

# Liberty

March 2002

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## Drugs in the Media: All the Lies That Are Fit to Print

*by Jeff Rigenbach*

## The Lord of the Epic

*by Stephen Cox*

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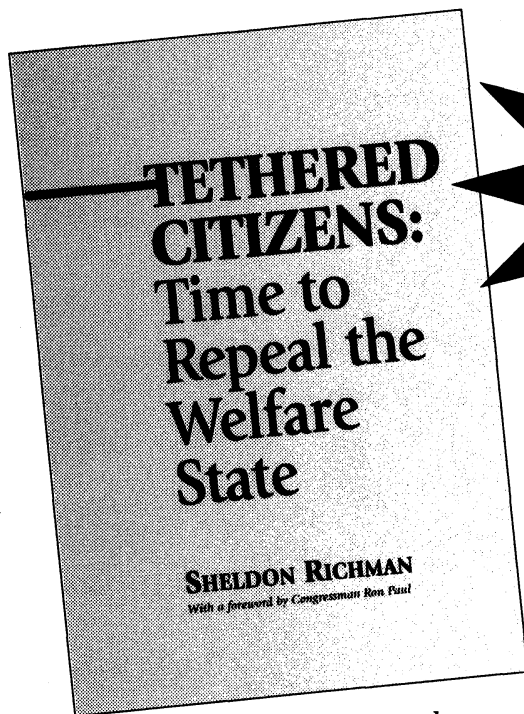
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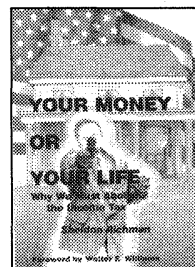
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## Letters

### Close the Borders

I have just finished reading Bruce Ramsey's excellent, insightful, and perceptive article ("The Limits of the Melting Pot," February). It should be read and comprehended by all libertarians, especially my fellow members of the Libertarian Party.

Before the Sept. 11 attack, and the undeclared but just war against the Osama bin Laden pirate gang and the (late) bandit government of the Taliban in Afghanistan, our immigration plank was an albatross around our necks. Now it is a dagger in the back of the Libertarian Party and must be excised. It could justly be characterized as the Osama bin Laden plank and we should get rid of it before our enemies start using that designation.

David Macko  
Solon, Ohio

### Give Us Your Tired, Your Hungry, Your Welfare Queens

Another issue of *Liberty*, another pro-immigration rant ("Open Minds, Closed Borders," January).

An article in the *San Francisco Weekly* (Dec. 12-18) tells how the San Francisco Housing Authority hurts the people it was designed to help. It describes an immigrant woman who no doubt works very hard and did not come to this country to be a burden to the taxpayers. But she *is* a burden to the taxpayers. She has lived in public housing for 24 years. The cost of her home is more than the taxes she pays from her low-paying job. Despite all her years in this country she has not learned English.

People on the political left do not deny that immigrants as a group are dependent on welfare. They complain that too little money is being spent on them. Why do libertarians and the pro-immigration right deny what we all can see?

Yes, my own ancestors were immigrants, but in the 1700s there was indentured servitude, not government

welfare.

Douglas Rose  
Oakland, Calif.

### Minority Politics

In "Open Minds, Closed Borders" Ken Schoolland did not mention that America is gradually being changed from a predominately white nation to one with a nonwhite majority, thanks in part to its immigration policy. California's failure to control immigration from Mexico has led to that state now having a nonwhite majority. How soon, I wonder, will the rest of America follow in California's footsteps?

Robert M. LaFrana  
Wyoming, Mich.

### Idealistic Idiots

Idealistic idiots or libertarians, is there any difference? No!!!

Ken Schoolland in his absolutely idiotic article about immigrants said, "Any immigrant who wants to come to America in search of a better life should be let in."

Real life, gang, real life! California shortages: water, electricity, homes, and way, way overcrowded freeways. Absolutely ridiculous reasoning. Thus, we do it!! Let's pick up 20,000 Somalis, Nigerians, Algerians, Palestinians, and drop them in School-less's Hawaii and, of course, Port Townsend, Wash.!! And I mean now!!! Then in months all you will have moved, as none of you live, or work with, non-English speaking immigrants, who by the way, School-less, send 95% of their paychecks to Mexico, which sure helps the U.S. economy, right? No wonder Nader trounces libertarians, even he is more practical.

Al Winter  
Rancho Cucamonga, Calif.

### Conservatives and Natural Rights

Timothy Sandefur's review of Andrew Peyton Thomas' biography of Clarence Thomas ("A Man to Be Destroyed," February) contained an insight that may help libertarians better

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communicate with conservatives. Sandefur was right when he said that most conservatives reject natural rights and the Declaration of Independence.

