

Holding hearings and drafting bills lend legislators an air of being able to do something about public concerns like tasteless song lyrics, drug-tainted sports records, drug addiction, abortion, and gay unions.

Politicians and celebrities like to appear knowledgeable about ongoing progress in science and technology, as

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Carnival

A DAMSEL FLY WITH FOLDED WINGS
wide-eyed can see the peace she brings

a dragonfly with wings foursquare
forever readies his next dare

When frigate birds swoop to the ground
to take what other birds have found

the katydid attributes blame;
cicadas stridulate the same

unlike the cooing mourning dove
whose varied hymns sing of one love

Ephemeral the mayfly’s song,
which may last all an evening long

or heard by swallows in the sky
that veer to feed, last but a sigh

Spiders spin webs, their passive chase
will guileless insect lives erase

not so the parasitic gall
that grows for years before oaks fall

Once when a firefly drew near
I saw its light just disappear

for blind bats with their radar grace
swallow down prey & leave no trace

This carnival of life & death
will witness our extinguished breath

At pale moonrise, tonight the clouds
sail by ash-white as human shrouds.

— John Wander

Ron Paul's Progress

Nose under the tent — Ron Paul is getting traction. I think everyone who's ever supported Ron Paul is shocked at the success he is experiencing — and no one seems more surprised than Ron Paul. Since modern political battle has become exclusive territory for narcissists and sociopaths, it's refreshing to see a candidate with humility.

I'm quite certain that there is a lot of surprise within the GOP hierarchy as well. I think that the Republicans have consistently dismissed libertarians and underestimated how much of their base is ex-LPers who got tired of losing elections.

I feel there are going to be two interesting outcomes from this primary that could have revolutionary impacts on the libertarian movement. First, there will be a much different LP — after Paul has drawn away manpower and resources for the duration of his campaign. And, if the Paul campaign gives the mainstream candidates any resistance, Republicans — for the first time in a long time — will have to recognize that there are a few libertarians in their big tent.

— Tim Slagle

Critical response — On Monday, Nov. 5, Ron Paul's U.S. presidential campaign raised over \$4 million. This was the largest single-day contribution total so far for any campaign in the 2008 presidential race. The money may help Paul emerge from the second-tier of GOP candidates in time for the early primaries.

The one-day haul resonated with mainstream media, which understands money in politics and promptly ordered up features on Paul. That coverage itself may have been worth several million dollars more to his campaign.

The money and media attention improve Paul's prospects, though he's still a dark horse. They also boost his chances of staying in the race through the Republican convention this summer, where he may be heard by a larger audience. Many small-government advocates — who loathe the major U.S. political parties but regret "throwing away" their support on third-party candidates — may be a bit happier about voting for Paul in a GOP primary than other options.

But one of the most interesting results of Paul's haul was the critical coverage that it received from statist partisans. Some critics harped on the allegation that some Paul supporters had used spam bots and other tools of unscrupulous internet marketing to gin up support. Others dismissed Paul as merely the Howard Dean of this cycle — an internet oddity destined for a quick exit from the center stage of American politics.

Still others responded more viscerally.

Andrew Leonard — a contributor to the left-wing website Salon.com — left Paul and his millions aside and attacked the donors. Here's some of what Leonard wrote:

Geeks skew libertarian. . . . By the nature of their work, programmers count on being able to precisely manipulate reality through their manipulation of code. . . . Libertarians take, as a starting point, that the fewest rules, or the least government, result in the cleanest code. . . . Get back to basics — get rid of the cruft, the ambiguities, the illogic. Paul's political positions — antiwar, states' rights, antiabortion, anti-death penalty, abolish the Federal Reserve, go back to the gold standard — are clear and unambiguous. The code for expressing those views is easily written.

Ri-i-ght. With charlatans like Hillary Clinton and John Edwards seeking the presidency, *Ron Paul* is the one who panders with simplistic bromides. (Also, it's interesting to see "clear and unambiguous" used as pejoratives when describing a politician. I'd say that's not a bug, it's a feature.)

Leonard — like many mainstream media types, affecting a pose of worldliness — defends the messiness of porcine establishment politics as adults' work. This condescension and cynicism is striking.

Get used to it. Regardless of how far Dr. Paul proceeds in this presidential cycle, he is articulating a reasonably coherent libertarian perspective. His code resonates and will be adopted by other programmers. As America's federal benefits system lumbers along toward insolvency, libertarian voices will grow louder in the political mainstream. And, as they do, establishment hacks will dismiss them as simplistic and unsophisticated — geeks who should stick to Halo 3.

But sloppy code fails. Cruft makes systems run slowly. And all the hipster condescension in the world doesn't change the fact that statist redistribution schemes are a bad, buggy application. The geeks supporting Ron Paul may be easy to ridicule; but they're used to that. Clean code is efficient. And time is on our side.

— Jim Walsh

Paul's haul — Most Americans don't know about Guy Fawkes Day, Nov. 5, which celebrates the capture of a man who in 1605 plotted to assassinate King James I of England by blowing up the House of Lords. But libertarians loved the political movie "V for Vendetta," in which a future Guy Hawkes brings a fascistic British state to trembling ruin with bluster, bombs, and the Fawkesian slogan, "Remember, remember the fifth of November." And so the idea was hatched for supporters of the presidential campaign of libertarian Rep. Ron Paul to funnel donations on one day — Nov. 5, 2007.

It was not a Paul idea; it came from fans who started a web page, ThisNovember5th.com. Their idea was to get media attention to a one-day record — a thing that could be done by outsiders only by means of the internet.

The goal was \$10 million, which was indeed fantastic. Paul actually raised \$4.07 million, which was still more than any of his Republican rivals had raised on any single day.

The Paul campaign said it had signed up more than 21,000 new donors on Nov 5. The Washington Post called it “head-snapping fundraising.”

So it was. And it came in the wake of \$5.2 million raised between July 1 and Sept. 30, which was head-snapping in itself. And that gets us to the main point: endurance. The

The Paul campaign said it had signed up more than 21,000 new donors on Nov 5. The Washington Post called it “head-snapping fundraising.”

primary contest for the presidency is a matter of endurance, and so far Ron Paul has endured. In addition to money he has a clear message and an enthusiastic following, which one cannot say of most of the others.

In its news story on Paul’s haul, the Washington Post quoted a Republican operative who said, “Money is a resource, not an outcome.” The man was right and, although the money has enabled Paul to get TV commercials on the air in New Hampshire, he is still polling in single digits. At press time, he is at 3.7% in New Hampshire — up from 1% in early summer, but still not in striking distance of victory. Intrade, the internet betting page, gives Paul’s chance of winning the nomination as 9%.

He’s still not winning — but he has risen to the top of the second tier. As I write, Paul’s chances of winning the Republican nomination are ranked third on Intrade, well behind Giuliani’s and Romney’s, and slightly ahead of Thompson’s and McCain’s, who have peaked and gone into decline.

Though Paul’s chances remain slight, he may win a bloc of delegates, particularly from the caucus states. Once the primary contests are over — and they will be over quickly — the focus will be on what Paul can do with his delegates, and whether he will be allowed to be heard at the convention. The better he does now, the more noise he can make then.

— Bruce Ramsey

Upcoming dates — The Libertarian Party will hold its presidential nominating convention in Denver in May 2008.

The Republican Party will hold its presidential nominating convention in St. Paul in September 2008.

This is a major problem for the Libertarian Party.

In 1988, the LP nominated Republican Congressman Ron Paul as its presidential candidate. Ron is now running for president on the Republican ticket. Despite large contributions — which, I somehow suspect, come mainly from left-wing antiwar types, not right-wing opponents of

tax increases or illegal immigration, both of which Ron also opposes — he will never be nominated by the Republicans. He will pick up a few delegates, and the Grand Old Party will do its best to keep these people from kicking up an antiwar, isolationist fuss at the convention.

That’s too bad — very much too bad. But it, like Ron’s defeat, seems inevitable.

In 1996, I reported for this journal from the Republican national convention in San Diego, where Pat Buchanan, the darling of the GOP’s core constituency, was prevented from staging any effective antiestablishment demonstration. You heard it here first: Ron will suffer the same fate.

In the meantime, the Libertarian Party will have to decide whether to nominate Ron — despite the fact that, while running for the Republican nomination, he would have no business accepting the Libertarian nomination, and doubtless would refuse to do so — or to nominate someone to run against the Republican nominee, who might, theoretically, be their old friend Ron.

For a libertarian like me, these proceedings will be sadly fascinating.

The Libertarian Party was a good idea to begin with. Since Ron’s campaign in 1988, however, it has been tossing in the shoals of American politics. Now it may be headed for the rocks.

I hate to see bright, well-motivated people experience disappointment, when they have done much good in the past, especially on the local level. (My own local LP, the glorious San Diego County Libertarian Party, has been responsible for tens of millions of dollars in tax rollbacks.) I am sure that 2008 will not bring the end of libertarian political action, action that continually increases, with or without the LP’s involvement. Ron’s candidacy is only the most obvious current instance. One of the LP’s institutional problems is the fact that libertarian ideas and projects can be found virtually everywhere, in both major parties, in think tanks, in activist groups, and throughout the popular media. The struggle for liberty is often motivated by “single issues,” not a uni-

It’s interesting to see “clear and unambiguous” used as pejoratives when describing a politician. That’s not a bug, it’s a feature.

fied doctrine, but this doesn’t render the struggle ineffective; sometimes, it leads to successes that unified doctrines seldom have in America.

The coming year may show us whether the LP as an institution can find a path toward continued productive work. If it cannot, the election of 2008 will be a particularly sad event, but it will by no means spell the end of the libertarian cause.

— Stephen Cox

Tet in Retrospect

by Jon Harrison

A generation ago, America fought a needless war.
Then, in January 1968, a decisive event occurred.

Forty years ago this month, on January 30–31, 1968, Viet Cong and North Vietnamese regular army forces launched the Tet Offensive in South Vietnam. U.S. and South Vietnamese forces and officialdom, and the U.S. public at home, were taken almost completely by surprise.

As the battles played out in South Vietnam and on television and in newspaper columns across the U.S., a profound shift took place in the American attitude toward the war. Defeated on the battlefield, the enemy won a propaganda victory of enormous importance. Because of Tet, the administration of Lyndon Johnson chose to scale back U.S. involvement in the war. The “Big Push” of 1966–67 was replaced on the American side by the beginnings of “Vietnamization,” a policy formalized under President Richard Nixon in 1969. The Viet Cong and North Vietnamese found that their gamble¹ had paid off — not militarily, for they had been badly beaten in the field — but psychologically, in that they had dealt a decisive blow to the American psyche. Victory in the field followed seven years later.

The Background

U.S. involvement in Indochina began during the Second World War. While President Franklin Roosevelt favored trusteeship under UN auspices to the restoration of French

colonial rule, in typical FDR fashion he put off any formal decision until the end of the war in the Pacific. With his death, U.S. policy became more pro-French. While still favoring eventual independence for the region, Washington allowed its relationship with France to dictate the pace of events.²

The First Indochina War between France and the Communist Viet Minh (led by Ho Chi Minh and Vo Nguyen Giap) began in late 1946. U.S. involvement in the war was minimal until the outbreak of fighting in Korea in 1950. At that point, the U.S. dispatched a military mission and began subsidizing the French war effort. By 1953, the U.S. was paying over half the cost of the war.³

The defeat at Dien Bien Phu (1954) spelled the end of French military power in Indochina. The U.S. came close to intervening with both combat airpower and ground troops at that time, but eventually agreed to a negotiated settlement at Geneva.⁴ This gave the Viet Minh control over Vietnam

north of the 17th parallel. Ironically, it now appears that had the U.S. gone to war in 1954, the Viet Minh would have been completely defeated.⁵

As it was, the U.S., in the name of worldwide anticommunism, took on South Vietnam as a client state. The North Vietnamese, after a period of recuperation, activated the National Liberation Front (NLF), called by Americans the Viet Cong. It was composed of cadres left behind in the South in 1954, plus new recruits. By 1960, a new war had begun for control of South Vietnam, pitting the Viet Cong against the American-supported forces of Ngo Dinh Diem, the “George Washington of Asia.”⁶

Diem was not simply an American puppet. His overthrow (at U.S. instigation) and murder in 1963 placed South Vietnam squarely in America’s lap. This was one of the Kennedy Administration’s greatest blunders. Diem’s death made a face-saving withdrawal or negotiated settlement much more difficult to achieve.⁷

Nevertheless, Kennedy’s successor, Lyndon Johnson, probably could have negotiated his way out of Vietnam. For reasons that remain unclear to this day, he chose not to do so.⁸

In 1964–65, events approached a crisis. With the Viet Cong moving from strength to strength throughout the country, and the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) infiltrating its first troops, it became apparent that South Vietnam could not long survive without a major U.S. military intervention.

By spring, 1965, South Vietnam was on the edge of the precipice. The U.S. had already begun bombing the North in February. In June–July, the final decisions were made to Americanize the war, and U.S. combat units began to pour into the South.⁹

Westmoreland’s War

The American Army and Marine Corps that entered South Vietnam in 1965 represented one of the finest instruments of war ever honed, comparable to the Roman legions, Napoleon’s veterans, and the elder Motke’s Prussians. If this force had an Achilles’ heel, it was in the officer corps, specifically the generals and senior colonels who formed its leadership.

The great majority of these officers possessed a conventional outlook, wedded to a degree of hubris. In the American Army of that day, such an attitude was virtually required for

The Americans were to find that this enemy was every bit as brave as they were. In addition, he was fighting on his own soil.

promotion to senior rank. What these men knew, they knew well. What they did not know, they had not yet begun to suspect existed. Exhaustively trained and technically competent, they nevertheless lacked the “feel” for events that is the hall-

mark of great leaders. They stood at the pinnacle of the military arm of the greatest power in history. To put it another way, they were ripe for a fall.

Gen. William Westmoreland commanded the American forces in South Vietnam from 1964 to 1968. “Westy” epitomized the American general of his time. One author aptly termed him “the inevitable general.”¹⁰

Westmoreland managed the troop buildup in 1965 and early 1966 superbly. His forces prevented the Viet Cong-NVA forces from overrunning the country. From spring 1966, he

As early as the fall of 1966, McNamara had privately opposed further escalation. Now he had forfeited Johnson’s confidence, and on the eve of Tet departed the administration to become president of the World Bank.

planned to defeat the enemy by employing a conventional strategy of attrition. In this at least he resembled his famous predecessors Grant and Eisenhower.

But Vietnam was a fight more political than military in nature. Moreover, in its purely military aspect the ground to be fought over was most unsuitable for the application of attrition tactics. The Viet Cong were, for the most part, close to or among the civilian population. The NVA was based in the remote countryside, which consisted of triple canopy jungle and rugged mountain ranges. Westmoreland’s strategy required that American troops be sent into these areas to find and destroy the enemy forces. The Americans were to find that this enemy was every bit as brave as they were. In addition, he was fighting on his own soil.

During 1966–67, Westmoreland carried out a series of large-scale, tactically successful operations with uninspiring code names like “Attleboro” and “Junction City.” Again and again, U.S. forces killed large numbers of the enemy. Territory gained, however, remained under U.S. or South Vietnamese control only so long as Allied troops stood on that ground. Once they departed, the enemy was free to return. The North Vietnamese, despite their heavy casualties, were perfectly capable of replacing the losses they suffered.¹¹

By 1967, both sides were feeling the strain. The American people were becoming increasingly dissatisfied with a situation that looked more and more like a stalemate.¹² The North Vietnamese, despite their ability to stay in the fight (with Soviet and Chinese aid) so long as the U.S. effort remained short of total war, were nevertheless finding the conflict increasingly burdensome. The two sides responded to this situation in radically different ways. Their responses were to determine the eventual outcome of the war.

On the American side, President Johnson refused to escalate the war to a point beyond North Vietnam’s capacity to

endure.¹³ Characteristically, he chose instead to shore up the home front with a PR campaign. He ordered the American commander in Vietnam home to rally the Congress and the people once more to the cause.

Westmoreland addressed a joint session of Congress on April 28, 1967. For the first time in American history, a commander in the field spoke to Congress while the war he directed was raging. The general's firm jaw and military bearing carried the day as he proclaimed, "We will prevail in Vietnam over the Communist aggressor." Congressional applause was deafening.

The effect of Westmoreland's oratory soon wore off. Heavy fighting continued throughout the summer and autumn, with heavy U.S. casualties and no discernible progress toward victory. Both hawks and doves were dissatisfied. In August, the Senate Armed Services Committee convened hearings whose main purpose was to persuade the administration to intensify the bombing of North Vietnam. During his testimony, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara left the impression that the war was unwinnable.¹⁴ As early as the fall of 1966, McNamara had privately opposed further escalation.¹⁵ Now he had forfeited Johnson's confidence, and on the eve of Tet departed the administration to become president of the World Bank. Nor was he the first to leave. Johnson had already lost such key advisers as McGeorge Bundy, George Ball, and Bill Moyers.

While the Johnson administration was losing cohesion, the social fabric of the nation was beginning to unravel. The antiwar movement was spreading and becoming radicalized. On October 21, 50,000 people marched on the Pentagon. At the University of Wisconsin, Madison, clashes occurred between student protesters and police — the first violent

episode of the student revolt that was to engulf campuses nationwide in coming years.¹⁶ Antiwar sentiment was growing in Middle America, though still reflecting more a frustration with lack of progress on the battlefield than a rejection of the war per se.¹⁷ Racial conflict, which many Americans had hoped would subside with passage of the Civil Rights Act (1964) and the Voting Rights Act (1965), was becoming increasingly violent. The ghettos of Los Angeles, Newark, and Detroit had already exploded, requiring in Detroit's case the intervention of the 82nd Airborne Division to quell the rioting. Inflation was heating up, the effect of the Johnson administration's obfuscations about the cost of the war, and the resulting failure to finance it properly.¹⁸

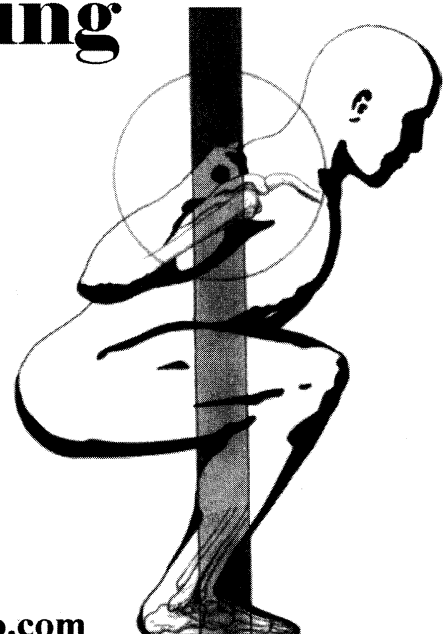
The social crisis was further inflamed by the character and appearance of the man who led the nation. No one who has studied Lyndon Johnson objectively can avoid the conclusion that he was a liar, a coward, and a bully.¹⁹ Despite the legislative achievements of his first 18 months in office, he failed to gain the affection or respect of most of the American people. He, more than any other individual, was responsible for the notorious "credibility gap" that was straining traditional ties between government and the media, and between government and the average citizen.²⁰ The dichotomy between government pronouncements and events in Indochina — heightened by the reportage beamed nightly via satellite into living rooms across the nation — was by late 1967 becoming increasingly obvious.²¹ Johnson bore the primary responsibility for this, though Westmoreland's headquarters in Saigon came a close second.

At this point, Westmoreland was called to Washington again. After briefing the White House and members of Congress, he spoke at the National Press Club on November

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21. Here he stated, "We have reached an important point when the end begins to come into view." He went on to say that Viet Cong strength in South Vietnam was "declining at a steady rate." Within two years or less, he asserted, the beginning of a turnover of responsibility to the South Vietnamese was foreseeable.²² The next day's Washington Post lead story was headlined, "War's End in View, Says Westmoreland."²³

Westmoreland's words would soon come back to haunt him. For the enemy had prepared a riposte of great boldness and breathtaking scope.

The Other Side of the Hill

A general Viet Cong-NVA offensive in South Vietnam was first mooted within the North Vietnamese leadership at the end of 1965.²⁴ In January 1967 General Nguyen Chi Thanh, the top Communist commander in South Vietnam, proposed what became the Tet Offensive.²⁵ Thanh was killed in a U.S. bombing raid the following July, but in that same month the North Vietnamese Politburo sanctioned the "General Offensive and General Uprising" that was designed to win the war.²⁶

Whether the North Vietnamese leadership actually believed the offensive would result in military victory is unknown. Vietnam has not opened the relevant archives to scholars.²⁷ Naturally, those who were to carry out the offensive were told it would bring victory.²⁸ Whether the leadership believed this must be doubted, though the Communist propensity for self-deception should not be discounted. Certainly, the timing of the offensive points to an attempt to produce the maximum *political* effect in the United States during an election year.

Additionally, the Vietnamese Communists saw the offensive as a means of relieving pressure on their own forces, locked as these were in an ongoing struggle of attrition with the Americans.²⁹ Westmoreland's troop strength and firepower were still growing in 1967, and his forces had for the most part held the initiative since the late summer of 1966. Most worrisome from the Communist point of view, the Viet Cong's base of support in the countryside was being eroded by the flight of many peasants to the relative safety of the cities.³⁰

The Communist conception was for an offensive in three stages. First, they would launch preliminary attacks in remote areas, to lure U.S. forces away from South Vietnam's cities. In

No one who has studied Lyndon Johnson objectively can avoid the conclusion that he was a liar, a coward, and a bully.

the second stage, the Viet Cong, aided by the NVA, would attack the cities. It was hoped that this would lead to a popular uprising against the South Vietnamese government and the Americans, with the South Vietnamese armed forces (or

large parts of them) switching sides to join the attackers. If the second stage succeeded, it was planned to deliver the coup de grace by a direct invasion of the South from the North.

Such was the plan. N-Day (equivalent to D-Day in the Vietnamese language) was fixed for Tet (the Vietnamese lunar New Year and the most important holiday on the Vietnamese calendar), which was to begin on January 31, 1968.³¹

On the Eve of Tet

Preparations for the offensive were thorough and efficient — remarkably so, given the Communists' primitive logistical base. Secrecy was maintained right up until N-Day.

Once convinced that a major Communist offensive was imminent, Westmoreland still failed to sound the alarm publicly. As a result, the psychological effect of Tet was considerably greater than it would otherwise have been.

Nevertheless, there were indications of what was to come. At the end of October, the Viet Cong attacked the district capital of Loc Ninh. Rather than making a hit-and-run raid, they tried to take and hold the town, a tactic they had previously avoided. In November, the NVA undertook a major operation at Dak To, near the point where the borders of South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia met. An NVA document captured during the battle seemed to indicate a changeover to more conventional infantry tactics. Westmoreland refused to place any significance in this.³²

An increase in enemy activity throughout South Vietnam was discernible, at least to U.S. soldiers and officials who had their ears to the ground. These did not include Westmoreland and his staff, or Johnson's military and civilian advisers in Washington. In late November, the CIA's Saigon station put out a paper on the indications of a change in Communist strategy.³³ Westmoreland's HQ vigorously disputed the CIA's interpretation, maintaining instead that the enemy's strength was waning.³⁴

In mid-December, the U.S. command turned over responsibility for the defense of Saigon to the South Vietnamese Army. As part of its strategy for 1968, it planned to deploy some three-quarters of its forces in the III Corps Tactical Zone (south-central South Vietnam, including Saigon) away from the towns to defeat the enemy in the distant countryside. This was exactly what the enemy was hoping the Americans would do.³⁵

One high-ranking American officer was not fooled. He was the commander of U.S. forces in III Corps, Gen. Frederick Weyand. Weyand, a former chief of Army Intelligence, had become alarmed by such intelligence as there was indicating enemy interest in Saigon. He voiced his concerns to Westmoreland in a face-to-face meeting on January 10.³⁶

Since the middle of December, Westmoreland had come round to the idea of a major Communist offensive, though not one aimed specifically at the cities.³⁷ After his meeting with Weyand, he gave orders for U.S. troops to move back closer to the populated areas.³⁸ Had this not been done, Tet might have proved a military disaster on a scale not experienced by U.S. forces since the Chinese hordes crossed the Yalu in Korea in 1950.

Westmoreland and his J-2 (staff officer responsible for intelligence) briefed the U.S. mission in Saigon on January 15. Westmoreland was now convinced that a major Communist offensive was imminent, though he still did not believe it would be directed against the cities.³⁹ In any case, he failed to sound the alarm publicly. As a result, the psychological effect of Tet on the U.S. public and officialdom was to be considerably greater than it would otherwise have been.

In early January, the North Vietnamese began massing forces near the Marine firebase at Khe Sanh, near the Laotian border. The specter of Dien Bien Phu suddenly gripped President Johnson and his advisers. But their focus on the big picture remained blurred; they were, for all intents and purposes, oblivious to what the enemy had in store.⁴⁰ (Their attention was further diverted by the North Korean seizure of the U.S.S. *Pueblo* on January 23.)

The Battle Is Joined

The enemy's offensive began in the early hours of January 30, due to a mix-up caused by North Vietnam's recent introduction of a new lunar calendar.⁴¹ The offensive began with attacks on seven towns in northern South Vietnam, including Nha Trang, Da Nang, and Pleiku.⁴² On the 31st the storm truly broke. Attacks were launched from the Demilitarized Zone in the north to the Mekong Delta and beyond. All told, Communist forces struck at 36 of 44 provincial capitals and 64 of 242 district capitals.⁴³ Most spectacularly, they assaulted Saigon itself, the national capital and nerve center of the Allied war effort. A squad of Viet Cong soldiers briefly penetrated the U.S. embassy compound — an insignificant event from the military point of view, but one that had an immediate and profound psychological impact in America.

An observer versed in military affairs should have known almost immediately that with this offensive the enemy had committed an enormous blunder. While the attacks were boldly conceived and well coordinated, the Communists had exposed the cream of their forces to the overwhelming firepower and superior mobility of the Americans. The American forces, which had spent most of the previous two and one-half years chasing the enemy through jungles, now had him in their gun sights. A great slaughter followed.

This is not to say that the battle was entirely one-sided. The enemy had achieved tactical surprise, and his troops fought and died with great bravery. American casualties were heavy — some 500 per week killed during the height of the fighting — and bitter, drawn-out battles occurred, particularly at Hue (the old Vietnamese imperial capital), which took weeks to clear. Nevertheless, it was soon obvious that the offensive was a failure. Notably, the South Vietnamese civilian population and armed forces made no move to join the attackers.

The battles of Tet were over by early March. Despite enormous casualties, the Communists conducted fresh offensives

in May and September. These too failed. The Viet Cong never recovered from Tet and the succeeding offensives. They could not make good their losses, particularly among experienced cadres. Essentially, the war against the Viet Cong was won in 1968.⁴⁴ This U.S. victory was, however, a Pyrrhic one. For at home Tet was perceived as a U.S. defeat.

The American Reaction: Collapse of the Home Front

The shock wave of Tet hit the American home front almost as hard as Pearl Harbor. The public had been told that we were winning, that month by month the enemy was losing strength. Tet gave the lie to the claims of the president and his advisers. Westmoreland now paid the price for his earlier optimism, and for his failure to sound the alarm bell publicly in the days before the enemy's offensive opened.

The Johnson administration and the U.S. military unquestionably bore primary responsibility for the shock and revulsion felt by the U.S. public over Tet. For years, they had misrepresented the causes, progress, and objectives of the war. Now the trust between government and the governed was broken; the credibility gap became a chasm. The tremendous military defeat suffered by the enemy simply did not register in such an atmosphere.

That said, the role played by the media both before and after Tet was highly deleterious.⁴⁵ Despite some doubts about the conduct of the war, the major newspapers and television networks had generally toed the government line on Vietnam.⁴⁶ Blindsided by Tet, they now turned with a vengeance on the administration and Westmoreland. They neglected to look inward and analyze their own mistakes. Worse, they failed to report accurately what was happening on the battlefield.

Two events epitomized the media's failure. First was the absurd coverage given to the penetration of the U.S. embassy grounds in Saigon by a few Viet Cong.⁴⁷ Militarily, this event lacked even tactical significance, but for the media it symbolized the hollowness of the administration's pre-Tet claims. It received tremendous coverage during the first crucial hours

An increase in enemy activity throughout South Vietnam was discernible to U.S. soldiers and officials who had their ears to the ground. These did not include Westmoreland and his staff, or Johnson's military and civilian advisers in Washington.

and days of the battle. It dominated both television and newspaper coverage — rivaled only by graphic pictures of the South Vietnamese national police chief publicly executing a man suspected of being a VC. The larger and far more

important events of Tet were, by comparison, either downplayed or misinterpreted. Context, to say the least, was missing.

Visiting the scene after the clearing of the embassy grounds, Westmoreland spoke of the battle in general as an enemy defeat. He was correct — but the correspondents to whom he addressed his remarks weren't buying it. This moment, captured on film, cost Westmoreland what credibility he still had with the press corps and the public.

The second event occurred in late February. The passage of a few weeks had not caused the media to pause and reflect. Now "the most trusted man in America" set a seal on the prevailing view of Tet as a defeat.

In 1968, the anchor of the CBS Evening News was Walter Cronkite. He was a veteran journalist who had seen war at first hand. Like most of his professional brethren, he had supported the war before Tet.⁴⁸ His reporting from Vietnam in 1965 had done much to calm the public's nervousness about a land war in Asia. During Tet, he returned to Vietnam for another look. He came back to the States to host a CBS News special on the crisis.⁴⁹

At the close of this program, Cronkite chose to editorialize. His "personal assessment" of the situation was highly colored⁵⁰ and failed to reflect the reality on the battlefield. No mention was made of American successes or the enemy's heavy losses.

This was perhaps the most irresponsible piece of journalism ever printed or broadcast by an American of influence. A journalist held almost in awe by much of the nation took it upon himself to declare a war stalemated and negotiations with the enemy a necessity, based on a few days of personal observation of the situation. It was the most powerful of the blows that were being delivered by the media against the U.S. war effort (in what amounted to a veritable "treason of the clerks").

Johnson's press secretary, George Christian, later remarked that when Cronkite changed on the war "the shock waves rolled through the government."⁵¹ "If I've lost Cronkite, I've lost the country," LBJ was said to have remarked.

Denouement

At this moment (March 1968), a U.S. victory in Vietnam was still possible. The enemy had been badly beaten in the first major, semi-open fighting of the war. According to textbook strategy, the time was ripe for a knockout blow. The enemy had been weakened; he must not be given the opportunity to recover. A renewal of U.S. offensive operations on the ground in South Vietnam, combined with an intensified air campaign against the North, might have achieved victory or at least peace on terms similar to those obtained by Richard Nixon in 1973.

It was not to be. Westmoreland wanted to clean up the situation left by Tet and then regain the initiative through offensive operations.⁵² To do this he requested an additional 206,000 troops, which would have brought his strength up to almost three-quarters of a million men.

Johnson hesitated. He called upon his new Secretary of Defense, Clark Clifford, to undertake a complete review of Vietnam policy. Clifford, who had never believed in the policy,⁵³ swiftly quashed the idea of a big troop increase.

Johnson, after mulling the situation for a few weeks, on Mar. 31 announced a halt to the bombing of North Vietnam above the 20th parallel. He also called for negotiations to end the war. Westmoreland was given a token reinforcement of 24,500 men — the last troop increase of the war.⁵⁴ In the same speech, Johnson withdrew as a candidate for reelection to the presidency. The final chance to win the war was gone. Tet had ultimately paid off in a big way for the Vietnamese Communists.

Why did the nation fail to rally behind the war effort after Tet, as it had after Pearl Harbor? As already mentioned, it felt betrayed by the Johnson administration. Despite the government's claims, the war, it seemed, had been going badly all along. What point could there be in pouring more resources into a losing cause? The media, which in different circumstances might have led public opinion back to support for the war, instead did the opposite. It allowed its resentment of the administration to influence its reporting and analysis of events. At no point during or after Tet did it undertake an objective assessment of the military situation in Vietnam (it had similarly failed to do so when we were "winning").

Even more fundamental was the fact that Vietnam was a luxury war, not one that truly involved the national interest. This being so, it should never have been fought — or, if the nation's leadership was determined to fight, then overwhelming force should have been used from the start, in order to achieve a quick victory. It was sheer nonsense to believe that the citizenry would stand for a prolonged stalemate against a fourth-rate power, while American boys bled and died in the thousands. The lesson of the last two years of Korea was plain.

Johnson and his advisers saw the Cuban Missile Crisis as the template for Vietnam.⁵⁵ Their view was that modulated responses, the prudent application of U.S. power, would bring the desired result. They could not have been more wrong. The American people, and above all the peoples of Indochina, suffered terribly for their misjudgment.

Tet was a landmark in the decline of Western power and prestige in Asia, on a level with the fall of Singapore (1942) and Dien Bien Phu. It can also be said to mark the ebb of America's westward expansion, which, far from ending at the Pacific, reached out across that ocean to Hawaii and the Philippines, and then to the rim of Asia in the war of 1941–45 against Japan. Victory in Vietnam would have established the American military permanently on the Asian mainland at Cam Ranh Bay, and given U.S. oil companies unfettered access to the rich deposits of the South China Sea. Whether this might have led eventually to an even bigger war with China is impossible to say. Perhaps our "defeat" at Tet was a blessing in disguise, after all. □

Notes

1. Strictly speaking, a gamble in military terms involves "an operation which can either lead to victory or to the complete destruction of one's force" — thus Field Marshal Erwin Rommel in "The Rommel Papers" (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1953) 201. According to Don Oberdorfer's classic "Tet! The Turning Point in the Vietnam War" (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 116 and 363, the Communists employed 67,000 troops at the opening of Tet, about 28% of their available force. Thus, Tet was not truly a "gamble."

2. "'The Pentagon Papers,' Gravel edition" (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971) III, 1–3.
3. Marjorie Billings-Yun, "Decision Against War" (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988) 7–9.
4. On this, see Billings-Yun, also David Halberstam, "The Best and the Brightest" (New York: Random House, 1972) 136–45.
5. The Vietnamh were exhausted after almost eight years of war. So were the Chinese Communists, who had spent the previous 20 years fighting first the Chinese Nationalists, then the U.S. in Korea. See Nikita Khrushchev, "Khrushchev Remembers" (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1970) 481–83. The main obstacles to U.S. intervention in Indochina in 1954 were logistical, but these could have been overcome. Nineteen fifty-four was perhaps the one moment in its history when the United States could have fought and decisively won a conventional war on the mainland of Asia.
6. So named by Vice President Lyndon Johnson during a May 1961 visit to South Vietnam.
7. On the overthrow of Diem see "Pentagon Papers" II, 224–70; also Howard Jones, "Death of a Generation" (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003) 407–42.
8. On the possibility of a negotiated peace between the overthrow of Diem and the 1965 escalation see Fredrik Logevall, "Choosing War" (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), and Halberstam 369–78. On the case for staying and fighting, see W.W. Rostow (Johnson's National Security Advisor, 1966–69), "The Case for the Vietnam War" in *Parameters* (Winter 1996–97) 39–50.
9. "Pentagon Papers" III, 389–478; Halberstam 537–602.
10. Ernest B. Furgurson, "Westmoreland: The Inevitable General" (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1968). A brief but perceptive character study of the general can be found in Halberstam 547–62.
11. Halberstam 619.
12. Oberdorfer 78–86.
13. Halberstam 641–42. In the spring of 1967, Westmoreland wanted to expand the ground war into Laos so he could block the Ho Chi Minh Trail, down which the great bulk of Communist supplies flowed. According to North Vietnamese colonel Bui Tin (who in 1975 accepted the surrender of Saigon, then in 1990 fled Vietnam for the West), had this been done Hanoi "could not have won the war" (interview of Stephen Young with Bui Tin in the Aug. 3, 1995 *Wall Street Journal*). Bui did not mention the possibility of Chinese intervention, which is believed to be the reason why LBJ refused Westmoreland's request.
14. Oberdorfer 93–97. See also Deborah Shapley, "Promise and Power: The Life and Times of Robert McNamara" (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993) 428–32. It was actually the Preparedness Investigating Subcommittee that held the hearings under Armed Services Chairman John Stennis. Ironically, this subcommittee had been established in 1950 by Sen. Lyndon Johnson.
15. "Pentagon Papers" IV, 107.
16. This event has been memorialized by David Maraniss in "They Marched Into Sunlight" (Riverside, N.J.: Simon and Schuster, 2003) and in the excellent PBS video "Two Days in October," which is based on the book.
17. Oberdorfer 82–83.
18. Halberstam 603–10.
19. Both public and private records are replete with Johnson's lies. As to his being a coward and a bully, see the telling anecdote (involving Marine Corps Commandant Wally Greene) in Halberstam 437–38. Johnson was a thoroughly corrupt politician. He became wealthy despite spending his entire working life on the public payroll. He was also a very vulgar man. In short, he should never have risen higher than dogcatcher in a dusty Texas town. His ascent to the highest office speaks ill of the American political system and of our society in general.
20. See for example, Halberstam 584–601.
21. For the media's growing disenchantment with Johnson's Vietnam policy: Oberdorfer 86–92. For rumblings among the public, 111–13.
22. This in fact happened on almost the exact timetable Westmoreland had announced, with the beginning of Vietnamization in 1969. Much has been made of this by Westmoreland's defenders. Context, however, is everything in this matter. Westmoreland in 1967 projected the gradual turnover of responsibility to the South Vietnamese as a step that would follow the suppression of the Viet Cong-NVA insurgency. The timetable would depend on the successful completion of his attrition campaign. Vietnamization actually came about under Nixon as a stopgap, a means of buying time both on the battlefield and with the American public, thus avoiding a precipitate U.S. withdrawal.
23. Peter Braestrup, "Big Story" (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1977) 59. Earlier, in July, while in the United States for his mother's funeral, Westmoreland had told reporters that "tremendous progress" had been made in the war, and that reports of stalemate were "pure fiction" (Oberdorfer 103).
24. Oberdorfer 51.
25. Bui Tin interview in *The Wall Street Journal* (Aug. 3, 1995).
26. Oberdorfer 42–54.
27. On this see "Vietnamese Archives and Scholarship on the Cold War Period: Two Reports" at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars website. Most relevant here is the report, "The Archives of Vietnam and the Indochina Wars," by Robert K. Brigham.
28. Oberdorfer, 54 and 75–76.
29. Bui Tin interview, *The Wall Street Journal*.
30. Oberdorfer 53. On the American attitude toward "depriving the enemy of the population" see Westmoreland's callous remark to Neil Sheehan, reported in Halberstam 550.
31. Both sides had previously adhered to a truce during Tet. The North Vietnamese undoubtedly saw the truce and its accompanying holiday celebrations as a favorable moment to strike.
32. Oberdorfer 107–108.
33. *Ibid.*, 120.
34. "Pentagon Papers" IV, 538–9; Oberdorfer 120.
35. Oberdorfer 136–37.
36. *Ibid.*, 137.
37. *Ibid.*, 120–1. Braestrup xxv.
38. Oberdorfer 137.
39. *Ibid.*, 121.
40. The siege of Khe Sanh was to preoccupy Johnson, the media, and the public for weeks. It was an outpost of at most tactical significance, and should have been abandoned once the NVA's interest in it became known.
41. Oberdorfer xi.
42. *Ibid.*, 121–26. U.S. forces had advanced warning of the attack on Pleiku, thanks to captured enemy documents.
43. Braestrup 139.
44. Needless to say, the NVA remained in the field, bloodied but unbowed, and its forces carried out the offensive that eventually won the war in 1975.
45. The role of the media is covered comprehensively in Braestrup's "Big Story." See also Oberdorfer 238–75.
46. There were, of course, individual exceptions — among them David Halberstam and Neil Sheehan reporting from Vietnam, and the syndicated columnist Walter Lippmann.
47. For a narrative of this event, see Oberdorfer 2–40.
48. *Ibid.*, 248.
49. *Ibid.*, 248–50.
50. At one point, he held forth on the prospect of Vietnam leading the world to "the brink of cosmic disaster." The full text of his remarks can be found in Oberdorfer 250–1.
51. *Ibid.*, 247.
52. "Pentagon Papers" IV, 546–49.
53. Halberstam 596–97.
54. Any possibility of Johnson approving Westmoreland's call for over 200,000 more men was ended when news of the request was leaked to the press. Published in *The New York Times* on March 10, it produced a firestorm of criticism second only to that provoked by Tet itself.
55. Halberstam 591.

“Laissez Faire”: R.I.P.?

by Bruce Ramsey

Thirty-six years ago, when libertarianism was just a gleam
in the eyes of a few individuals, a wonderful institution
was started — a bookstore, of course.

Laissez Faire Books, one of libertarians' major ways of identifying and acquiring good things to read, announced on Oct. 13 that it was going out of business. Then, in mid-November, as were going to press, it announced that it had been bought by the International Society for Individual Liberty, and would retain its laissezfaire.org web page. It had already sold its web page www.lfb.com.

For a month, we thought LFB was done. It had been a remarkable institution, and we had prepared the following story about it. That there is a serious effort to keep it going is good news, but its fate remains in doubt, and its story, the story of its rise and struggle and the reasons for its possible demise, is still worth telling.

Begin with what LFB's competitors, amazon.com, abe-books.com, and others have done in the book business. Said Andrea Millen Rich, who ran LFB through its most prosperous and influential period, "Earlier this year, my own husband bought [Milton Friedman's] 'Capitalism and Freedom' from Amazon. I said, 'How could *you*, of all people, buy it from Amazon?' He said, 'Well, I was ordering some books from them, and I just thought of it.' That is what happened to Laissez Faire Books. It became so easy to buy from Amazon instead."

That is part of the reason for LFB's peril. The other part is

that LFB's catalogue has not been as sprightly and provocative as it once was, and it has not offered as many really good new titles as it once did. The bookselling world changed, Laissez Faire Books changed, and maybe the libertarian world changed too. Wrote Rich's successor, Kathleen Nelson, in her announcement: "I suppose the market has spoken."

It has, though perhaps not finally.



John Muller, a civil engineer, and Sharon Presley, a student in psychology at the City University of New York, were the founders of Laissez Faire Books. On March 4, 1972, they opened a small storefront in New York's Greenwich Village, and had a party with such luminaries as Murray Rothbard,

Roy Childs, and Jerome Tuccille. It was a time when radicalism burned hot. Recalled Presley, "We saw ourselves as part of what Albert Jay Nock called 'The Remnant' — a small minority who understood the nature of the State and who would be left when the current insanity became unworkable."

LFB's Mercer Street store became a social center for New York libertarians. "It was always intended to be more than just a bookstore," said Presley, now a lecturer at California

"It ain't easy dealing with some of these genius types. But it was certainly worthwhile."

State University, East Bay. "We created a community of people who maybe didn't know how to get in touch with each other. We held events. Peter Breggin spoke, and Edith Efron." There were also film showings, such as the various episodes of the science-fiction TV series "The Prisoner."

LFB was a place to visit from afar. Prof. Peter Boettke of George Mason University recalled buying Carl Menger's "Principles of Economics" (1871) in that store. Prof. Aeon Skoble of Bridgewater State College fondly remembers discovering Steve Ditko's "Static" underground comics. In a rare cross-country visit in 1983, I was delighted to reel in a copy of H.L. Mencken's "Treatise on the Gods" (1930).

"Laissez Faire Books carried *everything* that was libertarian," said Andrea Rich. "There was so little in those days — and they had all of it."

But LFB did not make money. Even though it was a tiny store, yet grossed more than \$100,000 in 1980, the owners "just couldn't keep it going," as Rich recalls.

One day, she heard that LFB was about to go out of business. "I talked to Howie about it" — referring to her husband, property-rights activist Howard Rich — "and we bought it, in February 1982." Andrea and Howard brought a practical attitude toward the store. "This was a *business*," she said. "All these very lofty things about keeping the movement going were great, but this was a business, and if we didn't conduct it like a business, there was going to be nothing."

To survive, LFB had to sell more books, and the way to do it was mail-order. LFB had advertised in libertarian magazines, and from 1972 to 1977, had published Laissez Faire Review — a review and catalogue. Andrea Rich, helped by Howard, set out to build up the mail-order business. "We bought lists, 50,000 to 70,000 names," Andrea says. LFB eventually developed a roll of 25,000 to 30,000 names and kept it fresh for many years.

There were hiccups, especially at the start. "We had this beautiful two-color mailing, very expensive on high-quality paper, for [Murray Rothbard's] 'The Ethics of Liberty,'" Andrea recalls. "We were all sitting there, stuffing these envelopes by hand, and I noticed that it said, 'The Ethnics of Liberty.' Oh my God, we had to destroy the whole thing."

About this time, Laissez Faire Books was given a hand by the proprietors of the Conservative Book Club: Neil McCaffrey, Jr., his son Neil III, and his daughter Maureen. "They were hugely bigger than us," Andrea said, "and they didn't have all that much reason to help us." But they did, first by renting their mailing lists, and then by pointing out what other lists to rent and what book shows to attend.

In 1984, the company changed its status to nonprofit — not out of a disdain for profits or the lack thereof, but because it saved \$60,000 a year in postage.

Also in 1984, the company hired Roy Childs. He was a movement firebrand who had allied himself with anarchists Karl Hess and Walter Block and had made a splash in 1969 with his "Open Letter to Ayn Rand." He was also the libertarian movement's premier writer on books. In the mid-1970s he had edited Bob Kephart's newsletter, Books for Libertarians, which later became Libertarian Review. Editing that magazine, which was kept alive through 1981 by Wichita oilman Charles Koch, had been the high point of Childs' life. But the magazine was gone, and in 1984 Childs went back to selecting, reading, and expounding on books.

He was extraordinarily good at it. "Roy understood that he was not just describing these books to people." Andrea recalled. "Roy had a way of making the review of a book into something you wanted to eat. What he would write would be so sensuous, so passionate, so delicious, that you didn't just read it. You wanted to consume it."

"It was not always easy dealing with Roy," she said. "You gave him a deadline, and it was laughable. Just totally laughable. We finally got to the point where we were paying him for a delivery: 'You give me a review, I give you a check.' It ain't easy dealing with some of these genius types. But it was certainly worthwhile."

Childs was LFB's intellectual artillery. "I was never that," Andrea said. "Lots of people thought I read every book we sold. That was not me. I didn't read all these books. I just sold them."

New editors bring new offerings. Under Sharon Presley, LFB sold such feminist works as "Concerning Women" (1926) by Suzanne LaFollette. It was strong on libertarian-themed science fiction — Eric Frank Russell's "The Great Explosion" (1962), for example. It was strong on anarchism, carrying the

"It was always intended to be more than just a bookstore. We created a community of people who maybe didn't know how to get in touch with each other."

works of individualist anarchists such as Benjamin Tucker and Lysander Spooner and left-anarchists such as Emma Goldman and Peter Kropotkin. Presley recalled a visit to the store by Bob Dylan, who asked for haiku. She explained that

LFB was an anarchist bookstore, and referred him to a copy of "The IWW Songbook." He looked at it but did not buy.

"I was not as knowledgeable about science fiction as Sharon was," Andrea said. "I would carry the obvious things, but I didn't find and discover the new stuff unless they were

"The official Randians were shocked and horrified that they were getting things in the mail for a libertarian book service. And they did not write, 'Please remove my name from your mailing list.' 'Please' was never part of it."

the guys who hung out at Laissez Faire." Neil Schulman was one, and the catalogue carried his "Alongside Night" (1979) and "Rainbow Cadenza" (1983).

Roy Childs "was not a big science fiction person either," said Andrea. After he came, LFB tended to follow his interests: philosophy, political theory, economics, and to some extent history. Left anarchism went away, and there wasn't much new being written about individualist anarchism, or explicitly individualist feminism.

Political theory was big. There were the classics, such as Rose Wilder Lane's "The Discovery of Freedom" and Isabel Paterson's "The God of the Machine," and also Nozick's "Anarchy, State, and Utopia" (1974). "It was such a phenomenon," Andrea said of the last work. "After it won a National Book Award, a lot of writers got book contracts on the strength of Nozick's success."

Laissez Faire's long-term bestseller was Henry Hazlitt's short, inexpensive, readable, and conservative-friendly "Economics in One Lesson" (1946). "Year in and year out, we could count on selling approximately 3,500 copies," said Andrea. "That's 52,500 copies in 15 years. We never had more than 30,000 customers, and most of the time not that many. We figured it must have been people giving copies to family and friends."

LFB also carried quite a few academic titles in economics, though not nearly as many as publishers submitted. For some authors the LFB catalogue was a kind of badge. Writes Boettke, author of "Why Perestroika Failed" (1993), "When I decided that I wanted to be an academic economist one of my goals was to have some book of mine carried in LFB. The fact that my first book was on the cover and reviewed so favorably by Roy Childs was a dream come true."

The anchor tenants of the economics pages were Thomas Sowell, who was extraordinarily prolific, the late Ludwig von Mises, and Murray Rothbard. "Rothbard was gold for us," Andrea said. "Anything by Rothbard."

Ayn Rand, who had had the biggest market of all, died in 1982. But books by and about Rand continued on, as did books in Rand's tradition, such as "The Ominous Parallels" (1983) by her official heir, Leonard Peikoff.

Among Randians, Peikoff's book "was a very big deal," Andrea said. "He came to Laissez Faire Books, and we had an autograph evening for him. I was told [that] when asked why he agreed to do that, he said, 'This book is very important. I would sign books for Attila the Hun.' Later, he spoke for Jim Blanchard's gold conference in New Orleans and autographed books for us there twice, because we were the official booksellers there. Then the even more rigorous Randians pointed out that we had carried anarchist books. So Leonard broke with us." Rand greatly disliked anarchism. She also disliked what she regarded as "libertarianism," which she associated with irrational forms of radicalism.

About that time, Robert and Beatrice Hessen sold Palo Alto Books, a Rand-oriented mail-order company, to Laissez Faire. Andrea recalled: "The official Randians were shocked and horrified that they were getting things in the mail for a *libertarian* book service. And they did not write, 'Please remove my name from your mailing list.' 'Please' was never part of it. It was, 'How dare you think you could have my name to send this garbage! You make sure I never get one of these again.'"

The Randians gravitated to their own booksellers, such as the Ayn Rand Institute, set up by Peikoff in 1985, and the Objectivist Center, set up by David Kelley in 1990. Rand's fans, however, remained a big part of LFB's customer base. And that made Barbara Branden's biography, "The Passion of Ayn Rand" (1986) perhaps LFB's biggest event of the 1980s. Since 1968, when Rand excommunicated her chief assistants, Barbara and Nathaniel Branden, rumors had circulated that she had had a sexual relationship with Nathaniel. By 1986, most libertarians had heard this story, but not all of them believed it, and few knew the details. Now there it was in print, told by the woman whose husband was involved.

Barbara Branden spoke at Laissez Faire Books, and more than 300 people showed up. "What a cathartic event that was!" Andrea recalled. LFB sold tapes of the event. And, Andrea said, "We bought 6,000 copies of the book. We sold them, and went back for another 4,000, and another 3,000. Maybe we sold 20,000 all together."

LFB made money by its ability to buy at large discounts. "We would dicker, and make a deal on how much we were willing to pay," Andrea recalls. "Howie taught me to be a pretty good negotiator, and that's the only way we could have

When Roy Childs died, he was replaced by Jim Powell. He didn't write with the sizzle that Childs had, but he wrote clearly and knew his stuff. Laissez Faire was saved. For a few years, business continued to improve.

existed." Howard also set the rule that LFB would buy only nonreturnable books, because books that couldn't be sold back to the publisher were cheaper.

For books aimed principally at the libertarian market — and LFB *was* the libertarian market — publishers had to reach a deal with LFB before committing to a press run. Andrea observed, “This happened over and over. It even happened with the big publishers: Random House, Simon & Schuster, and HarperCollins. In cases where we could not negotiate a deal, we didn’t carry the book.”