*Chronicles* editor Thomas Fleming calls natural rights a "superstition" and Jeremy Bentham called them "nonsense on stilts." Conservatives never stop ridiculing Thomas Jefferson's "all men are created equal."

From the practical side, one can argue that you have only those rights you are able to assert. Yet, what conservatives don't seem to appreciate is that libertarianism is primarily concerned with ideals, not practicalities.

Conservatives and libertarians will find no consensus where one talks about apples, and the other about oranges.

Jack Dennon  
Warrenton, Ore

### Montgomery Woes

I read with great interest the item appearing in February's "Terra Incognita" regarding the measure by the Montgomery County, Ala., council to fine cigarette smokers for smoking at home if the smoke leaks out. By what must be an extraordinary coincidence, here in Montgomery County, Maryland, an almost identical ordinance was passed by our county council *on the same day!*

The Maryland ordinance attracted a good deal of attention, not to mention outright scorn, in the national and international press. So much so that the following week, our county executive, Doug Duncan, a proponent of the measure, announced he would not sign the bill into law, lest Montgomery County (Maryland) become a laughingstock before the world.

I'm sure that in all the hubbub about the Maryland bill, the actions of the Montgomery County, Ala., council must have gone unnoticed, so I am thankful to the editors of *Liberty* for bringing this to our attention. Now, I wonder what the folks in Montgomery County, Penn., have been up to . . .

Luther Jett  
Washington Grove, Md.

*Terra Incognita responds:* Oops!

### Microsoft's Abusive Monopoly

Dave Kopel is wrong about Microsoft ("Microsoft Capitulates," January). In one of my previous jobs, we wanted to port a C compiler to the Windows environment. It compiled code that ran twice as fast as that com-

piled by the latest and greatest Microsoft offering. Our problem was that we had to take heroic measures to test our compiled code. Why? Microsoft will not release the specifications of the object code that their system supports — the format that their linker accepts and their libraries contain.

Other compiler teams have faced the same problem. Some with deeper pockets than ours reverse engineered the Microsoft object code formats. That worked fine until Microsoft "improved" the formats, requiring another round of reverse engineering. Eventually, most gave up — just as Microsoft intended.

Who loses? Everyone who wants to create efficient programs to run in the Windows environment and everyone who would like to use them.

Windows is the most bug-ridden, unstable, sophomoric, "designed" by trial-and-error, half-baked piece of crap masquerading as an "operating system"

that I've seen in my 42 years in the computer industry. Windows usually hangs trying to shut itself down. Often, a crashing program destroys system information. One that I see a lot is that the "ESCAPE" key's meaning is altered. Guess what the "solution" is. Yep, yet another reboot. This on a machine that has hardware to protect the data of one program from all other programs! The "system" doesn't even protect its own vital data! It stores vital resource use information in fixed size 65,536 byte buffers. Program crashes often trash even them. Normal use overfills them.

As far as I'm concerned, UNIX is "the" operating system. OS/2 was great (after its initial teething problems) until Microsoft cut IBM off from the details of Windows 95 that they needed to be able to run the new generation of Microsoft tools — like Word and Excel. Denial of information necessary to competitors. Does that sound familiar?

## From the Editor . . .

The war against terrorism is winding down. In its conquest of Afghanistan, the United States has killed thousands of people and suffered one more casualty than it did in its war against Serbia. It's a sweet victory, though the enemy escaped and it looks as if Americans have lost a lot of liberty, not to mention treasure. On a brighter note, war hysteria is being tempered by Americans' traditional desire to pursue their own interests, but they are still quite willing — and even happy — to be subjected to absurdly intrusive yet ineffective searches before they board aircraft.

The best inoculation against hysteria is honest analysis and vigorous controversy. This issue of *Liberty* has rather less on the war than issues in the recent past, but we're not letting our skeptical guard down one little bit, as you can see from several of our "Reflections."

We begin with what's in the headlines: the sudden collapse of Enron, which invested other people's money very badly. Until men become angels, fraud will occur. As Andrew Chamberlain points out in our lead feature, what's important is how fraud is dealt with. And for once, the U.S. government seems to be dealing with the fraud quite sensibly, pursuing the perpetrators and allowing the healing balm of bankruptcy to sooth our wounds, rather than exacerbating the problem with a bailout. We also look behind the headlines. Stephen Berry reports startling news from England: The Labour government is carrying privatization into areas where even Margaret Thatcher feared to tread.

But there's more to life — and to *Liberty* — than war and the economy. Thomas S. Szasz shows how libertarian theorist Murray Rothbard grew wiser as he grew older. Miles Fowler looks at the strange career of Vardis Fisher, a first-rate writer caught up in a federal welfare program. And your humble editor reluctantly responds to an old friend who has fallen on hard intellectual times.

Our review section is particularly rich. It begins with Steve Cox's look at the number-one movie of the millennium and the novel from which it came. Our other reviewers also take a close look at a reformed ecologist, a great economist, two singular writers, Pat Buchanan, and Dwight Macdonald.

*R. W. Bradford*

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I say, break up Microsoft, and make the various parts tell the others and all aspiring competitors the details of the file formats and APIs. How many pieces? At least three: Windows, Applications, and Development Tools.

Marv Graham  
West Columbia, S.C.

*Kopel responds:* In Marv Graham's opinion, Microsoft makes lousy products and is difficult to work with. The writer's error is his belief that the government has the legitimate authority to make Microsoft into the kind of business partner he would like to write software for. In a free society, he's free to stop dealing with Microsoft. Neither the author nor IBM has a right to see Microsoft's intellectual property secrets. Microsoft created them, and Microsoft is entitled to use them as the company chooses. Microsoft has no obligation to facilitate use of its operating system by third-party software designers — but, in fact, one reason why Windows became so successful is that Microsoft did make Windows interoperable with a vast range of software written by other companies.

Software writers and software users who don't like Microsoft Windows can choose other operating platforms, such as Apple or Unix.

By the way, I used IBM's OS/2 and Microsoft Windows 95 on my business computer in 1995. Windows 95 was far more stable, and far better able to handle different software and peripherals. I abandoned OS/2 because it was an inferior operating system, not because I wanted to use MS Word.

Other computer users may have different preferences or experience.

Individual consumers, not the Antitrust Division of the Department of Justice, are the ones who best know their own preferences. As *Antitrust After Microsoft* details, Microsoft prospers because consumers choose to buy its products..

## Off the Wagon and on the March

As an expert in identifying the behavioral signs of alcoholism, I read "The Mussolini of Maui" (January) with great interest. Early-stage alcohol addiction is marked by an inordinately large sense of self-importance. This translates into a need in the afflicted to inflate their egos, often by wielding power over others, especially capriciously. Gov. Cayetano seems particularly adept at this.

While not every power-hungry politician is an alcoholic, a disproportionately large percentage are. Both Mussolini and Huey Long, to whom Cayetano is compared, were alcohol addicts, as was Josef Stalin.

Doug Thorburn  
Northridge, Calif.

*Thorburn is the author of Drunks, Drugs and Debts: How to Recognize Addicts.*

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*During the Christmas rush, we were unable to reach Dave Kopel in time to respond to letters criticizing his article on Microsoft in the January issue. Here is his reply:*

Contrary to what one letter-writer claimed, Sun's Solaris operating system certainly does contain an integrated Web browser. The writer may have been confused because Sun also distributes the more sophisticated Netscape for Solaris browser, which Solaris users can install.

Solaris is based on Unix, not Linux, as I had mistakenly written. Sun's Cobalt servers do use a Linux operating system.

I had described Sun's business model as based on forcing users to purchase Sun hardware to run their Sun software. This was true in the olden days, when the only way to run Solaris was on Sun machines, or on a very small number of other machines which were licensed by Sun. But these days, Solaris will run on Sun's Sparc architecture, or on Intel-based architecture.

I had characterized Sun's workstations (a.k.a. "clients") as only working with Sun servers. This is true for one type of Sun client, but Sun does make another client which can work with a variety of servers. The letter-writers were correct to point out that Sun servers have always been able to accommodate a wide variety of clients. — Dave Kopel

# Reflections

**Quid pro no** — The Democrats are so hungry to find wrongdoing on the part of George W. Bush that they are now claiming that he should have offered Enron a bailout. To a Democrat, it's only a scandal when you take money from a donor and *don't* perform a political favor. — Tim Slagle

**Catch this!** — The January 2002 issue of *Maxim* pointed out the notably large number of psychopaths who found *Catcher in the Rye* to be a very inspiring and empowering book: John Hinckley (tried to assassinate Ronald Reagan); Mark David Chapman (assassinated John Lennon); Arthur Bremer (tried to assassinate George Wallace); Robert Bardo (stalked and killed actress Rebecca Schaeffer).