Well, mostly. For years, LFB had good relations with the University of Chicago Press, until new management refused to deal with LFB on a book-club basis. “For a few years we did not carry any of the works of Milton Friedman and F.A. Hayek,” Andrea said. “On that one I gave in. It was just too embarrassing not to be carrying ‘Capitalism and Freedom’ and ‘The Road to Serfdom.’”

By the mid-1980s, New York City had begun to recover from the shabbiness of the ’70s, and rents went up. LFB’s landlord raised the rent from \$900 a month to \$3,000; and the bookstore had to widen its market or move. One way was to sell to non-libertarians: “I tried an experiment. I got five copies of the *Village Voice* and put them out. We were across the street from NYU, and we could not sell five copies in a week.”

Another way was to sell to *more* libertarians, by mail — which didn’t require a street-level address. Andrea moved the store into the seventh floor of a building on Broadway that was full of sweatshops. The rent was smaller, the space was bigger, and libertarians still managed to go to the showroom there.

LFB stayed in that place for five years, and when it moved it was for a personnel reason. Andrea Rich is a sparkplug of ideas, a strong leader, but she needed a store manager who could keep track of the details. She found such a person, Anita Anderson, to do the job for three years, but Anderson moved to San Francisco to be near her family. None of the replacements whom Andrea hired was as competent in her view — so in 1989 she asked Anderson if she would run LFB if Andrea moved the operation to the West Coast.

Yes, she would. And so, said Andrea, “Young Neil McCaffrey brought his crew of guys down, packed us up overnight, helped us rent a truck, and we moved everything to California. Retail sales went down, but catalogue sales went up.”

The next shock, in 1992, was the death of LFB’s master of marketing, Roy Childs. For years he had suffered from his weight; he no longer came into the LFB office to write; he had become apartment-bound. When he died, he weighed 475 pounds. At LFB, Andrea said, “We thought life was over. I was sure it was the end of us when Roy died. A lot of people wanted to do his job, but they didn’t have any idea of how to sell a book.” Childs was replaced by Jim Powell. He didn’t write with the sizzle that Childs had, but he wrote clearly and knew his stuff. *Laissez Faire* was saved. For a few years, business continued to improve.

In the early 1980s Andrea had reprinted Morris and Linda Tannehill’s self-published “*The Market for Liberty*” (1970) under the *Laissez Faire* name, so it could have copies to sell. Soon enough, Andrea set up a separate book imprint, Fox & Wilkes, named after the 18th-century English liberals Charles James Fox and John Wilkes. LFB used the Fox & Wilkes brand for years. With Rothbard’s “*For a New Liberty*,”

it revived a book that Macmillan had printed a few times and dropped. John T. Flynn’s “*The Roosevelt Myth*” (1948) was another revival. Fox & Wilkes’ selection was heavy on radical works, such as Franz Oppenheimer’s “*The State*” (1914) and Albert Jay Nock’s “*Our Enemy, the State*” (1935). Another was Walter Block’s “*Defending the Undefendable*” (1976) — a book Sharon Presley had said was indefensible and Roy Childs had defended. Andrea was particularly proud of offering “*The Lysander Spooner Reader*,” which provided works by the 19th-century individualist that were otherwise available only in booklets and pamphlets.

Reprints were crucial in the pre-internet era, when the used-book market was fragmented into tens of thousands of secondhand bookshops. I used to frequent those shops; I remember running across a copy of a first edition of “*The State*” in a bookstore in Vancouver and agonizing over it, knowing that I might never find it again. Today I see that Abebooks.com offers 71 copies of “*The State*,” from sellers in Canada, Australia, the U.K., Ireland, and the United States, one of them at a lowbrow secondhand store five miles from my house. I see also that the book has been available from at least eight publishers over the past 93 years, including Fox & Wilkes, at prices, including shipping, from \$7.66 to \$218.80; and that the Bobbs-Merrill edition of 1914, which is the one I found in Vancouver, can be ordered from sellers in Randallstown, Md.; Sylva, N.C.; Bar Harbor, Maine; Austin, Texas; Conway, Mass.; and San Francisco and New York.

Today there is also print-on-demand, and new offerings of short-press-run books such as the Garet Garrett novels, which the Ludwig von Mises Institute has now printed for the first time in 80 years. None of this was available in the early ’90s.

The years 1993–1995 were the peak of LFB’s business, with annual revenue touching \$1.3 million. They were also a political peak of sorts. “The conservatives took over in Washington, and liberty was here,” Andrea recalls with a chuckle. But it wasn’t just conservatives who seemed to be taking over. On Jan. 20, 1995, two and a half months after the Republicans’ historic sweep of Congress, *The Wall Street Journal* ran a page-one story by Gerald Seib with the headline:

Less is More

Libertarian Impulses
Show Growing Appeal
Among the Disaffected

When Government Fails,
Many Voters Are Asking
Who Needs It, Anyway?

At one point during this time, LFB briefly had a million dollars in the bank.

Then came a new thing — the internet booksellers. “We didn’t see it at first,” Andrea said. “We were so specialized, and surely Amazon was not going to bother with the kind

of books we did.” But the very name Amazon indicated an ambition to become an unstoppable river of books, the biggest and widest.



The San Francisco operation of Laissez Faire Books was on the second floor of a warehouse on the low-class side of Market Street. It was not the best neighborhood. In the early '90s, when LFB was shipping containers of donated books to Eastern Europe, and having to load them in back of the building onto a truck, the LFB people had to go out and clear the place of bums. But LFB was still the world's premier libertarian book service. Such out-of-town authors as Charles Murray and Nathaniel Branden gave talks at its headquarters, and people from all over the world managed to visit the showroom.

Andrea communicated daily from New York and handled the major book buys. “She knew when books were in the works,” said Anita Anderson, general manager in San Francisco. Powell wrote the book reviews from Connecticut, and Kathleen Nelson did the layout from Arkansas. Like Andrea, Anderson didn't read most of the books; her book guy was Dave Brooks, who had grown tired of teaching philosophy at a local college and had initially come to LFB for a job in the warehouse.

Anderson said people would telephone with book-related questions she couldn't answer. “I'd call Dave. He'd read all of Mises and Nozick and everybody. He could give them everything they wanted to know, and they'd end up buying the book. You need someone like that.”

During the 1990s, LFB's book selection leaned more heavily toward works on public policy. The company's best customers were getting older, and they already owned the classics. Some of the policy books did well, though Anderson said, “Policy books drop quicker. A year later, they're discounted.” That meant a greater risk of getting stuck with too many.

There were always books on which LFB bet wrong. One was Michael Paxton's “Ayn Rand: A Sense of Life” (1997), the picture book that went with his video documentary. Rand's

Reprints were crucial in the pre-internet era, when the used-book market was fragmented into tens of thousands of secondhand bookshops. I used to frequent those shops.

novels were perennial sellers for LFB, and the company made a big order for “Sense of Life.” It was a misjudgment. Said Anderson, “Most of the people who were interested in Rand didn't care about pictures.”

More and more of LFB's business was being done by internet. Internet buyers tended to be younger, which was an encouraging thing, but they didn't have the same loyalty

Internet buyers tended to be younger. They didn't have the same loyalty as paper-catalogue customers.

as paper-catalogue customers. Many of them requested that their names *not* be put on a list for snailmail. Selling to them was a one-off business.

By the end of the decade, LFB's business was shrinking, and because it could commit to fewer books, the discounts from publishers were thinner, and some publishers were no longer willing to deal with LFB as a book club. By the end of 2002, LFB was barely in the black. Anderson had left to have a baby and would come back only part-time. Andrea was ready to get out. “Nobody wanted to buy Laissez Faire Books,” she said. She gave it to the libertarian Foundation for Economic Education under an agreement that the Foundation could give it back — which, after a year, it did. It had not even bothered to move the business.

“I convinced Andrea to take it back and give me a shot at it,” said Kathleen Nelson. Nelson came to San Francisco for a quick lesson in management before moving the business to Little Rock. She had always worked out of her home; this was the first time in her adult life when she worked in an office.

LFB was not in good shape. It had stacks of unsold books. A few of the stacks were more than 1,000 volumes high. Revenues were down by half compared with the early-'90s peak. The mailing list — customers who had bought a book within the previous three years — was down by at least 10,000 from the peak, and the new rented lists were not producing enough names. Moving to Arkansas, however, permitted big cuts in costs. “Rents are a lot cheaper than in San Francisco,” Nelson said. “Salaries also.” She brought none of the San Francisco people with her, and the head count shrank by more than half.

Nelson is a plainspoken woman with no time to waste. She worked constantly, and found several employees willing to work 12-hour days. She kept Laissez Faire going for three years.



The struggle of LFB occurs in a changed market. “I think the libertarian market as a distinct market has virtually disappeared,” said Jim Powell, who has been writing books since he left LFB: “Wilson's War” (2005) and “Bully Boy: The Truth About Theodore Roosevelt's Legacy” (2006). “For a market to

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A Question of Meaning

by John Hospers

In Liberty's October 2007 issue, Leland Yeager and Stephen Cox debated the question: Is there a God — and does it matter? A distinguished libertarian philosopher now offers his own response.

When asked whether I believe in God, I sometimes reply, "Yes — many gods. There's Zeus (Jupiter), and his nagging wife Hera, and a huge extended family of other gods — Poseidon, who rules the sea, and Pluto, in charge of the underworld, and so on in an unwieldy bureaucracy of overlapping functions, somewhat like the Departments of State, Defense, and Interior, all serving at the pleasure of the president."

People know from the start that I don't really believe any of this, and many of the ancient Greeks probably didn't believe it either. They didn't think that if they climbed to the top of Mount Olympus they would see Zeus face to face. Nor did they think of him as creator of the universe; they were fellow citizens of the universe, but not creators of it. Neither did the so-called problem of evil greatly concern them: why is there so much pain and suffering in the world?

If gods did not create the world, they are not responsible for its defects. Christian theology has been wrestling with that problem for centuries. But the Greek gods were hardly paragons of morality, and they weren't worshipped as Christians worship the God of the Bible. True, the gods were immortal (they didn't have to face death), but they were not avid moral lawgivers, and there were no eternal punishments for evil-doers, and certainly not for unbelievers.

In Judaism there was one God; and the first of the Ten Commandments warned adherents, on pain of death, not to

have any gods before him. Throughout the Old Testament, God was conceived in a highly anthropomorphic way. God talked with Adam and Eve in the garden in the cool of the evening. When he told them not to eat of the tree, they disobeyed; and in the end "he repented himself that he had made man."

Later on, God gave commands to Abraham, Moses, and Noah; and usually they would hear his voice and obey his commands. Apparently, God had a human voice that could be heard at great distances.

Had there been sound amplification, presumably Moses would not have had to go to the mountains to receive the commandments and then tell the Israelites about them second hand.

It is widely held today that the author of the first chapter of Genesis was not the author of all of it. In Genesis 1 we read that "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." God, that is, existed prior to the existence of the physical universe: God was not the product of physical forces but

the creator of them. And so the cosmic concept of chapter 1 was replaced by the anthropomorphism of chapter 2.

In the New Testament, we inhabit a very different moral universe, dominated by the life of Jesus and a very different conception of the good life — not “an eye for an eye” but

One's eternal salvation depended on one's adherence to the Christian doctrine which admitted only believers to heaven. Thus, the emphasis shifted away from a saintly way of life to a succession of promises and warnings.

“forgive your enemies.” Christian ethics, along with classical Greek ethics, became a dominant moral ideal of the ancient world. But in the process there was generated not an ethics but a theology.

Jesus the ideal man became Christ the second member of the Trinity (Father, Son, Holy Spirit). One's eternal salvation depended on one's adherence, not to the way of life taught in the Gospels, but to the Christian doctrine which admitted only believers in Christ to the kingdom of heaven. Thus the emphasis shifted from a saintly way of life to a succession of promises and warnings concerning one's fate in an eternal hereafter: “No one can come to the Father but by me.”

We think, we believe, we wonder, we doubt. All these occur in what we commonly call our minds. It is true that we also have physical bodies. We cannot think without having brains: a brain is a necessary condition for the occurrence of any kind of mental life. Having a brain is not sufficient for thinking, but it is surely necessary.

It is far from clear, even today, to what extent minds occur in the universe. If having a mind presupposes that the creature weighs alternatives and then chooses among them, we cannot be sure that any creatures other than human beings have minds. Do armadillos weigh alternatives and then choose? Can we even be sure about dogs and cats? They act in this way rather than that, but do they go through the mental process of choosing? Many would question this.

Perhaps then we should draw the line elsewhere: by answering the question “Are they conscious?” A dog is conscious — he feels pain and pleasure, and he is aware of people around him. But so is the garden snake who avoids people, and perhaps the mosquito as well. In fact we don't know, and can only guess, whether certain organisms, such as amoebas and shellfish, are conscious of anything. We just don't know how far down in the tree of life we have to go to determine at which level consciousness occurs. We would bet that the tree out there is not conscious; but how would we proceed to collect on such a bet?

There are many physical organisms that lack consciousness. But are there beings with consciousness who do not possess physical bodies? We are immediately inclined to say No;

how can there possibly be a mind, a center of consciousness, with no physical organism located at a definite point in space? What would you say of a new neighbor of whom people said “We don't think he has a body”?

“It's impossible,” we exclaim. “How can you even conceive of anything that absurd?” But countless people apparently do believe it, when they believe in God. God, they say, is an incorporeal spirit, with no body at all. “But where is he located?” He is not located in space, we are told. He is a non-spatial being, at once everywhere and nowhere; yet the universe owes its entire existence to him.

Absurd if you like: but is this not what Christians believe? When they pray, it is not to a physical body but to a mind (an infinite mind, if you like) who is source and origin of everything that exists. He is aware of everything, including your every thought and impulse; yet you cannot point to any object or collection of objects and truly say, “There he is!”

A similar situation arises when we are speaking not of God but of ordinary human beings who have died. “Where is he?” “He is right there, lying in his grave.” “No, that's not what I mean. He no longer has a body, only a spirit or soul.” Isn't that what we attribute to loved ones who have “passed on”? They have died, but they are still alive.

The little daughter for whom we grieve is still alive, and has thoughts and feelings even though she is no longer here. “She's in heaven,” we may say. But this presents an array of questions. Will she always be as she is now, a little girl? Will she grow up and become an adult, in time even an old woman? Does she remember us now? Does she miss us? Can she grieve also?

What of the mother who has lost her son in war and wonders whether her son, now in heaven, misses us. “Yes,” people say, “but not in a way that would hurt him.” But how can he not be hurt if he is now without someone who had been so

Absurd if you like: but is this not what Christians believe? When they pray, it is not to a physical body but to a mind (an infinite mind) who is the source and origin of everything that exists.

central to his life? In what sense can he be said to still exist at all? Yet that, or something very like it, is what many generations of Christians have believed. They believe falsely, we may say, just as one believes falsely that there are ghosts or leprechauns.

But do they say it intelligibly? They utter the words — but you can't just attach any old adjective to a noun and then take for granted that you have actually said something meaningful about reality. Whether you have or haven't is a matter of continuing controversy. □

Learning From Interlingua

by Leland B. Yeager

A language has been discovered that helps us
discover the nature of language. Also, it's fun.

F.A. Hayek, the Nobel-laureate economist and philosopher of liberty, said that he appreciated “results of human action but not of human design.” The results he had in mind included useful institutions that have evolved gradually without overall planning — institutions such as morality, the common law, the market system, money, and, almost prototypically, language. Hayek condemned as “constructivism” an eagerness to impose one’s bright ideas for reconstructed or invented institutions without due regard to the possible merits of those that have evolved almost spontaneously.

People first hearing of Interlingua, the modern auxiliary language, may well suspect constructivism. Yet far from showing contempt for whatever has not been deliberately planned, Interlingua respects the historical character of language. As I’ll try to show, it can be useful to the individual person in several ways even if it never is widely adopted for international communication.

Reasons why the charge of constructivism would be wrong explain why Interlingua fascinates me (and, I hope, other readers of Liberty). No one favors imposing it to replace national languages. Interlingua registers objectively existing linguistic reality: it is natural, not artificial — a generic Romance language distilled mainly from Italian, French,

Spanish, Portuguese, and the many Romance-Latin-Greek elements of English. The international vocabulary of science and technology appears in it, as well as other international words borrowed into German, Russian, and many other languages. Indeed, its source languages might well be considered dialects of Interlingua as their standard, just as their own dialects have been more or less deliberately standardized in German, Italian, Serbo-Croatian, and other national languages. (Ludwig von Mises, chosen by Liberty’s editors as libertarian of the 20th century, notes such precedents in his “Nation, State, and Economy” [1919, trans. 1983].)

Interlingua offers a key to the common features of its sources. It was extracted from them by teams of professional linguists working over many years with the International Auxiliary Language Association. Its first definitive dictionary and grammar appeared in 1951, when IALA’s research

director was Dr. Alexander Gode. Since then many other dictionaries have appeared, adding words on the same naturalistic principles used for its earliest publications. The largest is a five-volume Interlingua-Dutch/Dutch-Interlingua work.

Interlingua's grammar sheds complications that even any one of its source languages manages without, such as grammatical gender, noun cases, and accord of adjectives and nouns. It avoids personal conjugations and irregularities of verbs, those notorious bugbears of students. The simplifications actually enhance Interlingua's generic Romance character, for the complications that are dropped differ among its individual source languages anyway. Its vocabulary is instructive as a standard from which each of those languages distorts words away from their common ancestors, distorting them in idiosyncratic yet *systematic* ways.

While few people have studied Interlingua, an individual person can benefit from knowing it. He (or she) can communicate with any of the hundreds of millions of native speakers of Romance languages, who (as I have observed) can understand it without having even heard of it before. For international meetings, it has the merits of being very easy to learn

and of not giving an advantage to native speakers of any national language. With it, we English-speakers could soften our reputation of scorning foreign languages and expecting everyone to use ours. Learning Interlingua is admittedly easier for speakers of its source languages than for speakers of more distantly related or unrelated ones; yet even exotic languages have adopted its international vocabulary of science and technology.

Interlingua can be useful especially to us English-speakers, whose vocabulary has the double basis of Germanic and Romance-Latin-Greek roots. Many words for everyday concepts such as *foot*, *head*, *bread*, *meat*, *sky*, *water* are of Germanic origin. Their counterparts in the Romance languages as standardized in Interlingua are *pede*, *capite*, *pan*, *carne*, *celo*, *aqua*; and from them English forms derivatives: *pedal*, *capital*, *pantry*, *carnivorous*, *celestial*, *aquatic* (to mention just one of each). Since many thousands of English words embody Latin (and Greek) roots, Interlingua becomes a key, like Latin itself, to English vocabulary. It promotes understanding of the derivations and even the spelling of our words, thus offering us one of the main advantages of knowing the classical languages.

Table 1

In each of the examples below, an Interlingua word is followed by its meaning and a few of its English derivatives.

batter 'beat', 'strike': batter, battery, battle, combat, debate, rebate, abattoir

cader 'fall': cadence, case, accident, incident, decadent, casual, casualty, casuistry, recidivism

carne 'meat', 'flesh': carnal, carnivorous, carnival, incarnation, carnage, carnation

creder 'believe': creed, credible, credulous, credit, creditor, credential, discredit, miscreant

ducer 'lead', 'draw': duke, conduct, conducive, ductile, educate, deduce, abduct, duct, aqueduct

funder 'melt', 'pour': foundry, fuse, fusion, transfusion, confuse, confound, diffuse, effusive, profusion, funnel

grave 'weighty': gravity, gravid, aggravate, gravamen, grieve, grief, grievous

grege 'flock', 'herd', 'crowd': gregarious, segregate, integrate, aggregate, congregate, egregious

imperar 'govern', 'command': empire, emperor, imperial, imperative

leger 'gather', 'choose': select, collect, college, diligent, predilection, elect, elective, eligible, elite, intelligent

leger 'read': lecture, lectern, lesson, legend, legible

mitter 'put', 'send': mission, missionary, emissary, Mass, emit, remit, transmit, submit, promise, missile, message, committee

moner 'warn', 'advise', 'remind': admonish, monitor, monitory, premonition, monument, demonstrate, summon. Indirectly, through the Temple of Juno Moneta (Juno Who Warns), Interlingua moneta: English money, monetary, monetize, demonetize, mint

pender 'hang': depend, append, suspend, pendulum, propensity, appendix, impending, independent

ponderar 'weigh', 'ponder': ponder, imponderable, ponderous, ponderosa, preponderate

poter 'be able': potent, impotent, potency, potential, potentate, potentiometer

precar 'pray': precatory, precarious, imprecation, deprecate

precio 'price': price, prize, precious, appreciate, depreciate, appraise

premer 'press': print, imprint, pressure, impress, oppress, depress, repress, suppress

rader 'scrape': razor, erase, abrade, abrasive, raze, rash

scriber 'write': scribe, scribble, describe, inscribe, subscribe, circumscribe, prescribe, nondescript, manuscript, scripture, conscription, postscript

seder 'sit' and sede 'seat': see (as in Holy See), session, president, obsession, sedentary, sessile, sediment, residence, residue, assiduous, siege

sequer 'follow': sequel, sequence, consequent, persecute, prosecute, pursue, obsequious

tener 'hold': tenable, retain, detain, abstain, pertain, tenant

torquer 'twist': torque, torsion, retort, distort, extortion, contortion, tortuous, torture

vader 'go': evade, invade, pervasive, wade, waddle

venir 'come': venue, Advent, circumvent, event, prevent, supervene, convene, revenue, eventually

Among the many English words containing *two* Interlingua roots are —

aqua 'water', ducer 'lead': aqueduct

plen 'full', poter 'be able': plenipotentiary

omne 'all', poter: omnipotent

melle 'honey', fluer 'flow': mellifluous

carne 'meat', vorar 'devour': carnivorous

ben 'well', voler 'wish': benevolent

agro 'field', coler 'cultivate' (and cultura 'culture'): agriculture

pisce 'fish', coler: pisciculture

mano 'hand', scriber 'write': manuscript

ex 'out of', 'from', onere 'burden': exonerate

Some of the foregoing examples (Table 1) already include roots that form derivatives together with Latin-Interlingua prepositions such as ab, ad, con, ex, circum, super, trans, and others. Further examples include: abstract, adhere, conference, execute, circumspect, superficial, transitory.

Knowing Interlingua helps bring to life dead metaphors latent in English words: e.g., exonerate (ex = off, out; onere = burden), mellifluous (melle = honey, fluere = to flow), benevolent (ben = well, volere = to wish). It may help force a writer to think more exactly what he means; it may alert him to long Latin-derived words that creep into his drafts and to ways of replacing pretentious ones. (A current vogue term that I find repellent is “prior to.” Well, *prior* is one of the Latin-Interlingua words for “earlier than” or “before.” Why not just use the good old Anglo-Saxon word “before”? After all, English is basically a Germanic language.)

Interlingua illuminates systematic deviations in its “dialects” from their common ancestor — so-called sound shifts.* The examples in Table 2 (each with a derived English word) show how **-ct-**, **-li-**, **-cul-**, and an initial consonant + **I** are characteristically simplified in the Romance languages.

Many other such parallel shifts occur. Of all the Romance languages considered here, French most distorts Interlingua words. (A notorious example is *évêque*, which shares no consonant with Interlingua/Latin *episcopo* and no letter at all with English *bishop*.)

An **e** or **i** of stressed syllables in Interlingua frequently changes to **oi**; examples follow in Interlingua, French, and English: me, moi, me; credere, croire, believe; preda, proie, prey; derecto, droit, right or law; feno, foin, hay; fide, foie, faith; ficato, foie, liver; digito, doigt, finger; pipere, poivre, pepper; frigide, froid, cold.

Interlingua **c** followed by a vowel often becomes **ch** in French; **l** in certain positions becomes **u**, and **s** in certain positions (especially at the beginning of a word) disappears, leaving an acute or circumflex accent as a trace. Examples are (Interlingua) cantar, (French) chanter, (English) sing; can, chien, dog; vacca, vache, cow; morsello, morceau, morsel; fardello, fardeau, burden; pelle, peau, skin; schola, école, school; ostrea, huître, oyster; tosto, tôt, soon or early. Many words, some already shown, undergo two or three of these

systematic changes; other examples are: capillo, cheveu, hair; stricte, étroit, tight; castello, château, castle. As also already illustrated, French tends to shorten words; it has been described as Latin spoken by a hard-of-hearing person, who misses many syllables.

Knowing Interlingua as the standard from which such sound shifts depart should be useful in learning at least to decipher texts in one or all of the Romance languages.†

Interlingua goes beyond illuminating correspondences within its own Latin-Romance family. By representing its family in parallel with the Germanic, Slavic, Greek, Celtic,

Far from showing contempt for whatever has not been deliberately planned, Interlingua respects the historical character of language.

and other families that derive, over millennia, from a common Indo-European ancestor, it can help show systematic relations among them also. The Latin-Romance stop consonants **p**, **t**, and **k** tend to correspond to the fricatives **f**, **th**, and **h** in English (here representing the Germanic languages). In the examples that follow, the double arrow ↔ indicates correspondence by common ancestry, not derivation of either word from the other.

Interlingua pisce ↔ English fish, pede ↔ foot, patre ↔ father, palpar ↔ to feel, pauc ↔ few, penna ↔ feather, plen ↔ full, pelle ↔ fell & film, porco ↔ farrow, putrer ↔ (to become) foul (rot).

Tres ↔ three, tenue ↔ thin, tu ↔ thou, te ↔ thee, tonitro ↔ thunder, turdo ↔ thrush (the bird), trans ↔ through.

Capite ↔ head, can ↔ hound, cannabe ↔ hemp, cento ↔ hundred, corde ↔ heart, corno ↔ horn, cute ↔ hide (=skin), como (Latin quomodo) ↔ how.

*Although IALA's researchers did not explicitly consult the less-familiar Romance languages, these also count among the dialects of Interlingua. I present Catalan as a dialect in Panorama (Union Mundial pro Interlingua), November/December 2000, and Rumanian and Galician as dialects also and Papiamentu as a quasi-dialect in Confluentes (American Society for Interlingua), 2002, nos. 2 & 4, and 2003, no. 3.

†“How to Read All the Romance Languages Right Away” is the subtitle of “EuroComRom — The Seven Sieves,” by William J. McCann, Horst G. Klein, and Tilbert D. Stegman (Aachen: Shaker Verlag, 2002). The authors show how to exploit similarities and systematic differences among the individual languages. Their method would work better if based on the generic standard language from which the languages deviate as “dialects.”

Table 2

Interlingua	Italian	French	Spanish	Portuguese	Rumanian	Catalan	English cognate
nocte	notte	nuit	noche	noite	noapte	nit	nocturnal
lacte	latte	lait	leche	leite	lapte	llet	lactic
octo	otto	huit	ocho	oito	opt	vuit	octet
filio	figlio	fil	hijo	filho	fiu	fill	filial
folio	foglia	feuille	hoja	fôlha	foaie	fulla	foil, foliage
consilio	consiglio	conseil	consejo	conselho	consiliu	consell	counsel
oculo	occhio	oeil	ojo	ôlho	ochiu	ull	oculist
plen	pieno	plein	lleno	cheio	plin	ple	plenty
flamma	fiamma	flamme	llama	chama	flacăără	flama	flame

Interlingua **qu** ↔ English **hw** (usually spelled **wh**): Que (L. quod) ↔ what, qui ↔ who, quando ↔ when, qual ↔ which, proque (L. quare) ↔ why.

Indo-European voiced stops **d** and **g**, conserved in the Romance languages, become the voiceless **t** and **k**-sound in English: dece ↔ ten, digito ↔ toe (and finger), domar ↔ to tame, genere ↔ kind (and kin), genu ↔ knee, grue ↔ crane.

Again in systematic patterns, the Romance languages, especially French, have not only derived the bulk of their vocabularies from Latin but have borrowed some words from the common ancestor of the modern Germanic languages. **Gu** (and **g**) in Romance words sometimes corresponds to **w** in Germanic. Without necessarily identical meanings in the two languages, such words include Interlingua guerra ↔ English war, guastar ↔ waste, gemer ↔ whine (or groan), guisa ↔ wise (guise), guai ↔ woe, ganiar ↔ win (gain), guindar ↔ wind (hoist), Guilhelmo ↔ William.

We saw above how Interlingua resurrects dead English metaphors. Similarly, it illuminates loan translations (calques) even in distantly related or unrelated languages. For example, Interlingua/English *transition* combines (in effect) the Interlingua roots *trans* 'across' and *ir* 'to go'; the corresponding German, Russian, and Hungarian words — Übergang, perekhod, and átmenet — are formed with native roots meaning the same. *Contra* 'against' and *dicer* 'say' form *contradiction*, and the equivalent roots form Widerspruch, protivorechie, and ellenmondás in the other three languages. *Con* 'together' and *poner* 'put' form *composition*, with the parallels zusammenstellen, sostavlatj, and összetenni. Such correspondences are innumerable.

Realists (like me) do not expect Interlingua to triumph over English as an international auxiliary language. With its advantages for certain purposes and especially for speakers of its source languages, however, it might gain the role of *second* auxiliary language. The two could be allies. Knowing either facilitates learning the other.

Any mention of Interlingua brings Esperanto to mind and requires a comparison. Esperanto is an ingenious invention to which Hayek's epithet "constructivism" does indeed apply. Dr. Ludwik Zamenhof (1859–1917) plucked words more or less

not disparage Esperanto, which has its appeal. The contrasts between the two languages do summarize, however, some features of Interlingua. It is a discovery of and an introduction to linguistic scholarship. Registering objective reality, it has a

If Interlingua is such an admirable achievement, why is it less widely known than Esperanto? As a work of scholarship, it appeals less to enthusiasts for gadgetry, exotic contrivances, global salvation, and miscellaneous causes.

natural character. Hundreds of millions of Romance speakers can understand it instantly. Even apart from any widespread deliberate adoption, it is useful to individuals, especially to writers and others interested in word origins and synonyms. It lacks cultist associations.

If Interlingua is such an admirable achievement, why is it less widely known than Esperanto? As a work of scholarship, it appeals less to enthusiasts for gadgetry, exotic contrivances, global salvation, and miscellaneous causes. Furthermore, gaining attention can be expensive, as business and political advertising shows. Unfortunately, IALA's chief patron, Mrs. Alice Vanderbilt Morris, died shortly before the language's defining dictionary and grammar appeared; and funds for popularizing it dried up. Nevertheless, a community of Interlingua supporters does flourish.

Literature in and about Interlingua, as well as further links to the internet, can be found at interlingua.com. As a sample, meanwhile, here is the beginning of a historic classical-liberal document. The translation preserves the slightly antiquated style of the original, particularly in capitalization and punctuation.

QUANDO in le Curso del Eventos human, il deveni necessari pro un Populo dissolver le Bandas Politic que les ha connectite con un altere, e assumer inter le Poteres del Terra, le Position separate e equal al qual le Leges del Natura e del Deo de Natura les da titulo, un decente Respecto al Opiniones del Humanitate require que illes declara le causas que les impelle al Separation.

NOS mantene que iste Veritates es evidente per se, que omne Homines es create equal, que illes es dotate per lor Creator con certe Directos inalienabile, que inter istos es le Vita, le Libertate, e le Recerca del Felicitate — Que pro assecurar iste Directos, Governamentos es instituite inter Homines, derivante su juste Poteres ab le Consentimento del Governatos, que quandocunque ulle Forma del Governo deveni destructive de iste Fines, il es le Directo del Populo alterar lo o abolir lo, e instituer nove Governo, basante su Foundation super tal Principios, e organisante su Poteres in tal Forma, que les semblara le plus apte a effectuar lor Securitate e Felicitate. □

The vocabulary of Interlingua is instructive as a standard from which each of its source languages distorts words away from their common ancestors in idiosyncratic yet systematic ways.

arbitrarily from the several languages that he knew, including Polish and Russian, and distorted them into conformity with his idiosyncratic ideas for vocabulary and grammar. No one can understand Esperanto without studying it. Saying so does

Uh, Oh: Grandpa's Back

by Matthew Bandyk

Latte drinkers of the world, unite!
You have nothing to lose but your sanity.

The militant poet Gil-Scott Heron famously said that “the revolution will not be televised.” But apparently it does have a soundtrack. Marx has now come back from the dead to explain why communism is more essential than ever, and he was accompanied by the sound of Billy Joel.

That was the music used to warm up the crowd for Howard Zinn’s one-man play “Marx in Soho,” which I saw last summer. The play consists largely of the German philosopher talking about why the years since his death have done nothing to repudiate the validity of Marxism. As Bob Weick, the actor who plays the role of Marx, confided in a *Washington Post* preview of the show, “It’s not that communism failed. It’s that it hasn’t really been tried.”

How many times have we heard that one before? Nevertheless, Weick’s theater group has picked up the old chestnut and, determined to convince others that communism has gotten an unfair rap, is touring major American colleges, arthouses, and high schools with Zinn’s drama. (I saw it as part of Washington’s Capital Fringe Festival.) The goal is to convince audiences that everything they’ve been taught about communism is wrong.

For some people, it seems to work. “The meaning of the

play actually moved me and made me want to become more radical,” glows one college student’s testimonial.

“Marx in Soho” has been kicking around since 1999, although earnest people have updated it continually to fit in references to such contemporary events as the War on Terror and the Enron scandal. Unfortunately, both the subject and the audience have seen better days. The choice of Billy Joel for some of the ancillary music was fitting for a show that is political bathos for boomers. My fellow audience members were not exactly what one would expect to find at a show advertised as a “rousing defense” of a revolutionary ideology. Instead of dreadlocks and Che Guevara T-shirts, I saw receding hairlines and tees from vacations on Sanibel Island.

Billy Joel isn't as hip as Gil-Scott Heron, or the crowd as exciting as a rally of young bohemians or a strike of raucous dockworkers, but the age distribution is true to the type of people who have time to worry about Marxism these days. Affluent, bored retirees of the world, unite! You have nothing to lose but the price of your ticket.

Zinn himself has made a good career as a mainstream radical. His "A People's History of the United States" was lauded by Matt Damon in "Good Will Hunting" and featured in dramatic readings by James Earl Jones and Marisa Tomei. It has recently been adapted into a version aimed at 10- to 14-year-olds (and people thought it couldn't be dumbed down!).

So, one can hardly be surprised that the Marx of "Marx in Soho" is one highly fitted for upper-middle class popular consumption. This Marx isn't a commissar; he's a kindly grandfather spinning yarns by the fire. He opines lovingly about his wife Jenny in a manner reminiscent of Forrest Gump. He's anything but the nasty, selfish, vengeful, parasitic old coot that his contemporaries dreaded; or the intransigent radical who was worshipped by Lenin, Castro, Pol Pot, and other unsavories. He's a Marx that you might want to have a drink with, especially if you're a trendy resident of the Soho quarter of London, where he lived from 1849 until his death.

Why did this Marx decide to return and chat with us? The idea is that the odd association between Marxism and oppressive, impoverishing dictatorship has so unfairly maligned communism that its author is inspired to resurrect himself and set the story straight. This plot device — Marx's return from the dead — is a metaphor for what Zinn wants the audience to believe. Marx didn't see most of the horrors and failures of his disciples. But now, Austin Powers-like, he rises to proclaim that the past century has taught us nothing about his ideas, and that we should have another go at them.

Real communism, he now discovers, is based on freedom and democracy, not totalitarianism and murder. He speaks lovingly of the Paris Commune (1871), a paradise where proletarians came together and cooperated to provide education, medical services, and equal rights for all. It's true, the Commune lasted for only a few weeks; but still . . . That was cooperation!

It's when the people refuse to cooperate that Marx gets angry. (Strangely, so did the Communards.) And when he gets angry, he, like the historical Marx, also gets mean. At one point in the play, he growls that "we should praise the capitalist system for its amazing means of production — and then TAKE IT OVER." As Lenin found, it's really hard to be patient and wait for the revolution to happen spontaneously, as according to Marx's predictions, when it's so easy to prod it along with the barrel of a gun.

Zinn doesn't make Marx out to be flawless. But the problem for Zinn isn't that Marx overlooked the inability of centralized planning to organize economic activity effectively. It isn't that Marx exaggerated the poverty of the proletariat. The problem isn't what any of the people who have paid attention to global events since, well, Marx's time have discovered. It's that Marx "didn't anticipate the drugs that would keep capitalism alive."

Drugs? What is Zinn smoking? What he seems to mean is

that Marx did not foresee the ways in which capitalists would find ways to stave off the inevitable workers' rebellion. At one point in the play, Marx sheepishly admits that his "timing was a bit off" about the end of capitalism, an understatement that would surely provoke laughter from any audience other than one that chooses to dedicate its Friday afternoon to a one-man show about a discredited political philosopher.

Yes, the timing was a little off but, according to "Marx in Soho," we're still on that irrevocable path toward revolution. Capitalism continues to degrade the working class, which will inevitably rise against it. Zinn's Marx cites Enron and corporate layoffs as evidence that capitalism hasn't gotten any more humane. But a look at Soho today would tell quite a different story about the effects of capitalism. When Marx lived there, the place was a filthy slum and a red light district. Today, despite the ravages of global capitalism, it is a center of fashion boutiques, tourist hotels, media companies, and other well-paying enterprises ministering to the wants of a society rich beyond the dreams of even Marxist avarice.

Zinn is right in one sense. Marx's vision of communism hasn't really been tried, if you mean that nobody ever succeeded in following Marx's ideas to the letter. Of course, if nobody succeeded, it wasn't for lack of interest. But one can admit that none of the so-called "communist" states — the Soviet Union, China, Cuba, or any of the other expensive experiments — was an example of *true* communism. Nothing ever could be.

Marx predicted that communism would arrive only after the proletariat gained control of all means of production. Once the "dictatorship of the proletariat" had finished off free enterprise, man would stop living the egoistic life that capitalism had forced upon him and would, as Marx said in his essay "On the Jewish Question," start living up to his "species-being." People would no longer separate their individual needs from the needs of mankind as a whole. Egoism was the product of a political order that recognizes and protects private property; once that order was thrown away, the state would dissolve and true communism would arrive. Like the Marx who is summoned from the grave by Howard Zinn, mankind would be resurrected by politics.

But resurrected from what? Marxist man had never existed. He'd been absent through recorded human history. Everything we know about humans suggests that it is unrealistic (not to mention arrogant and silly) to expect them to subordinate their wants and desires to the community. The only way to believe in Marx's system is to *want* to believe in it.

That's why it's pointless to argue with the Marx of "Marx in Soho." It's pointless to observe that capitalism hasn't further and further degraded the life of the poor, that it has, in fact, lifted more people out of poverty than anyone living in Soho in the late 1800s thought possible. That's the real economic resurrection, isn't it? But none of this matters to Zinn. He has his faith.

This version of the play, and certainly others, will tour the country, spreading Marx's message, together with the image of Marx himself as a kind old man. You may not be convinced by Zinn's arguments, but you may be impressed by his stubbornness. □

Decisive Moments: The Camera and the Individual

by Joseph Ho

It isn't technology that makes a masterpiece;
it's people who know how to use technology.

Some people leaf through books of history, trying to see whether they are interested in the subject or the style. Others flip immediately to the thin gray line that separates the realms of white: the photo section.

The photographs, of course, may have been included as mere visualizations of the text. An article on Iwo Jima would not be complete without the black and white photo of the flag-raising on Suribachi; an essay on the Titanic may include sepia-toned pictures of her builder and captain; a history of the American space program can be complemented by a color photo of an astronaut snapping a salute in front of a wrinkled flag, planted in a desolate lunar landscape.

The same photographs may be viewed in a different way: they may be analyzed for their artistry, their composition, their dynamics, their suggestions and symbolism. Whole fields of art history have been developed in the pursuit of such knowledge. What is the significance of the dominant lines in this picture of people disembarking at Ellis Island? What does the high contrast in this war photo symbolize? What imperialistic motifs can be discerned in this photograph of colonial subjects?

As a student of history who is also an avid amateur pho-

tographer, I look at the photographs first, but I am not necessarily looking for either their visualization or their artistry. I wonder, instead, about their creation. Who took these photos? What was he or she like? Why was he there at that moment? Why did she take the photograph? What kind of equipment and technique did the photographer decide to employ? Did he or she take other photographs, and were they widely seen? Today, it is easy to forget the effect that individual photographers have had on the ways in which we view not only photographs, but also the world they represent. Similarly, with photographic technology so rapidly advancing, it is much too easy to neglect both the individual toil and the individual technique that went into the creation of past iconic images.

Photography has always been an individual art and science. At the most fundamental level, one always makes two basic choices in manipulating the camera — when to trip the

shutter, and what to include or exclude. Yes, there are confining factors: the limitations of space and time, the pressure to produce something that will be accepted or required by a certain audience. There are also the conflicts, moral or practical,

With photographic technology so rapidly advancing, it is much too easy to neglect both the individual toil and the individual technique that went into the creation of past iconic images.

that may take place in the photographer's mind. There is even the effortlessness, the apparent lack of any necessity for decision, that is the blessing of cliché pictures. But the camera has one operator; he or she alone is the mind behind the machine. As has long been whispered in the world of true photographic artists — and related to me many times through wise photographic mentors — “no camera is as good as the photographer behind it.”

Icons and Ironies

The day is cold and damp; salt spray stings the unshaven faces of helmeted men, huddled together in heaving, pitching landing craft as they speed toward the foggy shore ahead. Up on the cliffs, frantic shouts and piercing klaxons send sleepy, red-eyed companies into concrete shore defenses to repel an invasion they had no idea was coming. Soon, whining bullets and screaming mortar shells sweep the beaches; men run, shout, scream, and fall. Amid the blood and chaos of the first assault wave, a young Hungarian national wearing the combat uniform of a U.S. soldier crouches, pauses, leaps, and runs with the other men. But he is no ordinary soldier, and what he shoots with does not kill.

Swinging from leather straps around his neck are two Zeiss-Ikon Contax 35mm cameras and a Rolleiflex 2 1/4" by 2 1/4" camera, wet and muddy from the rough landing on Omaha Beach. The young man's combat pouches are filled with neither ammunition nor medical dressings, but preloaded rolls of black and white 35-millimeter film. He is Robert Capa, a photojournalist for Life magazine. In the first two hours of the D-Day invasion he shot a total of 108 photographs of U.S. soldiers under fire, switching from one grimy camera to the other, reloading as quickly as he could.

As the Americans cleared the beachhead and prepared for their first push into occupied France, Capa's negatives were rushed back to Life's photographic labs in England by one of the first returning ships; they arrived at nine that evening. Then, in a dimly lit darkroom, one of photography's greatest tragedies occurred. Eighteen-year-old Larry Burrows — himself later to become an iconic photojournalist of the Vietnam War — was there when an exhausted messenger arrived in the office, his uniform soaked with sweat, carrying the carefully

packaged, precious film. In a book by John Morris, Burrows tells the story:

A scrawled note said that the action was all in the 35-millimeter, that things had been very rough, that [Capa] had come back to England unintentionally with wounded being evacuated, and that he was on his way back to Normandy . . . Photographer Hans Wild . . . called up . . . to say that the 35-millimeter, though grainy, looked “fabulous!” I replied, “We need contacts — rush, rush, rush!” . . . A few minutes later [the lab technician] came bounding up the stairs and into my office, sobbing. “They’re ruined! Ruined! Capa’s films are all ruined!” Incredulous, I rushed down to the darkroom with him, where he explained that he had hung the films, as usual, in the wooden locker that served as a drying cabinet, heated by a coil on the floor. Because of my order to rush, he had closed the doors. Without ventilation the emulsion had melted.

Only eight frames of 35mm film were saved from the oozing mess of celluloid that lay dripping from the film hangers. These were published in Life with a dryly disdainful caption that labeled them “slightly out of focus.” Capa was himself to meet a tragic, anticlimactic end: one month short of a decade after that decisive June day, he lay dead at the side of a dirt road halfway across the world, his leg blown off by an anti-tank landmine. He had worked his way forward of a French patrol under fire from Vietminh guerrillas, running and lifting his camera (one of the three that had accompanied him on Omaha Beach) to photograph the advancing soldiers, when he stumbled into a minefield.

John Steinbeck wrote in tribute after Capa's death: “No one can take the place of any fine artist, but we are fortunate to have in his pictures the quality of the man . . . he made a world and it was Capa's world.” This “world,” in the 50 years since it became a part of history, has made its mark on ours. We have seen Capa's eight blurry frames, in one form or another. They have been printed in books and magazines; they have been used as production material for a myriad of war films; they have become iconic images of monumental events. Having been repeatedly exposed to these photographs, whether in their original form or in media that borrow from them, we have relegated Robert Capa to a name located chiefly in books of photographic history, buried in library archives — his courageous efforts and brilliant talent faded by the passage of

As has been related to me many times through wise photographic mentors, “no camera is as good as the photographer behind it.”

time. His unique personal accomplishment resulted in his eclipse as a personality — yet his accomplishment was no less real, no less individual.

I, as a young photographer, was soon to realize his individualism in a discovery of my own; a chance historical find

was to propel me backward in time and place me — in a startlingly realistic way — into Robert Capa's shoes.

Lessons From History

One winter day found me in a dim living room that reeked of old metal and the strangely aromatic smell of machine oil. I had come to visit the home and workshop of Jack Biederman, a retired high school photography teacher and camera repairman, to have one of my older 35mm cameras tuned up. My fascination with old photographic equipment turned to elation as I looked around his living room, packed from floor to ceiling with boxes of cameras and lenses, accumulated by Mr. Biederman in his long years of teaching, repairing, and collecting. That's the kind of person he was. As Mr. Biederman pointed out treasured cameras with his shaking, bony finger and described them in his raspy voice, my eyes came to rest on a worn leather camera case embossed with the words "ZEISS-IKON" in angular Germanic characters, lying atop a pile of half-disassembled cameras.

I had seen a case like this before, hanging from the neck of a photojournalist pictured in a World War II book. A cloud of dust rose from the pile as I lifted the case; it was very heavy. As I opened it, bright chrome finish and black lettering met my eye; the elegant words "Contax" and "Carl Zeiss Jena" set my pulse racing. A friendly chat and \$80 later, I found myself in possession of a 1938 Contax II 35mm camera with a 50mm f/2 Zeiss Sonnar lens, the same model of camera and lens that Robert Capa had shot with throughout his career — a camera responsible not only for the Omaha Beach landing photographs but also for pictures of peasant refugees fleeing the Japanese advance in China, the haunting "Death of a Loyalist Soldier" in the Spanish Civil War, and the last images of French soldiers advancing in Indochina, just before Capa's death.

The shutter of the Contax wasn't working. Zeiss cameras have always been known for their complex internal mechanics, designed by German engineers for reliability, not ease of repair. Even the highly skilled Mr. Biederman had shied away from putting the septuagenarian camera back into action. However, some research on the internet turned up an expert Zeiss repairman who was in business not far from my home. Within six months he had sent the camera back to me,

cleaned, oiled, and as ready for action as the day it left the factory nearly 70 years before.

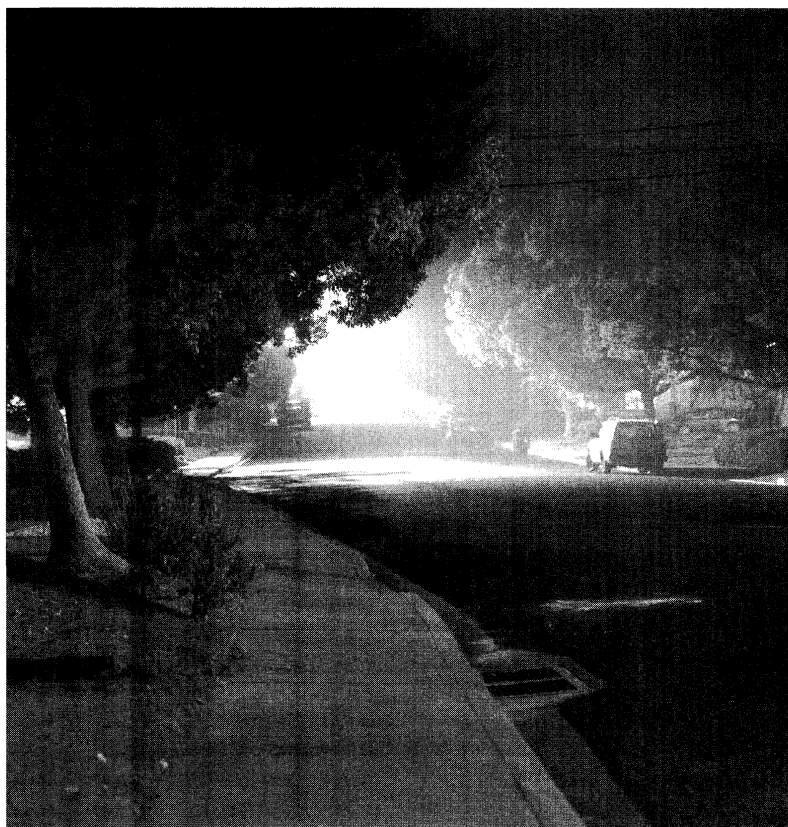
I spent that afternoon familiarizing myself with the workings of the Contax II, and in doing so, quickly gained a new appreciation for the amount of technical skill Capa needed to operate his camera. The back of the Contax, unlike that of modern 35mm cameras, did not swing open but detached completely to expose the shutter and the film take-up spool. The spool itself wasn't attached to the camera, but promptly fell out as the back was opened. Film had to be threaded into the spool; then both film and spool had to be loaded carefully into the camera. Seating the film so as to engage the film transport sprocket wheels was a pain. By the time I shut the back and successfully wound the film, my fingers were sweaty and sore. As I labored, I had a vision of Capa trying to load his Contax in the same way — not in a comfortable suburban bedroom as I was, but on a blood-soaked battlefield with bullets and shells kicking sand up around him. It was unbelievable. The man must have had nerves of steel. Certainly, "no camera is as good as the photographer behind it."

And now I would add: Every good camera offers a chance for its users to define themselves. It asks the photographer: What really interests you? What is your vision? How good are you at realizing it? A camera is really but a tool, an easily accessible outlet for individualism that is both easy

to use and hard to master. However, sometimes all it takes is an open mind and the ability to see beyond the camera as a mere tool, instead sharing one's own thoughts and being with the world through the secondary, mechanical processes of photography.

If you're looking for examples of the importance of individuality, look no farther than the photo of Albert Einstein that can be found on T-shirts and physics posters everywhere, the photo that shows the famous scientist sticking his very large tongue out at the camera. It's a bizarre but, presumably, endearing view of the man best known for his brilliant physics and frazzled gray hair. But while it is, indeed, a view of Einstein, it owes more to the individualism and quick reflexes of the photographer than to any real zaniness in its subject.

Einstein was famous enough that people stopped him on the street and asked, "Aren't you Professor Einstein?"



Joseph Ho

and even, “Can you please explain ‘that theory’?” Tired of the public eye, Einstein sought clever ways to turn inquirers away; in a famous counter to the questions above, he would bow humbly and say in a thick German accent, “Pardon me,

In the first two hours of the D-Day invasion, Robert Capa shot 108 photographs of U.S. soldiers under fire. All but eight of the photographs were lost.

sorry! Always I am mistaken for Professor Einstein!” Then, on March 14, 1951, his 72nd birthday, his adverse reaction to public curiosity was recorded on film.

The exhausted scientist was returning from an event held in his honor on the campus of Princeton University when he was accosted in his car by a swarm of press photographers. His picture had already been taken many times that day, and he was tired of smiling and being blinded by insistent flashbulbs. He shouted, “That’s enough! That’s enough!” but was immediately drowned out by the photographers’ demands for “one more photo, Mr. Einstein!”

Staff photographer Arthur Sasse from United Press was on hand that day, one of the throng that surrounded Einstein’s car. Sasse pushed his way to the front of the crowd and bellowed, “Look this way, Mr. Einstein!” At that moment, Einstein, fed up with the unrelenting press photographers, turned to face his loudest accuser — none other than Arthur Sasse — and furiously stuck out his tongue at him. Instead of waiting for the physicist to revert to a more normal expression, Sasse saw a distinctive photograph and fired off a single frame with his press camera. It was his only chance, as Einstein’s driver revved the car’s engine in impatient protest immediately afterward, and the photographers quickly scattered.

Einstein was later presented with a superb print of Sasse’s technically well-executed photo and immediately took a liking to it — as would millions of physics students in the decades to come. Today, “Einstein’s Tongue” can be seen in odd places all over the globe, from coffee mugs to body tattoos. It owes its popularity to the quick thinking of a now-forgotten UP photographer, who performed a radical renovation of his subject’s personality, as perceived by the crowd — and perhaps even by the subject himself.

Immediacy and Individuality

Photographer Dorothea Lange wrote in her later years, “The camera is an instrument that teaches one how to see without a camera.” Her statement was cruelly clarified by one of the most haunting pictures of the 20th century.

Two decades after Robert Capa waded to shore with American troops under fire at Normandy, the United States was involved in another conflict — not in Europe and not against fascism, but against the spread of communism in

Vietnam. As the war dragged on, the casualty list lengthened, and American public opinion grew polarized over the issue of whether to withdraw from the conflict, another young man took his place among the great iconic documentary photographers. He was 35-year-old Eddie Adams of the Associated Press. At the first noonday of February, 1968, his single decisive photograph, taken on a deserted Saigon street with a Nikon 35mm camera, burned the brutality of the Vietnam conflict into the minds of the American people.

At a few moments before noon, when the Tet Offensive had been underway for less than 24 hours, Adams watched as two South Vietnamese soldiers pulled a prisoner out of a doorway at the end of a Saigon street and escorted him down the sidewalk. The man looked to Adams like a Vietcong soldier, though he was clad in the plaid shirt of a civilian. What happened next occurred in a heartbeat, as Adams remembered:

When they were close — maybe five feet away — the soldiers stopped and backed away. I saw a man walk into my camera viewfinder from the left. He took a pistol out of his holster and raised it. I had no idea he would shoot. It was common to hold a pistol to the head of prisoners during questioning. So I prepared to make that picture — the threat, the interrogation. But it didn’t happen. The man just pulled a pistol out of his holster, raised it to the VC’s head and shot him in the temple. I made a picture at the same time.*

The photograph, later titled “Saigon Execution,” was carefully processed and was broadcast around the world on the following day by the AP radiophoto network. Public reaction was swift and fiery. Antiwar protesters around the world took it and ran with it. Never mind that the executed prisoner turned out to be a notorious Vietcong officer who had been leading killing squads only the day before, or that the executioner was a highly capable and well-respected South Vietnamese general — this photo “proved” all too well the cold brutality and meaningless sacrifice of war. It still ranks as one of the three iconic images of the Vietnam conflict — along with the heartrending picture of wounded, naked Vietnamese children fleeing a napalm strike, and the photograph of helicopters airlifting the last of the American forces from the roof of the Saigon consulate.

What you make of a picture shows who you are, not just what the photograph depicts. Yet photographs do have an effect, as Lange suggested, in teaching people how to see. Admittedly, this may take a long time to happen. When Matthew Brady’s photos of the carnage at Antietam were displayed in Washington, during the Civil War, audiences exclaimed, “How ghastly!”, but did nothing: photography was too new a technology; the viewers weren’t accustomed to the reality that the pictures purported to represent. When Capa’s photos of men struggling and dying in the waters of Normandy appeared in *Life*, the American public — perhaps also not used to the raw quality of the images — took it as another just sacrifice and carried on. But when Adams’ photo of the Saigon execution appeared in American and world media, sped by technology that was on the cutting edge of communications, it galvanized many people’s thoughts over-

*Adams, quoted in Horst Faas, “The Saigon Execution,” *Digital Journalist* (October 2004), <http://www.digitaljournalist.org/issue0410/faas.html>. Accessed July 21, 2007.

night. The sense of immediacy — the *sense*, at least, of a sudden intrusion of unmediated, unjustified brutality — was greater than before. Eyes that had become accustomed to the contemplation of war, and had even accepted its photographic images as classical representations of reality, now looked at an image that was disturbingly hard to fit in the comfortable, classical frame.

By the time that Adams' photo was circulating around the world, the camera was no longer an uninformed, removed observer (if it ever had been), but a participant in changing the world. Photography was now not only an "extension of the eye" (a concept coined by early documentary photographers) but an extension of the individual voice and spirit — the voice and spirit of the viewer as well as the photographer.

This fulfillment of Lange's prophetic statement was not to come without an artistic price — if you take the concept of "seeing without a camera" as including the concept of "seeing without any necessity of art or technique."

Photography was from its infancy a marriage of technology and art. Early photographers were more alchemists than artists, spending immense amounts of time working in unventilated darkrooms, mixing chemicals, preparing solutions, and, more often than not, exposing themselves to toxic substances. Until the first decade of the 20th century, the standard camera itself was heavy, cumbersome, and incapable of freezing motion; it was only in the mid-1920s that widespread photographic technology — high-speed lenses, smaller cameras, faster shutters, more sensitive film — started to enable the professional photographer to go to the action and capture it, rather than needing the action to come to him. The aggressiveness of technology shaped public perception of photographers as seekers and purveyors of truth.

Yet as photographic media became a vital component of the international information age, the sun was quickly setting on the days of the individual technician-photographer. The

"Saigon Execution" is one of the three iconic images of the Vietnam conflict — along with Vietnamese children fleeing a napalm strike and helicopters airlifting the last American forces from the roof of the Saigon consulate.

expansion of mass-market technology and consumerism into the field of photography was a blow to the individualism of technique.

A few weeks ago, I was walking through my old high school campus in Northern California. It was a beautiful summer day; the sun was setting over the golden hills. There was only one flaw in the vista: a pile of junk that the janitors had dumped outside, awaiting the garbage disposal service. As I approached this large pile, I saw something at the bottom, a

strange device . . . Coming closer, I realized that it was an old photographic enlarger, dumped on its side and half covered with dirt and pine needles. My heart broke. I had used this particular enlarger to print countless black and white pho-

"The man just pulled a pistol out of his holster, raised it to the VC's head and shot him in the temple. I made a picture at the same time."

tographs in my high school days, often staying after school for hours on end, watching images appear like magic in the developing chemical. Now the equipment that had served me — and hundreds, if not thousands of former students — so faithfully was only a rusting, rotting frame, dumped by the wayside to make room for the all-digital laboratory that the school was constructing.

Photographic technology has developed so far that little or no technical skill is required to produce decent photographs. For *good photographs*, composition is still necessary, and so are timing and all the other classical artistic elements; but the days of darkroom mastery, careful equipment selection, and the intimate feel for changing conditions of light are fading into memory, replaced by automation and computerization. Anyone can pick up an inexpensive digital point-and-shoot, aim and fire it, and produce a halfway decent image — one instantly viewable on a computer screen. Hours of darkroom work and skillful manipulation of film, paper, and chemicals have been reduced to computerized procedures that are faster than the click of a mouse. Yet in the process many decades of individual skill and artistry have been abruptly relegated to the realm of nostalgia.

Up to Par?

"God and Man" would have been both excited and disappointed by the events I've described.

Leopold Godowsky, Jr., and Leopold Mannes, inventors of the once-ubiquitous Kodachrome, are two of the greatest exemplars of individualism in photography. Extremely talented young musicians, Godowsky and Mannes — such close friends that others jokingly called them "God and Man" — were avid amateur photographers, often spending their spare time in high school on picture taking expeditions. One afternoon in 1917, the pair met to see a motion picture advertised by a local theater as "in full color." Their hopeful curiosity was dashed when the "color" movie turned out to be murky and dim, with none of the crispness or intensity the boys expected. Almost immediately, Godowsky and Mannes set out to develop a color photographic process that would be more efficient, more vibrant, and more accessible than any yet seen.

Though separated — Godowsky went to study and perform violin at UCLA, while Mannes enrolled at Harvard, pursuing degrees in music and physics — they went on with their

research, sharing ideas by mail and testing them during short visits between school terms. By the early 1920s, “God and Man” were together again, having set aside lucrative positions in the world of professional music to toil over chemicals and

This growing age of digital photography has defined two types of new-age pseudo-photographers: the obsessive technocrats and the zealous snapshooters.

films in their family bathrooms and kitchens. Unfortunately, their parents — professional musicians who balked at their children’s departure from their “destined” careers — soon kicked them out of their makeshift labs. But the two continued their efforts, eventually catching the attention of Kodak Company researchers, who had been working on a similar kind of color film. One commercial partnership and less than a decade later, the world’s first self-contained color roll-film hit the market, thanks largely to the genius and dogged perseverance of the two young musicians.

If Leopold Godowsky, Jr., and Leopold Mannes were alive today, they would be thrilled by the new developments in photography; after all, their invention of Kodachrome took color photography out of the realm of scientists and adventurous professionals and into the mass market. However, they would surely regret the lack of innovation and artistry fostered by the new technology. And they would be horrified to discover that their invention, Kodachrome, has fallen victim to technological progress. Their revolutionary 35mm color slides, once the cornerstone of family photography, now rot by the millions in attics and basements, or are sold as curios and “collectibles” on the internet, or — worst of all — are used as raw material for homemade “artistic” lampshades.

This growing age of digital photography has defined two types of new-age pseudo-photographers: the obsessive technocrats and the zealous snapshooters. The former, with a glut of photographic devices at their disposal, get lost in the technical aspects of photography; these naifs believe that buying the hottest new camera, loaded with all the bells and whistles available, will make them the “best” photographers. The latter type — the snapshooters — may or may not know anything at all about photography; with an automated camera and large memory cards, they simply shoot thousands upon thousands of snapshots, in the thin hope that a handful may turn out well. Talking to some of these photographers is akin to observing a starving man lost in a sumptuous meal; he can hardly stop chewing to savor the taste.

I recently attended a summer carnival held at my church. Children were playing on the grassy back lot, and the pleasant chatter of parents and old people mingled with the aroma of home-cooked food. I walked to and fro, sampling some food here, chatting a little over there, and snapping sporadi-

cally with my old 35mm camera as I observed beautiful photographs forming in front of my lens. Taking photographs of the action was a young businessman, not much older than I am. He certainly looked professional. Burdened by two of the most expensive digital SLRs on the market and a formidable arsenal of lenses in his kit bag, he lumbered back and forth, shooting anything and everything. A communal prayer was interrupted by the clattering sound of his cameras firing — neither the pastor’s soft words nor the folded hands could stop this man.

During a lull in his frenzy, I asked to see some of his photographs. He proudly passed his largest camera over to me, a monologue about the sharpness and expense of the optics already flowing from his lips. But as I flipped through the digital photographs, I could hardly find a good shot. Although the camera had done a brilliant job of exposing the scenes correctly and reproducing them with unbelievable sharpness, the compositions were terrible, full of jarring artistic mistakes. An informed, creative child of ten could have done better. I handed the large camera back to him and said something about his composition’s need for improvement. This sent him into a thinly-veiled rage; he asserted once more that his cameras and lenses were top of the line, and that they had been advertised as capable of making the finest photographs possible. He ended by saying, rather indignantly, that only *professionals* used such equipment as his, and that I — with my 20-year-old, “obsolete” film cameras — knew nothing of professional photography. My equipment “clearly wasn’t up to par.” I forced a smile and bade him good day; as I turned to leave, he was already firing away at an empty soda bottle on the ground. Here was another example of dogged perseverance; here also, I suppose, was another example of an individual learning how to see by operating his camera. But the results were purely mechanical reproductions of the outside world, cold and thoughtless.

I remember, in comparison, one of the first artistic compositions I had produced with a camera. It was an icy December night, nearly four years previous. A subdued whisper of wonder crossed my lips as I looked up from the tall, metal-cased finder of the tripod-mounted camera. The frigid valley air was thick with vapor; my breath rose lazily from my mouth, smearing the dark backdrop with its ghostly fingers. The image on the focusing screen was barely visible; my

What you make of a picture shows who you are, not just what the photograph depicts.

numbed hands trembled, fumbling with the icy metal focusing knob. The streetlight midway down the road was the brightest; I focused on it, bringing its image to a sharp pinpoint. As I watched and waited, the fog lifted slowly, gently.

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The DEA Wishes Me a Nice Day

by Peter McWilliams

December 17, 2007, marks the tenth anniversary of the government raid on the home of Peter McWilliams (1949–2000), an author beloved by Liberty’s readers. This article first appeared in the May 1998 issue of Liberty.

Peter used marijuana to treat the nausea caused by medications he took to combat AIDS. He died on June 14, 2000, after a federal judge had ordered him to stop using medical marijuana. Liberty’s founding editor, Bill Bradford, wrote of Peter upon his death: “He was one of the most joyous people I’ve ever known, a hero in every sense of the word.”

— Patrick Quealy

On December 17, 1997, I was working in my living room-office on my computer next to a fire — sort of high-tech meets Abe Lincoln. It was not yet dawn, and I had been working most of the night. Leonard Cohen’s “Famous Blue Raincoat” begins, “It’s four in the morning, the end of December.” It’s a special time of night and a special time of year. The rest of the world has gone quite mad with Christmas, and I am left alone to get some work done.

A hard pounding on the door accompanied by shouts of “Police! Open Up!” broke the silence, broke my reverie, and nearly broke down the door. I opened the door wearing standard writer’s attire, a bathrobe, and was immediately handcuffed. I was taken outside while Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) agents ran through my house, guns drawn, commando-style. They were looking, I suppose, for the notorious, well-armed, highly trained Medical

Marijuana Militia. To the DEA, I am the Godfather of the Medicine Cartel. Finding nothing, they took me back into my home, informed me I was not under arrest, and ordered me — still in handcuffs — to sit down. I was merely being “restrained,” I was told, so the DEA could “enforce the search warrant.”

However, no search warrant was immediately produced. Over the next hour, one page after another of the warrant was placed on a table nearby. I was never told the reasons a federal judge thought it important enough to override the 4th Amendment of the supreme law of the land and issue search warrants

for my Los Angeles home of eleven years, my new home (two doors away), and the offices of my publishing company, Prelude Press, about a mile away. The reasons, I was told, were in an affidavit “under seal.”

In other words, I have no way of determining whether this is a “reasonable” search and seizure. The DEA agents could have written the judge, “We’ve never seen the inside

It was eerie to see bright (for the most part), friendly, young people systematically attempting to destroy my life.

of a writer’s house before and we’d like to have a look. Also, those New York federal judges are very touchy about letting us go into New York publishing houses, so can we also have a look at Prelude Press here in L.A.?”

Whatever the reason, I was in handcuffs, and the nine DEA agents and at least one IRS Special Agent put on rubber gloves and systematically went through every piece of paper in my house. (Were the rubber gloves because I have AIDS, or are they just careful about leaving fingerprints?)

I should point out, as I promised them I would, that I was never “roughed up.” The DEA agents were, at all times, polite, if not overtly friendly. During the three hours of their search, the DEA agents asked me tentative, curious questions about my books, as though we had just met at an autographing party. They admired my artwork, as though they were guests I had invited into my home. They called me by my first name, although I am old enough to be the father of any of them.

A DEA *Special Agent* (not just one of those worker-bee agents) made it a point to tell me that the DEA has a reputation for busting into people’s homes, physically abusing them, and destroying property, all in the name of “reasonable search and seizure.” This, he reminded me on more than one occasion, was not taking place during this search and seizure. I agreed, and promised to report that fact faithfully. I have now done so.

Patriots

I suppose the DEA considers this a step up, and I suppose I agree, but it was eerie to see bright (for the most part), friendly, young people systematically attempting to destroy my life. I do not use the word “destroy” lightly. DEA agents are trained to fight a war, the War on Drugs, and in that war I am the enemy — a fact I readily admit. The DEA, therefore, fights me with the only tools it has — going through my home, arresting me, putting me in jail for the rest of my life, asset-forfeiting everything I own, selling it, and using the money to hire more DEA agents to fight the War on Drugs. From these young people’s point of view, invading my home

is an act of patriotism.

In a DEA agent’s mind, because I have spoken out against the War on Drugs, I’m not just an enemy, but a traitor. In 1993, I published “Ain’t Nobody’s Business If You Do: The Absurdity of Consensual Crimes in Our Free Country.” In this libertarian tome — endorsed by a diverse group including Milton Friedman, Hugh Downs, Archbishop Tutu, and Sting — I explored in some detail the War on Drugs’ unconstitutionality, racism, anti-free market basis, deception, wastefulness, destructiveness, and unwinnability. I see it as one of the darkest chapters in American history, and certainly the greatest evil in our country today.

My view is at odds, obviously, with the last line of DEA Administrator Thomas Constantine’s 1995 essay, “The Cruel Hoax of Legalization”: “Legalizing drugs is not a viable answer or a rational policy; it is surrender.” According to Administrator Constantine, I and “many proponents of drug legalization” are “wealthy members of the elite who live in the suburbs and have never seen the damage that drugs and violence have wrought on poor communities, and for whom legalization is an abstract concept.” An abstract concept. Like life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Given my outspoken opposition to the drug war, I shouldn’t be surprised that the DEA wanted to search my home. The drug war is another Vietnam. Most of the drug warriors know it, and they have no intention of losing this war and becoming the homeless people so many Vietnam veterans have tragically become. Smart drug warriors. So, to the DEA, I’m part of the nation’s enemy. And I must admit, by DEA standards, I have been pretty bad.

But when I got sick, I got even worse.

In mid-March 1996 I was diagnosed with both AIDS and cancer. (Beware the Ides of March, indeed.) I had not smoked marijuana or used any other illicit drug for decades prior to this (a decision I now regret). But since 1996 I owe my life to modern medical science and to one ancient herb.

And so I became an outspoken advocate for medical marijuana. In 1996, before the passage of California Proposition 215 (the Medical Marijuana Act), I donated office space to a cannabis club so it could sell marijuana to the sick. I also started

To the DEA, I’m part of the nation’s enemy. And I must admit, by DEA standards, I have been pretty bad. But when I got sick, I got even worse.

the Medical Marijuana Magazine online in February 1997; testified in favor of medical marijuana before the California Medical Examiners Board and the National Academy of Sciences; and appeared as a medical marijuana advocate in

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or on numerous media, including CNN, MSNBC, The Los Angeles Times, Associated Press, United Press International, CBS Radio Network, and dozens more.

For a sick guy, I've been around. (Actually, I've been around, and that's how I got to be a sick guy, but that's another story.) Most disturbing to the DEA, I would guess, was my strong criticism of it in a two-page ad I placed in the Dec. 1, 1997, *Daily Variety*. I denounced Administrator Constantine's threat to criminally investigate the creators of "Murphy Brown" for Murphy's fictional use of medical marijuana. Having made comments such as, "The DEA gives the phrase 'ambulance chasing' a whole new meaning," I'm surprised it took the DEA seventeen days to find my house — but, then, they are part of the government.

Confiscation

About two weeks before my DEA Christmas visitation, the Medical Marijuana Magazine online announced it would soon be posting portions of a book on medical marijuana that I've been working on, "A Question of Compassion: An AIDS Cancer Patient Explores Medical Marijuana." My publishing company announced that books would ship in January. This brings us back to my computer and the DEA agents' almost immediate interest in it.

My computer and its backup drives, which the DEA also took, contained my entire creative output — most of it unpublished — for the nearly two years since my diagnosis. My central project has been the above-mentioned book and a filmed documentary with the same title. Being a fair, balanced, objective view of medical marijuana in the United States, the book is scathingly critical of the DEA.

So they took the computer, backup copies of my computer files, and most of my research materials on medical marijuana. William F. Buckley, Jr., said, "That is the equivalent of entering The New York Times and walking away with the printing machinery." If I don't get my computer and files back, it will take at least six months additional work to get back to where I was, and redoing creative work is disheartening at best.

Not only am I in shock from having been invaded and seeing my "children" kidnapped (writers have an odd habit of becoming attached to their creative output), but every time I go for something — from a peanut butter cup to a magazine — it's not there. Something is there, but it's not what was there 24 hours earlier. Everything reeks of nine different fragrances — like the men's cologne department at Macy's. My address books were also taken — not copied, taken. As you can imagine, all this is most disorienting, especially for a born-again marijuana addict like me.

How the DEA Works

A few random observations:

- While rummaging through my publishing company, a DEA agent told the publishing staff, "You guys had better start looking for new jobs. If the DEA doesn't take this place for marijuana, the IRS will. The government will own this place in six months." Such a statement does not just have a chilling effect on a pub-

lishing company; it is like putting an iceberg in front of the *Titanic*.

- The DEA took a microcassette tape from the recorder next to my bed. On the tape I had dictated a letter to President Clinton (dictating to President Clinton in bed seemed appropriate), asking him to rise above politics and show his compassion by making medical marijuana available to the sick. I may never get to mail that letter now, but I certainly hope the DEA agent who listens to it will transcribe it and send it to his or her boss' (Constantine) boss' (Reno) boss (Clinton).
- I have precisely three porn magazines in my house, hidden deep away in my sock drawer. (Who has enough socks to fill a whole drawer?) The magazines were removed from their stash and placed on top of random objects before photographing them. A jury, looking at these photographs, would think I have pornography all over the place. Frankly, I don't mind if a jury thinks this, because my view of pornography agrees completely with that of Oscar Levant: "It helps."
- When the DEA agents found a collection of Playboys at the offices of Prelude Press (the Playboy Forum is, in fact, one of the best antiprohibition information sources around), I am told (as I was not there) that three of the male DEA agents spent a great deal of time testosteroneistically pawing through and making typically sexist comments about portions of the magazine that have nothing to do with drugs — but that are obviously addictive nonetheless.
- An invasion of nine people into the world of someone with a suppressed immune system is risky at best. DEA agents come into contact with criminals and other DEA agents from all sorts of international places with all sorts of diseases. Some of these diseases don't infect their young federal bodies, but the agents pass them along. I think of certain strains of tuberculosis, deadly to people with AIDS and rampant in certain quarters — quarters where I make it a point not to go, but quarters in which the DEA seems to thrive. Since my diagnosis, I have lived the life of a near hermit, especially during flu season, which is now. Thundering into my sterile home surrounded by the clean air of Laurel Canyon is the equivalent of germ warfare. At least two of the agents were sniffing or coughing. Six of them handled me in some way. I kept flashing back to the U.S. Cavalry passing out smallpox-infested blankets to shivering Native Americans. Have these people no sense of the struggle AIDS sufferers have in fighting even ordinary illnesses, and the lengths some of us go to avoid unnecessary exposure to infection? (Naive American question, huh?)

Prospects

Philosophically, or at least stoically, one could say all this is part of my research into medical marijuana and those who

oppose it — especially into those who oppose it. The problem is that I'm not sure what I've learned. Two scenarios surface, each more frightening than the other.

Scenario One: The DEA, angered by my criticism and fearful of more, decided to intimidate me — and to have a free peek at my book in the bargain.

Scenario Two: In July 1997, the DEA invaded the home of a man named Todd McCormick, destroyed his marijuana research plants (one of which had been alive since 1976), took his computer (which had notes for a book he is writing), and has not yet returned it. Perhaps the DEA — caught in a blind, bureaucratic feeding frenzy — is just now, five months later, getting around to investigating my connection as possible financier of Todd's "Medical Marijuana Mansion" or even — gasp! — that I grew some marijuana for myself. This means

that in order to justify the arrest of Todd McCormick, a magnificent blunder, they are now coming after me, a magnificent blunder.

Whichever scenario is correct, if the DEA and IRS have their way I may spend the rest of my life in a federal prison, all expenses paid (and deaths from AIDS-related illnesses can be very expensive, indeed). Truth be told, prison doesn't particularly frighten me. All I plan to do the rest of my life is create things — write, mostly. I've been everywhere I want to go. It's my time of life for didactic pontificating. It is a phase writers go through immediately preceded by channel surfing and immediately followed by channel surfing. Or hemlock.

If the DEA has seized my computer to silence me, it has failed, as I hope this article illustrates. The DEA's next oppressive move, then, would be to arrest me.

Answering the Unanswerable — In his essay "The Cruel Hoax of Legalization," DEA Administrator Thomas Constantine throws down the gauntlet: "Let's ask proponents some of the hard questions that arise from their simplistic proposal." All right, let's.

Here, then, in order, are the withering questions Administrator Constantine dares us, the "legalizers," to answer. I shall venture where wise men have already tread and submit myself to the Administrator's withering scrutiny.

"Would we legalize all drugs — cocaine, heroin, and LSD, as well as marijuana?"

Yes.

"Who could obtain these drugs — only adults?"

As with cigarettes and alcohol, sale would be restricted to adults, but we can't pretend children will have any less access to drugs when they are legal than they do today when they are not. We can hope only that if we tell kids the truth about drugs — all drugs — they will listen when we advise them not to take any drugs, except medicines, until their nervous systems are fully developed. As with driving a car, voting, or not having to learn anymore, some pleasures are reserved for adults. Those young people who do not follow this sound advice will at least have access to the information necessary to distinguish between drugs that are the least harmful (marijuana) and those that are the most harmful (inhaling airplane glue, PCP and, long-term, tobacco) and experiment accordingly.

"Who would distribute these drugs — private companies, doctors or the government?"

Oh, not the government, please. Did you ever try to buy a bottle of good wine in a state where alcohol is sold only in government-run stores? "Red wine is in the cooler over there, white wine is over here, and pink wines are in the middle." So, please, not the government.

Doctors should certainly be able to prescribe whatever medication they think patients need, but most drug use is recreational and educational, not medicinal.

That leaves — hooray! — "private companies." Yes, free enterprise, capitalism, the open market will take care of manufacture and distribution, create new jobs, and remove the

criminal element almost overnight. We could expect private firms to compete to provide the safest drugs — as well as the least expensive. Best of all, it won't cost the taxpayers a cent. In fact, the drug companies will even pay taxes. This may not be a comfortable thought to Administrator Constantine — who uses "libertarian" and "open society" as pejoratives, the way Senator McCarthy used "communist" — but capitalism is the economic system we fought a 40-year Cold War to maintain, so why not use it?

"Should the inner city be the central distribution point, or should we have drug supermarkets in Scarsdale, Chevy Chase, and the Main Line?"

What a fascinating plan to rejuvenate the inner cities! Since the War on Drugs turned ghettos into war zones and death traps, why not let the inner cities profit from the influx of entrepreneurial money that is sure to follow legalization? Turn every Enterprise Zone into a Legal Drug Zone. The trouble with this plan, of course, is that it would require a government program, which means things will only get worse.

Enough government meddling. Legalize drugs and let the free market determine where the drug supermarkets will be, just as it determines the location of bars, liquor stores, and pharmacies.

"How much are we willing to pay to address the costs of increased drug use?"

The Administrator just doesn't get it, does he? The costs of "increased drug use" — should there be any increased drug use, and should there be any costs involved with this increased use — would be borne by the individual users, who would no longer be paying outrageously inflated drug prices and who would get to keep the taxes normally collected and wasted on the \$50-billion-a-year War on Drugs.

"How will we deal with the black market that will surely be created to satisfy the need for cheaper, purer drugs?"

No, no, Administrator Constantine, it's called a "free market" — not a "black market." A black market is *what we have now* because you and your Special Agents have driven a much-demanded commodity underground. Legalization will create a free market again, where drugs will be pure, dosages known, strengths uniform, and prices

20th Anniversary Year

(Some have cautioned me about assassination, which I find difficult to comprehend — but then I thought my book was so safe I didn't even have a backup in a Public Storage locker somewhere. I should, I suppose, state that I am not in any way suicidal about this — or anything else, for that matter. So if I should die before the DEA wakes and they claim my death was a suicide, don't you believe it. I plan to go about as quietly into that good night as Timothy Leary did. Still, as a naive American, this concern is far from my mind.)

If the DEA intends to come after me as the financier of Todd McCormick's medical marijuana empire, the DEA knows full well I took credit for that immediately after Todd's arrest — which made a lie of the DEA's claim that Todd purchased his "mansion" with "drug money." Yes, I gave him enough money to rent the ugliest house in Bel-Air and, being Todd

McCormick, he grew marijuana there. The money I gave him was an advance for a book on cultivating marijuana.

Todd cannot use medical marijuana as a condition of his bail-release. He is drug-tested twice weekly. He cannot go to Amsterdam where he could legally find relief from the pain

Most of the drug warriors know that the drug war is another Vietnam. And they have no intention of losing this war and becoming the homeless people so many Vietnam veterans have tragically become.

very reasonable, as determined by the laws of supply and demand. (As Director Constantine is obviously not a reading man, perhaps someone should send him a videotape of Milton Friedman's PBS series "Free to Choose." Label it "Advanced Drug Intervention Techniques," just to make sure he watches it.)

"And when the legalizers answer all these questions, ask them this: . . ."

Oh, boy, the \$50-billion, 700,000-prisoner question. Give me a moment to compose myself. All right, Administrator Constantine, shoot. No, wait, I mean *give* me the question.

" . . . Can we set up a pilot legalization program on your block?"

Oh, absolutely! I'll make a fortune just selling roadmaps to my neighborhood. In fact, I'll finance the whole endeavor. Give me a government-guaranteed monopoly on legal drug sales for, say, the next five years. Consider it your "pilot program." I'll let you know how it works out.

Alas, it is painfully evident that Administrator Constantine, having spent a lifetime in governmental bureaucracy, simply does not understand there is no need for a "pilot legalization program" — any more than we needed a "pilot let-women-vote program" in 1920 or a "pilot make-alcohol-legal-again program" in 1933. The government needs only to get out of the way and let the free market take it from there.

Thus endeth Administrator Constantine's series of questions no "legalizer" could possibly endure. As none of my answers are in any way new, one must wonder if the Administrator has ever read any of these answers before. In this country alone, they go back to Thomas Jefferson ("A wise and frugal Government, which shall restrain men from injuring one another, shall leave them otherwise free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement"), didn't miss Lincoln ("A prohibition law strikes a blow at the very principles upon which our government was founded"), and even touched George Bush when William Bennett wasn't around ("You cannot federalize morality").

(I plan to stage Othello someday with George Bush as Othello, William Bennett as Iago, and drugs as Desdemona.)

—Peter McWilliams

of cancer. Todd now faces life imprisonment — a ten-year mandatory minimum — and a \$4 million fine, for cultivating medical marijuana, which is specifically permitted under the California Compassionate Use Act of 1996.

The DEA, at the federal level, and California Attorney General Dan Lundgren (with Governor Pete Wilson smiling his approval from on high) should have opposed Proposition 215 in court. In court they had the right — and the responsibility, if they truly believed it a bad law — to challenge the law and ask a judge to stay its enactment. They did not. Instead, the DEA is fighting its War on Drugs in the sickrooms of Todd, me, and countless others.

Our government is not well.

What Our Patriots Are Doing Today

As I write this, I feel myself in mortal combat with a gnarly monster. Then I remember the human faces of the kind people who tried to make me comfortable with small talk as they went through my belongings as neatly as they knew how.

It reminds me, painfully, that the War on Drugs is a war fought by decent Americans against other decent Americans, and that these people rifling through my belongings really are America's best — bright young people willing to die for their country in covert action. It takes a special kind of person for that, and every Republic must have a generous number of them in order to survive.

But instead of our best and our brightest being trained to hunt down terrorist bombs or child abductors — to mention but two useful examples — our misguided government is using all that talent to harass and arrest blacks, Hispanics, the poor, and the sick — the casualties in the War on Drugs, the ones who, to quote Leonard Cohen again, "sank beneath your wisdom like a stone." It is the heart of the evil of a prohibition law in a free country.

After all, picking on someone with AIDS and cancer is a little redundant, don't you think?

On the way out, one of the DEA agents said, "Have a nice day."

I believe the comment was sincere. □

by advocating computers for young school children, broadband access for practically everybody, energy conservation (as by mileage standards for cars), and subsidies for ethanol and glamorous alternative energy sources.

Some years ago a congressman, having heard that the oceans are full of hydrogen, worked on a bill to promote a hydrogen-based economy until an adviser clued him in to chemical realities.

U.S. officials have often spoken and sometimes acted as if they were competent to democratize badly governed countries or sensibly to prefer some factions there over others. Foreign policy, like other public issues, must be dealt with somehow; yet the sad record of unintended consequences should be taken to heart.

But let's not be arrogant: we ordinary persons, not just politicians and celebrities, sometimes suffer delusions in our private lives, not to mention our policy positions.

— Leland B. Yeager

Gone with the wind — One of the magic solutions for global warming pushed by those of greenish hue is wind power. The greenies tout wind power as a perfectly safe source of energy. An article in *Der Spiegel* makes that claim look dubious.

Germany has more experience with wind power than any other country on earth. It has over 19,000 wind turbines, thanks mainly to lavish government subsidies. But a spate of recent accidents has caused concerns.

In one case, a 328-foot-tall wind turbine in Oldenburg broke apart. The authorities investigated six other units, and they shut down four of them because of safety concerns. In another case, parts of a rotor blade flew off and landed on a nearby road (luckily, not during rush hour).

Rotor blades from another wind turbine flew off in Brandenburg. In yet another incident in Schleswig-Holstein, a 230-foot-tall windmill broke in the middle. And several wind turbines near Osnabruck caught fire recently.

All this has led the German Insurance Association to complain about the large number of defects showing up, such as problems with the rotors, gearboxes, and generators. The big insurance company Allianz was hit by nearly a thousand

claims for wind power problems last year alone. Insurers now call the technology "risky."

In case one might think that putting windmills out in the ocean will solve the problems of risk, well, many countries have run into problems with wind turbine fields at sea. Vestas, a world leader in wind power technology, had to remove an entire field of turbines off the coast of Denmark in 2004, because the turbines couldn't stand up to the sea and weather.

The *Spiegel* piece doesn't explore two other problems with wind power. First, fields of wind turbines have proven great at killing birds. Quite an ecological downside, no? Second, because of the feeble output from a single wind turbine, you need massive fields of them to generate an appreciable amount of power, and those fields are surpassingly ugly. This is why the Kennedy clan, oh-so-green and politically correct, killed a planned project that would have placed a field off Martha's Vineyard, where their castle is emplaced.

— Gary Jason

The weakest link — Can anyone explain the lingering campaign of former Sen. John Edwards? A less-apt candidate for the U.S. presidency would be hard to find. He's unsubstantial yet protean — in a bad way. Standing next to Barack "Empty Suit" Obama, Edwards seems like a craven panderer. Standing next to Hillary "Freudian Train-wreck" Clinton, Edwards seems angry and resentful.

Yet Edwards carries on.

Nothing the man says rings true. Having read the polls that voters in New Hampshire worry about schools, Edwards says the federal government should underwrite universal pre-kindergarten and fund a statist higher education program called "College for Everyone."

He seems to have a poor understanding of who will pay for universal university education. His vaporous position papers suggest he'll increase taxes on the "the rich." But who knows? Like most statist, Edwards uses a definition of "rich" that reaches down into the middle-class when circumstances warrant.

Exploiting class resentments is something that Edwards — who made his millions as a personal-injury lawyer — seems to do naturally. He told one primary-state newspaper: "I do not believe it is okay for the United States of America to have 37 million people living in poverty."

I do not believe it is okay. That phrase, like its speaker, is so sanctimonious that it beggars belief. But it's not unusual for him. Through the early debates, Edwards repeated the illogical argument that his changing position on the war in Iraq shows more integrity than his opponents' consistent positions — for or against.

There he stands, smarmily, an ambulance-chaser presenting his case to a jury of rubes. Maybe he believes that Americans want to be told lies by a striving yuppie. Maybe he is blind to the greed, guilt, and venality of the fellow trial lawyers who support him. But some things should register, even with a solipsist.

Your wife — by all accounts a good and loyal partner — is sick with cancer, man! Put your vanity aside, give up this empty enterprise, and tend to her.

— Jim Walsh



"Well, well, well — seven hundred and fifty thousand counts of breaking and entering . . ."

Reviews

"The Best-Laid Plans: How Government Planning Harms Your Quality of Life, Your Pocketbook and Your Future," by Randal O'Toole. Cato, 2007, 416 pages.

Planners Beware

Bruce Ramsey

Thinktank books tend to rumble through the mind, even when you agree with them. A scholar with verified ideas excavates evidence to support them and makes it into a book. Such books may be useful, but most have a grayness about them.

Randal O'Toole's "The Best-Laid Plans" is published by a thinktank — the Cato Institute — which has given it an attractive cover and professional editing. But it is very much a book of Randal O'Toole, who is not an inside-the-beltway intellectual. O'Toole has spent his life as a guerrilla warrior — first against the U.S. Forest Service, and more recently against the land-use and transportation planners. There is no one in America quite like this man from Bandon, Ore.

"The Best-Laid Plans" is not a theory-first book. It does not argue that planning is inherently wrong because it violates people's rights, though you might conclude that from reading it. "When government agencies plan, they are making decisions about other people's time, money and property," O'Toole writes. "When the planners make mistakes, someone else bears the

costs." His point is not that the cost shift is wrong but that it leaves planners with little incentive to plan a future that people want.

O'Toole allows that any organization, even the government, needs to plan. If government builds the roads, it ought to have a roads plan. But when government attempts to plan for complex systems like an entire forest or an urban area of several million ornery humans, it is a wholly different matter. The planners won't have enough data. Probably a really good computer model would be impossible because it would have to quantify the unquantifiable. In any case the planners don't have models that are really good.

Then there is a universal law of life: stuff happens. We decide to kill off the grizzly bears. Then we reintroduce them. The human population explodes. Then the birthrate plunges. The globe is cooling. No; it is warming. "Comprehensive government planning does not work," O'Toole declares, "because no one can understand the total complexity of the world."

Furthermore, the planning organization is distracted from its mission. Politicians steer it from above. Bureaucrats corrupt it from within. Planners cut corners. Pressure groups

file lawsuits alleging the plans to be inadequate, which they are. Judges throw the plans out.

O'Toole tells the story of three jungles of planning he has explored: forest planning, urban land-use planning, and transportation planning.

Forest planning was the first. The Forest Service was required by law to produce large, complex plans. It produced them, and O'Toole read them. He also reviewed the data behind them. I skip over this part because I know little about it. With the other two I am familiar, having written about these issues as a journalist. There I can say that at every point at which "The Best-Laid Plans" touches my knowledge it appears to be right.

O'Toole talks about "smart growth," urban growth boundaries, light rail, modern streetcars, traffic calming, boulevarding, and the abolition of one-way streets. All of it is proposed, or is happening, where I live. And he writes much about Portland, Ore., a city three hours' drive from where I live. Portland has been the pin-up for planners.

A quarter-century ago, Portland's regional government drew a line around the urban area and declared that line a growth boundary. Building permits would be automatic inside the line, and

difficult outside it. The idea was to stop “sprawl.”

Economists said that limiting land would raise the price of housing faster than in cities with no such line. For the first decade they were wrong. The line had been drawn widely, and for a long time there was plenty of land within it. But in the 1990s there wasn't, and the economists were proven right.

Portland built “light rail” — a type of passenger train that, as O'Toole points out, is “light” only in the work that it does, not in its weight or its cost. The federal government paid for the first line Portland built. Oregonians were proud of it. It was a progressive thing. It would get people out of their cars. I live in Seattle, well within earshot of all the gushing over Portland's little train. Then Portland built a tram, and private developers began replacing warehouses with high-rise condo buildings in a place called the Pearl District. Then came a gondola, which connected a splashy riverfront development with a medical school. Light rail, trams, gondola. Portland was *so cool*.

No longer affordable, though. The condos are impressive, but visitors don't see the millions of subsidies dispensed through tax-increment financing, which took tax money away from schools. (Tax-increment financing is a way of bankrolling a project by using the tax revenue it generates. The taxes from, say, an office-retail center go to repay some of the debt of the project instead of being deposited in local government accounts. Sometimes tax increment financing counts the added taxes from land around the project as well.) Visitors don't know that bus routes were canceled to herd bus riders onto rail, though visitors will notice that it's tough to find a parking place. Congestion has increased, because most people in Portland did not get out of their cars.

Portland's “smart growth” strategy is, O'Toole writes, “based on the design fallacy, the idea that urban design shapes human behavior.” It does in some ways, but not nearly to the extent that the planners dream.

If you have followed O'Toole's work you have read much of what is in this book. I had already read the story of “The Ideal Communist City” — the East German town of Halle-Neustadt, which consisted entirely of mid-rises surrounded by gardens and served by

rail transit, with car parking only on the periphery. It was a city that entirely satisfied the criteria of many American city planners — and it was built by the government of Erich Honecker. Since liberation, some of the residents have fled, leaving many buildings empty and others inhabited only on the lower floors. The gardens have been paved over so that people can park cars where they live. I have seen O'Toole's slideshow of that city, and it is a pity it is not in his book. Still, “The Ideal Communist City” is a most audacious chapter. One of O'Toole's enemies put up a blog entry accusing him of “redbaiting” city planners.

He did.

A delightful feature of the book is O'Toole's defense of the personal car. He argues, for example, that it has been the single most important boon for employees, because it has given them access to many more employers. O'Toole also argues in this book (as he did previ-

ously in *Liberty*) that as Hurricane Katrina approached New Orleans, it was the people with cars who got out. He writes:

Automobiles give people the freedom to deal with disasters on their own terms and timetables. Even if buses and trains were available, people would be reluctant to take them. Would the bus or train take them where they wanted to go? Could people take their pets and precious belongings? Could they come back when they wanted to return? The automobile frees people from the whims of other people's rules and schedules.

Imagine using Katrina as an argument for cars! O'Toole did.

Google it and you can read the furious replies from the devotees of transit. They froth at Randal O'Toole. One blogger responded with a fulmination entitled, “Worst. Article. Ever.” He would hate this book. *Liberty's* readers should like it very much. □

“Young Frankenstein,” directed by Susan Stroman. Hilton Theater, New York.

Great Campy Fun

Jo Ann Skousen

Just when “The Producers,” Mel Brooks' musical adaptation of his 1968 film, has about run its course on Broadway, Brooks mounts another equally ambitious project, “The New Mel Brooks Musical Young Frankenstein.” Reuniting most of his team from “The Producers”: Tom Meehan as co-writer, Susan Stroman as director/choreographer, Robin Wagner as set designer, William Ivey Long as costume designer, and Glenn Kelly as music supervisor

and arranger, the show seems like a sure winner. Anticipated as the smash hit of the season, with premium seating in the orchestra going for \$450 a pop, the show has had New York buzzing for several months.

And it is smashing: lavish, big, loud, and populated by no fewer than six big-name stars, it is the musical show to see this year. On opening night the audience was electrified, erupting in applause with every new character's entrance and every well-loved line. It was a glittering night of tuxedos and evening dresses, the way theater used to be: during inter-

mission I bumped into Joan Rivers and Goldie Hawn; when the play ended I walked out with Regis Philbin on one side of me and Billy Crystal on the other. Mel Brooks and Gene Wilder both came on stage for curtain calls. Magical.

But while “Young Frankenstein” will most assuredly enjoy smashing success at the box office, is it a smashing production? Not completely. (And I think that’s a good thing — those \$450 ticket prices are going to come down, and you’ll be able to see the show without having to book it six months in advance.) Yes, it’s great campy fun, with over-the-top performances and glitzy dance numbers. But I think Brooks’ meticulous faithfulness (or is it merely laziness?) to the 30-year-old movie script, which was itself a parody of 1930s horror films, is a handicap here. Audiences laugh with sentimental good wishes, but they aren’t surprised and delighted with anything new. Still, what the show lacks in script, it makes up in its big bold sets and glorious choreography, especially “Puttin’ on the Ritz,” when the entire cast appears in monster-sized tap shoes.

Some of my favorite Broadway stars appear in this production, with the women outshining the men. Megan

Mullally (Karen in “Will & Grace”) establishes her fickle character in the hilarious “Don’t Touch Me” early in Act 1, then disappears and is sorely missed until she finally returns with her show-stopping “Deep Love” in Act 2. Sutton Foster (who leads the cast of a new musical every season) learned to yodel for her bawdy “Roll in the Hay” as Inga, Frankenstein’s randy laboratory assistant. That first number is full of promise, but though she is lovely in this role, she is neither as randy nor as funny as a fraulein named Inga is expected to be. The true genius in this show is Andrea Martin (“My Big Fat Greek Wedding”) as the spooky Frau Blucher. Her comic timing and campy accent are spot on throughout the production.

Meanwhile, Roger Bart, who was deliciously outrageous as the supporting character Carmen Ghia in “The Producers,” seems to be pacing himself as the lead in this show. He is good, but his Frederick Frankenstein never approaches Gene Wilder’s near-manic zaniness. (This may be due to a back injury he suffered during previews, so his performance may improve in a week or two.) The most hilarious moment of the show occurred in the first act, when

a revolving bookcase malfunctioned. Bart gamely attempted to cover for the malfunction, adlibbing as the bookcase revolved back and forth until finally he

Lavish, big, loud, and populated by no fewer than six big-name stars, it is the musical show to see this year.

said, “I’ve run out of ideas, Inga. Can you think of anything?” followed by “Ah, f*** it!” Eventually the bookcase righted itself and Inga picked up the scene, announcing, “Oh look! A passageway!” as though they hadn’t been mucking about in it for the past five minutes. I love live theater.

At the Hilton Theater for probably the next ten years, try to see “Young Frankenstein” with the original cast. After the Christmas rush, look for discount tickets on broadwaybox.com. □

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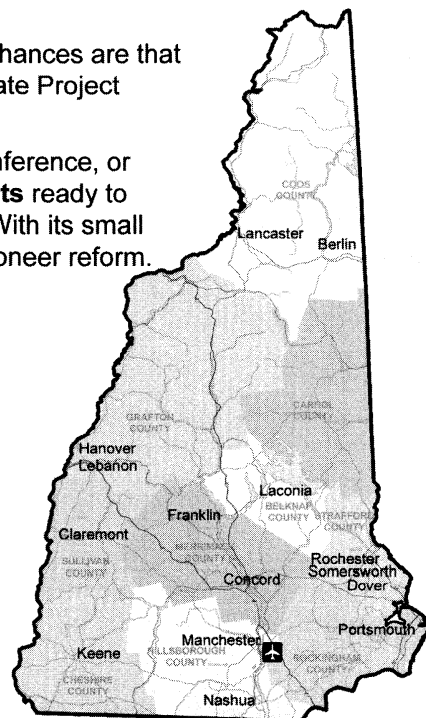


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"Libertarianism: For and Against," by Craig Duncan and Tibor R. Machan. Rowman & Littlefield, 2005, 167 pages.

Whence This Libertarian View of Life?

Gary Jason

The book under review is a lively exchange about the merits of libertarian political philosophy between one of its leading exponents, Tibor Machan, and one of its critics, Craig Duncan. Each participant provides an original defense of his political philosophy, then reads the other person's paper and critiques it; then each rebuts the other's critique. This makes the book a model of balance and clarity. It is also a model of civility: the debaters actually address each other in a reasoned and intellectually honest manner.

Its most important virtue, however, is its clear presentation of a host of basic issues that divide libertarians from modern liberals. The multitude and importance of these issues justifies a detailed consideration of the authors' arguments.

Machan starts off the exchange by enunciating his view of libertarianism, which he equates with classical liberalism and finds embodied in the Declaration of Independence. It is a philosophy of minimal government, in distinction to the governments of monarchist, socialist, fascist, and welfare states. He characterizes such states as "top-down" hierarchies seeking to impose their own goals on the citizens, as opposed to the "bottom-up" approach of genuine classically liberal states, in which the only goal of government is to enact laws the people

desire; government is the employee of the people.

This view of government stresses the fundamental rights of the Declaration: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness (really, just property in Lockean terms). This leads Machan to the Harm Principle: "everyone is authorized to carry on his or her chosen activities and pursue his or her objectives, if doing so does not violate others' rights" (p. 5). Government is restricted to guarding those rights. This is the ideal of civil society: no conquest, oppression, or other coercive means are to be inflicted upon others. The distinction Machan draws is the standard libertarian one between "force" (which can be legitimate if applied to defend citizen rights) and "coercion" (which is, by definition, illegitimate force used to further state goals).

But Machan argues that the rights so important in this view of legitimate political governance do *not* give the notion of "rights" a fundamental priority in political theory. Instead, he views them as "derived from the requirements of the ethics of individuals flourishing within the context of human communities" (8). Here, the libertarian vision is that of a society in which people take care of themselves, forming and using voluntary mediating structures such as families, churches, social clubs, and companies. The government acts as a referee to ensure basic rights by using the courts, police, and military.

Nevertheless, Machan rejects a con-

sequentialist approach to grounding libertarianism, one that regards libertarianism as moral because in a state of maximum (negative) liberty, people are going to make the best choices and the best social consequences will result. His libertarianism is based on respect for human choice, which can be and often is self-destructive. His libertarians reject vice laws, not because they like vice, but because they respect choice — a point one wishes libertarians would make more often.

To the charge that libertarianism involves an atomistic individualism that views human beings as isolated and self-sufficient, Machan replies that it need not do so. He notes that you *can* found individualism on a naturalist view of humans as a species of social animals with rationality as a central attribute, or you can found it on a Christian view that each person is a unique child of God, possessed of innate rights (17). In any event, he argues, individualism accounts for the superiority of free markets over controlled (statist) economic systems.

He draws some libertarian policy implications: government shouldn't regulate business or private conduct unless it demonstrably violates (or threatens to violate) individual rights; granting people "positive rights" (such as the right to health care) violates the real rights ("negative rights") of others and ought to be opposed; redistributionist schemes by government are inherently morally wrong (essentially enslaving some people to benefit others); government affirmative action is also morally wrong; and government should not punish people for using drugs (absent harm to others). Along the way, ironically, he marshals a large number of consequentialist arguments for these policy prescriptions: affirmative action programs increase racial tension and fail to help the very people targeted for help; the War on Drugs has increased organized crime while not helping those with drug problems; and so on.

Duncan begins by noting that he also bases his political philosophy on "respect for human beings' distinctive capacity for choice" (45). He puts forward four basic (and common) objections to libertarianism. The first, which he calls the "unanchored property"

objection, is that in reality what a person receives from any market transaction is not just the product of his or her own efforts but is highly dependent upon a governmental structure of supporting institutions and activities (police and court systems, banking insurance, monopoly prevention, government currency, transportation infrastructure, et cetera). All of these morally obligate people to pay for them in taxes.

For Duncan, taxation is not a kind of theft but a cost of doing business. He does think that some kinds of taxation systems can be unfair (too heavy on high-income earners, or too light on them), and we need to be guided by a principle of reciprocity: “there should be at least some rough balance between the benefits one gains and the burdens one shoulders in contributing to society” (47–48). But he gives no specifics about how that rough balance is to be calculated, or who will do the calculation. So what is rightfully yours is what the government leaves you after taxes. Also — an aspect of this critique that Duncan mentions but doesn’t explore — to talk about keeping what’s yours overlooks the dicey origins of property: “your” farm may be the land that was originally stolen from some native tribe by colonists centuries ago.

Duncan’s second objection, which he calls the “inadequate defense of liberty” objection, is that minimal government can’t protect people’s freedom. The libertarian view allows government to use

Machan’s libertarians reject vice laws, not because they like vice, but because they respect choice — a point one wishes libertarians would make more often.

force to stop others from attacking me, but it also allows people to discriminate against me, or fire me capriciously, or treat me unfairly in other ways. Power relationships naturally cause some to

be treated unfairly. For example, “fair access to economic opportunity will require some system of publicly funded education so that ignorance does not radically reduce the opportunities open to children of poor or negligent parents” (52). But fairness rights aren’t open-ended “positive rights” such as a general “right to be made happy,” because they deal with equality of opportunity, not equality of result. Duncan says that these fairness rights are fundamental, not just something based upon the consent of the governed.

The third objection, which Duncan calls the “dilemma of consent” objection, applies to the Lockean basis that Machan cites for his libertarianism: i.e., to the notion that a government is legitimate only to the degree to which it is based upon the consent (at least the tacit consent) of the governed. What is consent? Will mere continued residence do? If you don’t consent, will you have to leave the country whose laws you do not consent to? As Hume objected, the high cost of emigrating makes this an unrealistic option for most people; and anyway, what if no other country is willing to take you in? (Whether Hume’s practical objection is still true in this era of low-cost travel is debatable.) And of course, if consent is the basis of legitimate government, Sweden’s welfare state is as legitimate as a purely libertarian one.

“Insufficiency of charity” is the fourth objection. Duncan argues that absent governmental coercion, people will not give enough charity to provide the poor with education, health care, food, energy, and so forth. He bases this argument on some brief historical comments about how bad working conditions were at the start of the industrial revolution: the rich lived very well, while masses of people lived poorly, working (in England) 65-hour work weeks, etc. These conditions were, allegedly, ameliorated only by the rise of the welfare state. (This history is debatable. For example, before the 1930s there was little in the way of a welfare state in America, but people certainly didn’t starve en masse — charity did seem to work.)

Duncan offers the standard collective action problems. In a libertarian society free of government coercion, the charitable factory owner who provides

safe and comfortable working conditions to his employees will lose out in competition to the grinchy one who doesn’t, because the charitably run factory will have higher costs. Thus there

If consent is the basis of legitimate government, Sweden’s welfare state is as legitimate as a purely libertarian one.

will be (as the cliché holds) a “race to the bottom.” Moreover, if we don’t force everyone to contribute, we wind up with the “free rider” problem: if the police force (say) is paid for voluntarily, then those who don’t pay stand to benefit just as much as those who do, so there will be a diminishing number of voluntary contributors.

Machan doesn’t reply to these objections. He begins by noting the obvious, to wit, that most academic political thinkers are egalitarians, not libertarians. He holds that they, including Duncan, take equality to be the core value, whereas libertarians take freedom to be. And he makes the consequentialist point that the result has been an extensive and ever-increasing redistribution of wealth. The rates of progressive taxation are high here and even higher in Europe. (Machan ought to have gone farther and noted the cost in slower growth that this high taxation causes.) He traces the prevalence of egalitarianism in academe to two causes: first, a denial of free will; second, an intuitionist approach to ethics.

Regarding the first, he notes that many philosophers are unsympathetic to the idea that the hard-working entrepreneur deserves his money, because they view that person as just conditioned to be ambitious. That being so,

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he doesn't deserve to be rewarded more than other people, who happened to lack those inborn talents or social conditioning. Regarding the second, Machan

Machan traces the prevalence of egalitarianism in academe to two causes: first, a denial of free will; second, an intuitionist approach to ethics.

says that the principle that everyone ought to be rewarded equally is just intuitively "true" — and hastens to add that intuitionism is a dicey basis upon which to base ethical views.

A more serious objection to individualism is that people are not social atoms; they are parts of a larger group, be it a nation, tribe, society, or community, and thus owe loyalty to that group. Socialists such as Marx and communists such as Charles Taylor say in effect that classical liberalism rests on a mistaken view of human nature: atomistic individualism, the view that human beings can live without any society at all, like solitary animals.

To this Machan replies that communists take Aristotle's insight that man is a social animal way too far. He thinks they deny the idea that people are self-governing even while living in groups. Being social doesn't mean that we enjoy (for example) the condition of servitude: "there is an essential individuality to our lives as well, and this requires for our flourishing that we enjoy sovereignty in how we live" (68). That means (here Machan leaps) that it isn't unfair for some to be better off than others. Machan suggests that the expectation of "fairness" may be a socially conditioned impulse — in our affluent

society, parents bend over backwards to treat their kids equally.

This strikes me as armchair psychology at its worst. Desire for equal treatment seems innate not just in humans, but in lower primates as well, as experimental psychology has shown. Give one chimp a piece of cucumber, and another a piece of banana, and the chimp given only the cucumber will be very angry. Now, one must hasten to add that not all our innate desires are good; we all innately prefer a diet high in sugar and fat, but that hardly leads to physical flourishing in today's world. But the psychological desire for equality does seem to be real, and libertarians ought to deal with it.

Machan closes by making a couple of nice points. One is the observation that the mere fact that you don't deserve something doesn't mean that you deserve to have it taken away. Another is that people — often even libertarians — hold the rich in real contempt.

About this, Machan is puzzled: it makes sense for people to hate Marie Antoinette, since royalty do nothing to earn their money, and get it by taxing ordinary folk (who in her time were desperately poor); but these days the ultra-rich (e.g., Bill Gates) get their wealth by their own work and have to *pay* huge taxes, while average people are well off in absolute terms, and certainly well off when compared to average people of the past. Yet Machan should not be puzzled: envy is a constant of human psychology.

In chapter 4, Duncan lays out his case for what he calls "democratic liberalism," i.e., modern (as opposed to classical) liberalism. He contrasts the "wergild" system of feudal England, under which it was a greater crime to kill a king than a nobleman, and a greater crime to kill a nobleman than a serf, with the egalitarian idea that all human beings have equal dignity and worth. This, he avers, is the basis for his political philosophy.

For Duncan, the source of the human dignity arises from our powerful mental capacities and our ability to articulate values and make choices. It is upon this mental capacity that we base our concept of moral responsibility. He notes that his view of politics — based on a respect for dignity and the capacity for rational choice — goes back to the

ancient Stoics and was most forcefully articulated by Kant. He then analyzes respect for this capacity for choice as involving three things: not impairing it; not constraining it; and not ignoring it.

By impairing a person's ability to make rational choices, Duncan means crippling his or her mental capacities. This can be done in a myriad of ways, by physically or psychologically abusing people, or terrifying them, or addicting them to some powerful drug. By constraining a person's ability to make rational choices Duncan has in mind such things as physical restrictions (keeping a person locked up in a cell, for example), or threats that incapacitate a person (as when a mugger demands your wallet at the point of a gun). Here the person's dignity isn't reduced so much as thwarted.

The third way of failing to respect people's dignity is treating them as incapable of rational choice. This is "insulting a person's dignity." One way to do it was classically stated by Kant — treating someone as a means, a tool, for your own purposes. Duncan's spin here is that in treating people as means, you are treating them unequally. He points out that we are social animals, meaning that we cooperate to obtain the necessities of life. Society should respect the dignity of its individual members, but this leads to a dilemma: society is necessary for the development of the capacity for choice (hence for human dignity), but society requires rules and sanctions for

If the government debases the currency, am I not absolved of some of my moral obligation for the good things government delivers?

getting its members to comply, which in turn threaten freedom and equality, and hence human dignity.

Duncan deals with this dilemma as so many modern liberals do, by appealing to John Rawls' "liberal principle

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of legitimacy.” In this view, “the basic rules of society should be chosen so as to create a reasonable balance among the various inevitable threats to human dignity, chief among which are the threats of constraint and insult” (89). So, Duncan says, it is unreasonable to suppose that people will freely adopt constraints on their choices of occupation, spouse, number of children, and so forth, but it is reasonable to suppose that they will adopt “lesser” constraints on income, pollution, driving, etc. This gives him his key opening: he says that choice must be real, which means (to him) that a poor worker faced with options such as “do this or you will be fired” is like a person facing a mugger who demands at gunpoint “your money or your life.”

Under this concept of dignity-based liberal democracy, people have civil rights (rights to free expression, association, and so on); personal rights (rights against personal assault, murder, and so on); economic rights (to personal property, to freedom from discrimination); and political rights (voting, due process in legal proceedings, etc.). Restrictions on these rights are allowed when and only when “it would be reasonable to expect free and equal members of society to accept” them (94). Of course, this leaves a lot open to question. Does it mean that members of society must be equal to begin with? Are we talking about all members, or a majority? And do they operate from ignorance, or do we suppose that they are knowledgeable about basic economics, psychology, and history?

But . . . on to practical proposals. Duncan favors a democracy based on proportional representation, so that smaller parties have an easier chance of being part of the debate and of the legislative process. He does not mention the obvious problems that such democracies face, such as the increased difficulty in forming legislative majorities. He favors publicly funded campaigns, so that big money contributions don’t dictate elections, but he doesn’t address the major problems of such systems, either. Doesn’t denying me the right to contribute all the money I can to defeat a candidate I view as evil count as a denial of free speech, and dignity as well?

In the economic system, Duncan’s

dignity-based democratic liberalism favors some form of property rights, but not “absolute” ones. He thus predictably focuses not on whether property rights are guarded but on whether people have “adequate opportunity” to shape their lives. This means we must go beyond a system that gives people merely “formal” equality of opportunity to one that requires everyone to be given the opportunity to acquire the skills needed to succeed. Middle-class people should thus pay more in taxes so that inner-city schools can achieve financial equality.

Duncan doesn’t consider the option of vouchers, which would give all students an equal share of tax revenues to attend a school of their choice. Even in a poor urban district such as Washington, D.C., this would amount to \$14,000 per year per child. And he doesn’t offer evidence that there is real underfunding of education in America — indeed, that is a fallacy, as Jay P. Greene shows in his recent book, “Education Myths.” Besides, as Duncan himself notes, equal funding will hardly equalize education, because differences in genetics, subculture, and family enter in.

He notes (103–4) that there have to be “sensible limits” to the ideal of equality. One can just imagine the radical leftist response: then why *not* abolish the private family? And it’s unclear how Duncan can reply to this obvious extension of his own principles. One thinks here of Solzhenitsyn’s point made decades ago, that contemporary liberal principles of egalitarianism can’t resist extension by socialists, and ultimately by communists.

Addressing market outcomes and just deserts, Duncan makes the common leftist point that in our society, your economic reward doesn’t just reflect what you “rightly” deserve, or your “contribution to society.” Luck is also involved, and other people’s ideas of your contribution. A pornographer may earn what

20 nurses do. Janitors (as Duncan avers) may be underpaid, while CEOs (whom, Duncan feels, owe their status more to cronyism than to performance) may be overpaid.

Because the market is bad at rewarding people either for their effort or their contribution, and because (as Duncan readily concedes) governments in planned economies have been lousy at setting wages, he suggests that government *help to set morally correct wages*. Further, because “the power that employers have over employees is problematic from the point of view of respect for human dignity” (112), this power needs to be held accountable by a welter of laws prohibiting sexual harassment, ensuring worker safety, and setting a livable minimum wage. (He cites one study that alleges that minimum-wage laws do not increase unemployment, but one doubts that even 1 in 20 economists would agree.) He of course advocates social security, unemployment insurance, health insurance affordable by everyone, and a “maintenance” income for those in poverty. To all of this he adds that we shouldn’t micromanage the economy.

He might have considered the effects of the welfare states of Europe, which apply all the programs he advocates — effects such as chronically high unemployment, low economic growth,



“What’s all this ‘naughty or nice’ jazz? Haven’t you ever heard of situational ethics?”

massive population decline, and lower real wealth. He might also have projected the financial consequences of the entitlement programs we already have, which will, if not reduced, absorb *all* the federal budget within a couple of decades. And he might have investigated libertarian alternatives to safety net programs. Even if we agree that social security is needed, why can't we have the fully privatized system that the Chileans enjoy?

In his rejoinder, Machan accuses Duncan of basing his fundamental concept of equality on his own intuitions. Machan urges that his own version of egalitarianism rests instead on the objective facts of human nature. From this naturalist rather than intuitionist approach, democracy can clearly be seen to threaten liberty.

Machan focuses on a particular point: libertarians value freedom, not merely democracy. Yes, complete freedom requires people to be able to choose their leaders, but freedom, liberty, also requires that rights be observed. The fact that the majority of people may vote to renounce liberty doesn't make it just. A country can lose its freedom democratically (Machan cites the case of Hitler). Indeed, some non-democratic countries are freer than democratic ones: a dictator may allow his subjects substantial liberty, just not the liberty to vote him out. In short, "A free country is one the

Machan accuses Duncan of basing his fundamental concept of equality on his own intuitions. Machan urges that his own version of egalitarianism rests on the objective facts of human nature.

members of which do not have burdens to which they have not given their full consent imposed on them by others" (133). And by that definition, America is not free. To Machan, the sort of tax-

ation Duncan advocates is just extortion. To fund the legitimate functions of government, only voluntary means — such as user fees, fees on contracts to fund the courts, and perhaps lotteries — ought to be used. Machan doesn't address the free rider problem involved in such taxation.

But Duncan replies with a *tu quoque*, claiming that his theory rests on intuitionism no more than Machan's. Because different natural rights and natural law theories have been offered during the history of philosophy; Machan's is not the only, objective one. Duncan also says that Machan's theory would lead to judicial tyranny — an unusual charge for a modern liberal to make. In a libertarian society, he claims, "libertarianism is not up for debate" (149). No matter how much the people in an ideal libertarian society might want (say) minimum wage laws, those laws would be struck down by the judges. Here Duncan simply begs the question. He assumes that the majority *should* be allowed to pass such laws, which is precisely what Machan denies, because he holds that the majority should not be permitted to violate the rights of the minority.

Duncan concludes by pointing to passages in Jefferson and Paine that he thinks indicate that the Founding Fathers were not libertarians. His case would require a much fuller defense: a couple of quotes are unconvincing, and in any case Paine's views were considerably different from those of the real Founding Fathers.

Here, as elsewhere in this book, one comes away with the feeling that the case laid out is shaky. Let's start with Machan's case for libertarianism. First it seems "too skinny"; it doesn't seem to legitimize enough power structures to enable a society to survive in a world (such as the real world) with other societies that are not equally constrained. It is hard to see how Machan's principles could, for instance, justify having much of a military, or the kind of spy agency that could avert war or terrorism.

Machan is also inconsistent in discussing the basis of libertarianism. He bases it now on Lockean rights theory, then on Kantian dignity and respect for free agency, then again as neo-Aristotelian flourishing. He says he is not a consequentialist, but his argu-

ments are often consequentialist in form. As to his attempt to base his libertarianism on the dignity of rational agents, how secure can this foundation

Duncan says that Machan's theory would lead to judicial tyranny — an unusual charge for a modern liberal to make.

be if ultrastatist liberals such as Duncan can also base their view on it? And the natural rights - natural law tradition that Machan occasionally employs can also be used as a foundation for modern statist liberalism, as recently argued by Christopher Wolfe (in "Natural Law Liberalism").

In addition, doesn't basing libertarianism on a Kantian ethic of the dignity of all rational agents downplay the fact that not every person is a rational agent? What does a libertarian do about orphaned children? Rely solely on private charity? I agree that over the history of this country private charity has watched out for the destitute — more than Duncan acknowledges — but if hypothetically there were a shortfall, can the state not act? After all, a dead child cannot exercise rationality. And suppose a person wants to take a drug that destroys rationality itself: doesn't respect for dignity say that we must stop him?

Machan never really addresses Duncan's point about the reality of wealth creation. Suppose I make my fortune in real estate. Are not the institutions of society — fire departments, police departments, well-regulated banks, state-supported infrastructure (sewers, roads, etc.), court systems, and a myriad of others — contributing factors in my success? Can we disaggregate those factors from my own efforts and contributions? Even if many of the functions can be privatized, can they be freed of all governmental supervision?

Finally, Machan, like many other

libertarians, appears to believe piously in freedom of the will. But what if we don't have contra-causal free will after all? Does the libertarian approach to political governance then fail? Can we have political libertarianism without metaphysical libertarianism?

Duncan's contemporary (statist) liberalism is also shaky. The first problem with his account is one that Machan hits on nicely: if we all have a right to support from others, doesn't this lead to the tyranny of the majority, with the majority voting to support itself by plundering the minority? Duncan tries to put a limit on this with his principle of reciprocity. But don't systems that allow free taxation to equalize opportunity degenerate into an equality of income? Here Duncan faces his own free rider problem: in a democracy where 70% can tax the 30% to pay for everything, the 70% are completely free riders. And his point that such redistribution should be limited by the requirement that the (comparatively and temporarily) wealthy minority get a "rough" balance of return for its lost income is meaningless, since *the balance must be determined by the free riders themselves*. This is not merely an abstract issue: at present, the upper 5% of American income earners pay 57% of all federal income taxes, while the bottom 50% pay a negligible 3%. The economist Gary Shilling estimates that 53% of all Americans now receive much of their income from government.

Also, Duncan's concept of "desert" is simply too strong. We ought to distinguish positive from negative desert. If I find a diamond, I don't positively deserve it, since I didn't make or earn it, but I negatively deserve it, in that it was I, not someone else, who found it. The fact that I don't positively deserve it doesn't mean that it should be taken from me.

Machan locates another problem with Duncan's argument: there seems to be a contradiction between saying that you respect the dignity of rational agents, but then saying that they are not responsible for their actions or their state of existence. Machan traces this — rather unclearly in my view — to the problem of free will and materialism (compatibilism) (140). I view it instead as resulting from Duncan's inability to face the key fact about modern history: the welfare state that inspires him

has created and perpetuated the social problems that distress him. Duncan tosses out a brief comment (116) that, yes, the plight of the poor is sometimes the consequence of their own bad choices, but he afterwards ignores this

fact as if it were only a tiny fraction of the problem. I would argue that at this point in American history it is the predominant part of the problem.

Consider the 1960s Great Society welfare programs. Did they not

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directly cause an explosion of illegitimate births? And is it not clear that the absence of fathers has proven a major factor in the chances of children becoming destitute, criminal, or substance dependent? In Duncan's footnotes I saw many references to Rawls, whose work is the most popular *theoretical* justification for the welfare state, but no reference to the work of the social scientist Charles Murray, whose *empirical* work shows that the effect of these programs was to halt the historical reduction of poverty and make it far more socially catastrophic.

Duncan has the usual one-sided modern liberal view that what I earn is enhanced by the actions of an always benign government. But what about the costs imposed by the government or the harms it causes? For example, if an ob/gyn has his income dramatically cut because of our disgraceful tort system, doesn't that balance out the benefits "given" to him by the state, such as his partially subsidized education? Again, if the government debases the currency, am I not absolved of some of my moral obligation for the good things government delivers? Considerations like this make determining the degree of reciprocity virtually impossible.

Duncan doesn't spell out how the lack of equal opportunity for education and other services is due to "unequal power." Is it the case that, during the industrial revolution, the poor were made poor by the rich or had money sto-

len by the rich, or that the wealth of the rich *prohibited* the poor from becoming wealthy (as in some zero sum game)? You would have a very hard time proving those assertions.

Likewise, Duncan's critique of reward and merit in a capitalist system is very dubious. To begin with, he conflates moral with non-moral goodness. While it is true that the pornographer renders a less morally meritorious service than a nurse, his service may still be desirable in a non-moral way: he provides a type of pleasure. Moreover, Duncan overlooks the difference between "rule" and "act" utilitarianism. It may be that the practice of rewarding people purely on the basis of the free market is generally the best rule to follow, even if in *particular cases* it isn't. He also overlooks the role of pricing as a mechanism of information. The fact that philosophy professors earn dramatically less than engineering professors helps to inform would-be philosophers that either there is an over-supply of their profession, or that society has less desire or need for it than it has for other things. (That society may have morally wrong preferences, from Duncan's perspective, is another matter.)

Looking at the presentations of both authors, one feels that finding a secure ethical basis for libertarianism (or for modern liberalism) is still an open question. There is a wide spectrum of ethical theories, from ethical egoism,

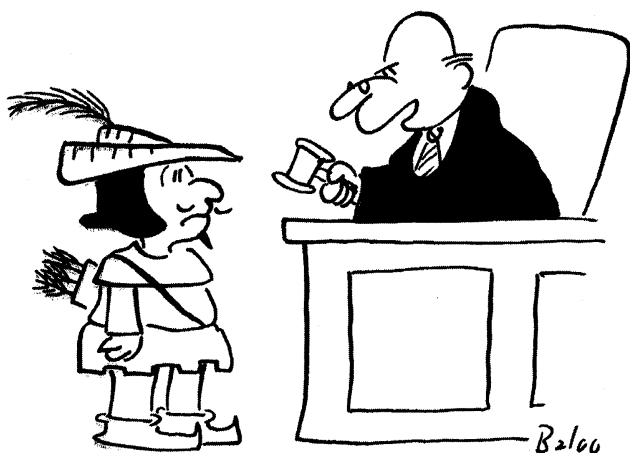
to utilitarianism, to Existentialism, to Christian agapism, to Kantianism, to Rossianism, to virtue ethics, all of which are arguably compatible with a libertarian social and political philosophy. Political libertarians have often been ethical egoists. But the same Mill who wrote "On Liberty" was a utilitarian. Machan bases his libertarianism mainly on Kantian respect for rational agents, but as

he notes, you could base it as well on Christian ethics. While the most influential existentialist writer Sartre was as politically leftist as you can get, his philosophy emphasizes the radical freedom of human choice, and so surely could be used as a basis for political libertarianism. Similarly, the multiple-rule deontology of W.D. Ross could easily be used as a basis for a libertarian political philosophy.

But my suspicion is that while these various ethical theories are compatible with social and political libertarianism, and can be used in some sense as bases for the libertarian perspective, the best approach would be one of virtue ethics.

In particular, I have doubts whether appealing to what rational agents would do in a hypothetical state of nature or veil of ignorance is the best way to proceed. Human beings are not generally exemplars of shining rationality. Never mind that children, adolescents, many of the elderly, and many prime age adults are mentally impaired. Normal adults aren't fully rational, either — as Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky demonstrated decades ago, in work for which Kahneman was recently awarded the Nobel Prize in Economics. A more plausible case could be made for the idea that we need to focus on the role that large-scale, centralized, coercive government plays in destroying virtue, and the role that nongovernmental, self-organizing groups play in creating and sustaining it.

Such a "virtue libertarianism" would, I believe, be more biologically realistic than other flavors of libertarian philosophy, some of which — if I may speak with brutal frankness — read as if they were written by perpetual adolescents, people who never married or had children, or were ever likely to. If we are truly naturalist — which we ought to be — we should never forget that humans are evolved hominids, and as far back as we can see they formed families for reproduction and child-rearing, and groups for mutual protection. Libertarians need to take such realities into account as much as they do the debating points of abstract theories, however attractive and inspiring and partially explanatory they may be. □



"It just so happens that robbing the rich and giving to the poor is a government monopoly!"

"Elizabeth: The Golden Age," directed by Shekhar Kapur. Universal, 2007, 114 minutes.

The Celluloid Age of English History

Lesley Skousen

"Elizabeth: The Golden Age," the sequel to the 1998 film "Elizabeth" starring Cate Blanchett, is a tour de force of typecast characters, misunderstood historical situations, and boldly simplistic good-versus-evil plot lines. "The Golden Age" attempts to take the audience through a mere three years of Elizabeth's 45-year reign, from 1585–1588, when the Catholic threat was strongest against the Protestant queen. During this period, international forces attempted to stir rebellion in English hearts, while English Catholic recusants negotiated with various powers in order to restore the nation to the pope, even if their efforts threatened Elizabeth's life. It was a turbulent time, and worthy of two hours of footage.

What a lost opportunity for the creators of this film! The most blatant problem with "The Golden Age" is the ponderous writing and direction, which left the audience hanging for minutes at a time during what the director deemed "significant" — actually contrived and boring — events. The inexplicable sex scene between Walter Raleigh (Clive Owen) and a lady-in-waiting lasts over five minutes and is interspersed with images of a lonely queen wishing she could love a man as easily as her maids do. Mary Stuart finally loses her head about ten minutes after the audience loses its interest and is simply bored by the anticipation. A decision to go to war

is built up to such an extent that one fellow moviegoer said quite audibly, "Attack them already!"

The less obvious problem with this movie is its odd depiction of its characters. Elizabeth — one of the world's preeminent political figures — is presented as a madwoman who desires nothing more than love, companionship, and children. And she is portrayed as fervently in love with just one man: Walter Raleigh. Although other famous favorites make brief appearances — Sir Christopher Hatton, for example, often stands in the background — the best known of Elizabeth's consorts, Leicester and Essex, are nowhere to be seen. Granted, they would have been in the Netherlands during the first half of the movie, but Leicester returned to defend his country against the Spanish Armada and died soon after, to Elizabeth's intense grief. Her greatest devoted servant, William Cecil, never makes it to film, and that may be the biggest historical fallacy.

Meanwhile, Elizabeth's supposed obsession with Raleigh gives the film the feeling of a romantic comedy — at least from time to time. The two go riding together, speak of love, kiss, and trust each other to perform their respective roles for the good of the realm. Raleigh goes to the queen, unbidden, in her time of emotional distress, and provides wisdom and guidance that she seems to lack. In turn, Elizabeth experiences great hurt when Raleigh marries

one of her ladies, and banishes them both from Court as she deals with the pain of having lost the only man who loved her.

In their zeal to simplify the story, the creators of this movie missed an important opportunity to use Elizabeth's famous flirtation in a very direct way. The success of Elizabeth's reign, indeed her Golden Age, was directly linked to her ability to make close connections with the many members of her court, through flirtation or some other method of establishing relationships that instilled a sense of obligation in others without restricting her own freedom. Her ambivalent responses kept courtiers and ambassadors guessing her next move instead of guiding or controlling her, a remarkable accomplishment for a 16th-century woman. Yet the movie implies that it was an inability to love that caused her fears, her incessant oscillation between happiness and sadness, and her stagnant answers on such weighty issues as that of marriage, the execution of her Catholic rival, Mary Stuart, and England's response to the Spanish threat.

This "Elizabeth" also treats the religious politics of the age in a curious fashion. The real Elizabeth I created a deliberate disconnect between political loyalty and religious belief. The Treason Statutes enacted by her parliaments in 1581 and 1585 focused on secular loyalty, love for the queen, and independence from Jesuits (who were charged with attempting to arrange Elizabeth's assassination) as a means of telling the difference between people who were traitors and dangerous subjects, and people who were merely English men and women obeying their conscience in the religious sphere. Elizabeth did not want to follow the path of her sister, "Bloody Mary," who vigorously persecuted her religious opponents. Indeed, during Mary's five-year reign, 300 people had been put to death for heresy; Elizabeth's 45 years saw the executions of approximately 170 people for religious reasons, and only some of those were Catholics. Elizabeth saw the value in tolerance, and persecuted only those with rebellious or murderous intentions. As a result, the great majority of her Catholic subjects remained entirely loyal to her.

Nevertheless, “The Golden Age” depicts all Catholics as ruthless, crazy, blind, or merciless. Upon hearing that Elizabeth has survived an assassination attempt, Mary Stuart cries out in disappointment. Philip II of Spain — a one-time suitor of Elizabeth, and her former brother-in-law — is a religious fanatic who ignores his advisers during a time of war in order to stare at a candle for guidance. Spanish warriors take a prayer break in the middle of a battle, and fail to see a burning ship coming straight at them. (Actually, most of the Spanish Armada was blown off course by a “Protestant Wind,” so there wasn’t a climactic battle.) Catholic plotters revel in the anticipated chaos and bloodshed that will happen when they overthrow the Protestant government.

Early Modern England was simply not that clearly divided. Among Elizabeth’s closest advisers were middling Protestants, radical Puritans, and religious conservatives such as Sir Christopher Hatton, who may or may not have been Catholic himself. These many voices were welcomed to debate in the presence of the queen. She supported and gave generously to her favorite court composer, William Byrd, despite his pronounced Catholicism, simply because he pledged his allegiance to her and created some of the most beautiful music of the century. A key point that goes unmentioned in this film is that, shortly before the events depicted, Elizabeth came the closest she ever did to getting married, in a French match with the Duc d’Anjou, a Catholic. During the prenuptial negotiations, she professed herself sympathetic to Catholicism and kept her Puritan advisers away until she achieved the alliances that were best for her realm.

Elizabeth’s greatest strength was her mixture of tact and ambivalence. She attempted to find common ground on which anyone could build rapport with her. She followed that policy with Catholics and Protestants (and Puritans, too); and she followed it with foreign states. She could play the Spanish against the French because with each she found common ground and the promise of building closer relationships. She didn’t look at Catholic

nations as strictly the “enemy” to be repudiated, but rather as potential allies who required careful attention. Not until her person or her realm was threatened did she become belligerent, and even during the Armada she acted defensively.

What makes her an even more interesting figure is that she conformed to ideas of traditional womanhood — being coy, dainty, and weak — but balanced it with the rhetoric and authority of a man, even a king. She swore like a man when events warranted, stabbed servants with a fork, and even threw her slipper at an insubordinate Francis Walsingham. None of these dramatic events appears in the film.

Those who played her game of

court intrigue always ran the risk of seeing her turn from a “weak and feeble woman” into the monarch who had “the heart and stomach of a King, and a King of England, too!” Those are the words with which (as tradition says) Elizabeth rallied her troops as the Armada approached. But that splendid speech doesn’t make it into “The Golden Age,” either. It is not surprising that the filmmakers chose to omit one of her greatest lines; their production is not one of greatness — and it will soon be forgotten. Let’s hope that the wisdom of the real Elizabeth, as diplomat and politician, will last longer than these images of a contrived relationship between the queen and Sir Walter Raleigh. □

“Gone Baby Gone,” directed by Ben Affleck. Miramax, 2007, 115 minutes.

A Triumph of Technique Over Meaning

Jo Ann Skousen

The story is so current it seems lifted from today’s headlines: a beautiful blond toddler is taken from her bed while her mother visits a neighbor in the same building. Only this time the parents of the toddler aren’t well-educated, well-spoken physicians from England vacationing in Portugal; she’s an unmarried, foul-mouthed coke addict from Boston. “Gone Baby Gone” follows the efforts of a local private investigator, Patrick Kenzie (Casey Affleck), as he tries to find the child and return her to her mother.

Inexperienced with kidnapping cases, Kenzie is nevertheless more suited to this investigation than the cops or the FBI because of his inside knowledge of the neighborhood. He went to school with these thugs. They know him. Like a feral dog grudgingly but menacingly acknowledging others, Affleck must bare his teeth and show his strength as he enters seedy bars and pool halls where a punch in the nose or a knife in the gullet is as common as a dish of peanuts on the table. Small in stature and baby-faced, he asserts his power with language and eye contact, peppering every sentence with

the f-word the way a Valley girl once used the word “like.” Only in the quiet moments with his partner-girlfriend Angie Genarro (Michelle Monaghan) does he allow his demeanor and his language to soften, subtly showing that his character is blue-collar, but not low class.

Like his brother’s character, knowing the neighborhood is where first-time director Ben Affleck shines. A native Bostonian, he pays careful attention to getting it right. His backgrounds are detailed and authentic; his characters, especially the extras, look stupid and grotesque. The beautiful Amy Ryan (“Dan in Real Life”) is mousy and plain as the missing toddler’s mother, ignorant and spaced out. But the world in which these ugly characters reside is beautiful. Watch for the cinematography at the quarry. Magnificent.

Standing too long in his brother’s considerable acting shadow, Casey Affleck has been given mostly small sidekick roles in the past (the “Ocean’s” trilogy, “American Pie”), seemingly as a concession to Ben’s Hollywood influence rather than as a tribute to Casey’s

talent. But Casey is a strong actor in his own right. I saw him at the Garrick Theater in London a few years ago in “This Is Our Youth,” opposite Ben’s good friend Matt Damon (possibly another fraternal favor). Casey dominated the stage. I can still feel the raw despair of his character as I return to the performance in my mind. With his starring roles in this film and the almost simultaneous release of “The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford” Casey Affleck has pushed his way out of Ben’s shadow and into the limelight.

Although it is technically brilliant, “Gone Baby Gone” (based on the book by Dennis Lehane, author of “Mystic River”) has more holes in it than a slice of Swiss cheese. A successful thriller must pull the viewer along with nodding agreement. As each new twist unfolds, the viewer wants to think, “Of course it had to be . . .” with a slap of recognition to the top of the forehead. I don’t want to give away the plot of “Gone Baby Gone,” but my reaction during the increasingly twisted denouement was, “Wait! There’s a much easier way! They don’t have to

do this!” It was easier to believe John McClane could shoot down a helicopter with a car in the latest “Die Hard” film than that — well, I did promise not to give away the plot.

In the end, the film successfully lifts the mat on Boston’s front doorstep to reveal the ugly bugs teeming

Affleck must show his strength as he enters bars and pool halls where a knife in the gullet is as common as a dish of peanuts on the table.

beneath, but in my opinion the story does not work. I was left contemplating the sad issue of children born to ill-prepared mothers, but without a sense of satisfaction at the way the issue was addressed. Technically brilliant, yes, but textually flawed. □

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"The Wire," HBO. Season 4 available on DVD Dec. 4; season 5 debuts in January.

At Last: TV With Meaning

Peter Allen

The word "gritty" is thrown around in reference to almost any cop drama today. But "gritty" isn't gritty enough to capture the essence of HBO's cop drama "The Wire." More than reflecting the real life of cops and the criminals they chase, the show depicts all facets of city life, including race, education, politics, unions, and the justice system. What emerges is a microcosm of the struggles that urban America has faced since the War on Drugs kicked into high gear and the "white flight" into suburbia deprived cities of their tax base.

The show is the brainchild of David Simon, who is also the creator of the show "Homicide: Life on the Streets." This one also takes place in Baltimore, a city that has been struggling for decades with a very high rate of drug addiction, property crime, and violent crime. It is not uncommon for the city to see nearly 300 homicides a year; with a population of just 650,000, this is frighteningly high, as is the overall crime rate. Indeed Baltimore, with its blue-collar roots, is the perfect case study for urban decline.

In its first season "The Wire" used a drug investigation as a backdrop to an even more intense struggle taking place within the police department itself. High ranking police officials worried more about how the investigation was making them look than about how suc-

cessful they were in breaking up a well-organized drug ring.

The investigation leads into a world with a parallel government, economy, and system of justice. The drug dealers in this network have a well-honed survival instinct that keeps them one step ahead of the police. Unlike most crime shows, "The Wire" does not simply chase the bad guys and throw them in jail; it examines the economics and collateral damage of the drug trade and even experiments with legalization.

At one point the dealers discuss how much simpler the drug game would be if murdering was not necessary to maintain the territories, each understanding that one day he may be killed for access to the corner where he makes his living. It is just this sort of argument that screams out for legalization. Eliminate the black-market features of the drug trade, and all that's left are people getting high, a pastime that is as old as mankind.

The show's writers are not content with a purely theoretical argument. In season 3, rogue District Major Howard Colvin (Robert Wisdom) legalizes drugs in a small section of his territory, determined to provide a way for law-abiding people to live their lives free of drug-related violence. He tells all the dealers and addicts that they are free to deal and use in an area of vacant row houses dubbed "Hamsterdam," on one condition: there will be no murders.

This experiment does not portray

legalization as a panacea for happy drug use; the legalized area encounters problems of its own. In a revealing exchange, the major defends his position by saying that none of the dealers and users are worse off than they were before: "Now they're just in one place." His friend replies, "and that place is hell." The Hamsterdam experiment shows that people must live with the consequences of their own choices. If you want to deal or use drugs, you will have to associate with other people who have made that choice. Meanwhile, with the drug trade contained in one area, the rest of the district can relax. Children play outside, the elderly walk around at night, and those who have made the choice not to use narcotics can finally live in peace.

The viewer sees what a world with legalized drugs would be like and contemplates such issues as: Where would the drugs be bought? How would they be taxed? Would just anyone be able to buy them? Sell them? Would there be an age limit? Would there be specific drug use districts? How would public health concerns be handled in these districts? Would dealers be licensed, and if so, what sort of purity control would you have to guarantee in order to get a license?

This is but one facet of the drug war that the show explores. The dealers also struggle with a weak supply chain that forces them to dilute the quality of the heroin they sell. They use marketing gimmicks, such as changing the color of the vial top or giving a new package a snappier nickname, like WMD. How to launder the money is also a concern; the show meticulously details how to uncover front companies and properties bought with illicit money.

The drug war is not the only reason that "The Wire" provides for the decline of Baltimore. Unions are a problem, too. In season 2 the show explores the long-shoremen's union that works the cargo ships coming in and out of the city's port. The port has long been in decline, and the union's membership and hours have dwindled. Now the union president has hired lobbyists to push the state government in Annapolis for improvements to the docks. The show reveals corruption among the union lobbyists who get into bed with unsavory characters who, in addition to stealing

from the docks, attempt to smuggle in women for the sex trade.

When the women end up dead inside a cargo container, the rest of the season focuses on the investigation, illustrating the decline of the port and its union. A decent living can no longer be made working the few ships that come in. Developers continue to lobby for access to the port for residential development, new technologies are introduced that replace manpower with computers, and the union dies a slow death — its members the last of a breed of organized blue-collar workers in an economy that has passed them by.

In its recently completed fourth season the show depicts the struggles of children in an inner-city middle school. It becomes apparent, early on, that education is not a high priority. Faced with a huge budget shortfall, a new mayor has to choose between two options: taking state money and losing local control of the schools, or keeping control and letting the schools operate in the red for the foreseeable future. Not surprisingly, the mayor decides to go with the option that is least likely to endanger his chances in a statewide race for governor.

At the end of the season the viewer is left with a pretty clear understanding of why the students cannot read at a level even two grades behind their year in school. The school system is regulated from the top with the interests of the unions and the administrators more at issue than education. An innovative classroom study, overseen in part by the

Unlike most crime shows, "The Wire" examines the economics and collateral damage of the drug trade and even experiments with legalization.

now retired officer who tried to legalize drugs, is shut down for failing to submit to the orthodoxy demanded by the school board. Instead of teaching children in a manner that speaks to their

world and the challenges they face, a one-size-fits-all standard is applied that is guaranteed to leave more than a few far behind.

"The Wire's" fifth season will be its last. It is rumored that it will feature a subplot examining the media's role in inner-city life. My hope is that the show will be able to go out with the same unsentimental portrayal of urban decay and struggle that has been its hallmark for the past four seasons.

Unlike "The Sopranos," it does not have a larger-than-life character whose final act would inevitably disappoint. What it does have is the sort of inconclusive narrative in which no action is truly independent, no decision ends up affecting only those whom the decision maker intended to affect, and every move is calculated to have the best possible impact on career prospects. That's not gritty, that's everyday life in the big city. □

"Strike," directed by Volker Schlöndorff. ARTE, 2006, 104 minutes.

Out of the Lenin Shipyard

Gary Jason

Movies about strikes and labor organizers are not uncommon in film history — think of "Grapes of Wrath" and "Norma Rae," to name just a couple. The usual plot line involves heroic union organizers fighting the heartless company to overcome horrible working conditions. But a recent movie out on DVD gives the formula an interesting twist.

"Strike," directed by the accomplished German director Volker Schlöndorff, was made in 2006 in Poland, with a mainly Polish cast, but with the lead played by German actress Katharina Thalbach. It hit art houses in America in the middle of 2007, and promptly disappeared. It is now out on DVD through a few video rental stores, but is more easily obtainable by sale through the ever-reliable Amazon.

The film recounts (with some artistic license) the struggle by Polish workers to form an independent union and

fight deplorable working conditions, set not by heartless capitalists in this case, but rather by the Communist state. The well-crafted script by Andreas Pflüger (based upon a biography written by Sylke Meyer) tells the story of how one uneducated, diminutive, and stubborn woman fought the Communist bureaucracy to improve working conditions at the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk, Poland. She became a cofounder of the independent trade union Solidarity.

The woman, Agnieszka (based on the real-life character Anna Walentynowicz, the subject of Meyer's bio) did not go on to achieve the renown of her friend Lech Walesa, but her role in the rise of Solidarity was great. Moreover, the worker revolt in the worker's paradise of Poland helped bring about the collapse of Communism, which freed tens of millions of people. No small achievement for such a small woman.

The events leading up to the historic 1980 shipyard strike are mirrored

continued on page 68

Twenty Years of Liberty

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1999

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2004

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2006

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nicely in the story of Agnieszka's life. She comes to Gdansk as a young woman after WWII, happy to find a job

Filmed at the actual Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk, the outstanding cinematography conveys convincingly the utter bleakness of life in that benighted Marxist utopia.

as a worker in the shipyard. She eventually becomes a welder, then a crane operator.

As the movie opens she receives a ribbon and a prize (a small TV) for being named a Heroine of Socialist Labor yet again. (We also see her taunted by fellow workers for setting the production quota too high, who scream at her the bitter old Soviet joke, "They pretend to pay us, so we pretend to work!") She takes the ribbon and TV back to her shockingly shoddy flat where this model worker lives with her son Krystian.

In a subsequent scene she meets and befriends the Lech Walesa character, here an itinerant ship electrician, at the yard. She gradually begins to fight with the management for better working conditions. The resistance by the managers is ironic, given that they are all Communist Party functionaries, supposedly devoted to the betterment of the working class.

In the most riveting scene, a major industrial accident caused by a dropped cigarette igniting a fuel leak, Agnieszka tries to rescue two burning men by moving her crane to pick them up. Over 20 men die, but subsequently the Communist management refuses to give the widows any help. Agnieszka's continued fight against the corrupt and heartless party hacks earns her an even-

tual beating, and costs her son a chance for a college education (which causes a major rift between them).

Communist mismanagement leads to the rise of the independent trade union Solidarity, and the famous 1980 strike, all of which — together with the appointment of the Polish Pope John Paul II — results in the eventual triumph of the movement on a scale beyond which its organizers ever envisioned. The evolution of the union's rise is nicely intertwined with the development of her personal life.

Filmed at the actual Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk, the outstanding cinematography conveys convincingly the utter bleakness of life in that benighted Marxist utopia. The first-rate score, by Jean-Michel Jarre, accents the movie well — in the opening scenes, it has a kind of driving machine sound impressionistic of a factory, for example. The

acting is excellent, with especially fine support performances from Andrzej Chyra as Lech Walesa and Dominique Horwitz as Kazimierz, a trumpet player with whom Agnieszka falls in love.

However, it is the performance by Katharina Thalbach that stands out most, in a demanding role portraying Agnieszka from youth to old age. The final scene, where she walks along the shore, bent with age, and comments on the aftermath of the momentous events she helped shape, is especially moving.

The director, Schlöndorff, has made several movies about the struggle of individuals to follow their consciences in times of political peril, including "The Ninth Day," about a priest persecuted by the Nazis. This tale, however, has an especially important historical story to tell, one well worth seeing, even if you have to make an effort to get the film. □

"The Kingdom," directed by Peter Berg. Universal, 2007, 110 minutes.

Can't We All Just Get Along?

Jo Ann Skousen

"The Kingdom" is yet another political thriller set in the Middle East, determined to convince audiences that we are all the same beneath our differences, so why can't we all just get along? Even the title suggests a melding of philosophies, the Christian Kingdom of God with the Muslim Kingdom of Allah set in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Like last year's "Munich," "The Kingdom" begins by implying that one

man's freedom fighter is another man's terrorist. The film opens with the juxtaposition of "Career Day" in two different countries. Jamie Foxx is an FBI agent sharing a cozy moment in the classroom with his 6-year-old son; meanwhile, in Saudi Arabia, a terrorist is cozily initiating his son into the glorious carnage of massacring infidel parents and children enjoying a Little League game in the American compound at Riyadh. The film ends with a similar cross-cultural juxtaposition, but this time it is meant to chill us with the ominous realiza-

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tion that we will *never* get along, largely *because* we are so much alike. Nasty humans.

As Foxx and his team (Chris Cooper, Jennifer Garner, and Jason Bateman) travel to Riyadh to investigate the crime, he befriends the Saudi cop (Ashraf Barhom) who is assigned to be their escort and bodyguard. Of course the two fight and then bond during the investigation, learning that they have more in common than in contrast. After all, they are both fathers, aren't they? And they both care about their

team members, right? We see the Saudi family kneeling together in prayer, and we walk through a Saudi video arcade where young boys are cheerfully gunning down virtual combatants. Just like home!

The final battle scene is gripping, with enough exploding cars, blasting guns, and crunching body parts to satisfy most thrill seekers. But it takes a long time to get there. Along the way we endure shaky handheld camera work, murky plot development, and mumbled dialogue, making it difficult

at times to follow the story.

Foxx puts in a good performance channeling Denzel Washington's terse style — he even nods “okay” under his breath a few times. But Jennifer Garner's character is a little too girly for an FBI agent today, Jason Bateman's wise-cracking is almost stereotypical, and Chris Cooper, one of my favorite actors, is wearing way too much makeup. It's a good movie for a rainy day with nothing to do after football season ends, but not a great movie. I would probably offer to go out for snacks. □

“Laissez Faire”: R.I.P.?, from page 30

exist you have to be able to identify people and reach them.”

Who wants to find libertarian readers, as such? “There aren't any libertarian book publishers now,” Powell said. There are just publishers. “When an author proposes a book to a commercial publisher they look you up and see how many books you've sold.” Once your book is published, Powell added, “you have 60 to 90 days to make something happen sales-wise before the publisher moves on.”

There is another, deeper, problem, he said. “The great majority of libertarian authors had their sales peaks more than five years ago, and some of them ten and 20 years ago.” The

giants are dead: Rand, Mises, Rothbard, Friedman. Sowell's top book was “Vision of the Anointed” (1995). Richard Epstein's was “Takings” (1985). Charles Murray's top libertarian book was “Losing Ground” (1984). (Andrea didn't consider “The Bell Curve” a libertarian book; she carried it but did not reorder it.) P.J. O'Rourke's top book was “Parliament of Whores” (1991), and Paul Johnson's was “Modern Times” (1983). John Stossel is a new author, and a welcome one, but it's not enough.

“What you want is to have a lot of authors with recent peaks,” Powell said.

Something to think about. Maybe there's a book in it. □

Decisive Moments, from page 44

Like a dark river, the newly paved road rushed diagonally through the frame, uniting the elements. Now was the time. Moving quickly, deliberately, my thumb found the rounded plunger on the shutter release. With a soft mechanical sigh, the thin metal blades swung open, and locked in place. Light streamed through the lens, onto the silver-coated surface of the film. Fourteen seconds. I glanced at the glowing second hand sweeping across the black face of my watch. The time was nearly up. My thumb released the plunger; the shutter blades clicked shut. I had my picture.

“Il n'y a rien dans ce monde qui n'ait un moment décisif” — “There is nothing in this world that does not have a decisive moment” — words uttered by Cardinal de Retz in the 17th century, later adopted by the pioneering candid photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson as his personal approach to photography. Though the concept of the “decisive moment” has now been relegated to the vocabulary of photographic historians, its meaning is more than merely historical. The decisive moment in photography is not simply the act of the shutter, chopping off a slice of light at the “right time”; it is more than the simple act of creating a “good” photograph. De Retz was right; our world is full of decisive moments — individual moments of discovery, of innovation, of tragedy, of creation, of moments when one is invited to decide whether one's “equipment is up to par,” in many senses of those words.

From the battlefield photography of Capa and Adams, to the technological genius of Godowsky and Mannes, to the photographic artists who can still shape and further the

field, these are the elements that make up true photography — decisive moments created and molded by individuals. No matter how much technology or social pressures may seem to dictate, there will always be ample room for individuality in this art; it is still only one moment, one mindset, one action by one person that is necessary to create a photograph. And one photograph, simple as it may seem, may be all that is necessary to change our perception of the world. □

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St. Paul, Minn.

Curious poultry preparation, chronicled in the *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*:

Scott D. Clark, a guest at the Embassy Suites Hotel in St. Paul, cornered a duck, grabbed the bird and ripped its head from its body while a hotel security guard and others watched.

Clark then turned to onlookers and said: "I'm hungry. I'm gonna eat it," St. Paul police Sgt. John Wuorinen said.

"He was allegedly drunk," Wuorinen said.

Oak Lawn, Ill.

The difficulty of mixing governance with humor, diagnosed in the *Chicago Tribune*:

Oak Lawn has installed second stop signs beneath the regular ones at 50 intersections with messages, including "WHOOAAA" or "Stop . . . and smell the roses."

"I thought it might make people smile and take notice," Mayor Dave Heilmann said as he launched the campaign.

It might be too soon to know whether the alternative signs will work. But while the mayor was posing for a photo with one of the new signs, a driver sped by without stopping.

Trenton, N.J.

A novel crime punished in its own circle of hell, discovered by the *New Jersey Star-Ledger*:

It's a fashion that started in prison, and now the saggy pants craze has come full circle — low-slung street strutting may soon mean run-ins with the law, including a stint in jail.

In Trenton, getting caught with your pants down may soon result in not only a fine, but a city worker assessing where your life is headed. "Are they employed? Do they have a high school diploma? It's a wonderful way to redirect at that point," said Trenton Councilwoman Annette Lartigue.

Manchester, England

The industrial proletariat two centuries on, from the *Manchester Evening News*:

A lottery scratchcard has been withdrawn from sale by Camelot because players failed to grasp whether or not they had won. To qualify for a prize, users had to scratch away a window to reveal a temperature lower than the figure displayed on each card. As the game had a winter theme, the temperature was usually below zero degrees Celsius.

Tina Farrell, from Levenshulme, called Camelot after failing to win with several cards: "I phoned Camelot and they fobbed me off with some story that -6 is higher — not lower — than -8 but I'm not having it."

Slumberland

Headline from the front line of the War on Drugs, from the ever-sedate *London Daily Mail*:

Smoking just one cannabis joint raises danger of mental illness by 40%.

Austin, Texas

The circle of life, observed by the *Austin American-Statesman*:

The Texas State Library and Archives Commission is declaring there are too many state reports. It says so in a 668-page report.

In the past, the state regularly compiled a list of about 400 reports that agencies were required by the legislature to produce. But the commission found more than 1,600, and state records administrator Michael Heskett is pretty sure his team hasn't found them all. Unless these reports are repealed by the legislature, agencies are required to prepare them, even if the need for the report — or the agency — no longer exists.

As for the commission's massive report on reports, Heskett predicts it won't go away. "For the report to be effective, it must be ongoing," he said.

Australia

Call to action, passed along by the *Melbourne Herald-Sun*:

More kangaroos should be slaughtered and eaten to help save the world from global warming, environmental activists say.

The controversial statement coincides with recent calls from climate change experts for people in rich countries to reduce red meat and switch to chicken and fish because land-clearing and burping and farting cattle and sheep were damaging the environment.

Roughly three million kangaroos are killed and harvested for meat each year. They are shot with high-powered guns between the eyes at night.

Omaha, Neb.

Clarence Darrow put to shame, in the *Lincoln (Neb.) JournalStar*:

State Sen. Ernie Chambers is suing God. He said that it is to prove a point about frivolous lawsuits.

Chambers' lawsuit seeks a permanent injunction ordering God to cease certain harmful activities and the making of terroristic threats.

The suit also requests that the court, given the peculiar circumstances of this case, waive personal service. It said that being omniscient, the plaintiff assumes God will have actual knowledge of the action.

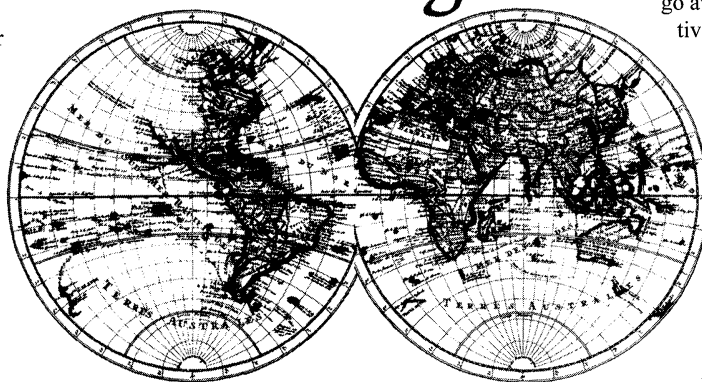
Chambers asks for the court to grant him a summary judgment.

Seattle

A lowering of standards in the Emerald City, noted in the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*:

The bus tunnel through downtown Seattle has reopened after a two-year, \$94 million retrofit for a light rail line. The retrofit lowered the roadway, and Metro is warning passengers to stand back from the edge of the platform so they won't get smacked in the head by bus mirrors.

Terra Incognita



Special thanks to Russell Garrard, Bruce Ramsey, and William Walker for contributions to Terra Incognita.

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



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—Patrick Henry, 1776*

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