I wonder: Will the old media types who tried so hard to blame the Oklahoma City bombing on Rush Limbaugh take the 50th anniversary of *Catcher in the Rye* as an opportunity to fulminate about J.D. Salinger? — Dave Kopel

## Sound Bites from the eternal struggle

— “Good intentions will always be pleaded for every assumption of authority. It is hardly too strong to say that the Constitution was made to guard the people against the dangers of good intentions. There are men in all ages who mean to govern well, but they mean to govern. They promise to be good masters, but they mean to be masters.” — Noah Webster

— “Necessity is the plea for every infringement of human liberty; it is the argument of tyrants; it is the creed of slaves.” — William Pitt

— “When citizens fear their government, you have tyranny; when the government fears its citizens, you have freedom.” — Thomas Jefferson

— “Find out just what any people will quietly submit to, and you have the exact measure of the injustice and wrong which will be imposed on them.” — Frederick Douglass

— “Yes, sir; of course you may pat me down. No problem at all. And thank you.”

— American citizen attempting to board an airplane.

— Ross Levatter

## Domestic violence in the White House

— We know that one in three families is plagued by domestic violence because outfits that make their livings off domes-

tic violence have told us so. In light of this awful statistic, shouldn't we expect that, over the years, 13 or 14 of our presidential couples would have been affected by this most American of scourges?

Ask yourself, have you ever seen a picture of President Bush in a bathing suit? And if not, why not? Do you really believe he puts on all those tight collars and long-sleeved jackets just because he enjoys feeling sweaty and constricted? Or, could it be that he needs to hide the bruises?

And what about the jeans and drab jackets he wears around the ranch — even in front of important foreigners? Is somebody doling out his money bit by bit to keep him impoverished and dependent?

For that matter, do most men work at home? Or is the “office” in the White House one more sign of an abused husband kept under the watchful eye of a controlling spouse?

And, when he does get out, is he ever alone? Or is he always shadowed by large gentlemen “for his own good”?

Most of all, isn't Laura Bush right-handed?

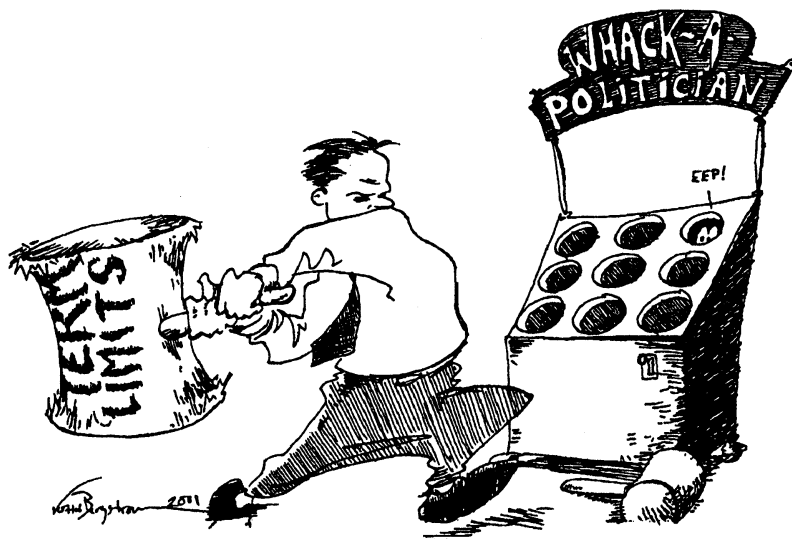
Doesn't that mean her fist would almost certainly catch him on the cheek just under his left eye?

And as for the bruise on his left cheek, just under the eye, that he sported in mid-January, don't you think it odd he was “alone” at the time — while Laura was in an “adjoining” room? Isn't that always the way when somebody winds up unconscious on the floor?

And it all happened while he was watching football — the very situation in which the National Organization of Women has warned us that the risk of domestic violence is the greatest.

Usually the stories that battered spouses tell to protect their abusers are just sad. But the president's excuse was more than sad — it was a pathetic cry for help.

Somewhere, in his unconsciousness, he must have known that if he just claimed he'd walked into a door, people would believe him. So he came up with the thing about jabbing a pretzel into a vagus nerve and passing out. I put it to you, could George W. Bush even find a vagus nerve — even with a flashlight and a copy of *Grey's Anatomy* to steer by? Could



you? What could be more of a tip-off that something was desperately wrong in the Bush household than this obviously trumped-up explanation?

Then, the next day he bravely tried to joke the whole thing off — while giving a speech about how the focus of his administration is to make sure “we never get hit again.” What is he trying to tell us here?

What other indignities is he being subjected to? Does Laura belittle him in private? Does she threaten to leave? Does she tell him that he’d never be able to make it on his own? Is he forced to submit to nights of ritual humiliation to satisfy the twisted lust of this so-called “first lady”?

Why, finally, hasn’t a caring community risen up and demanded that this violence against presidents stop?

— William Merritt

### *Another quality Acme product* —

I think it was a great relief to everyone that the last terrorist attempt was so horrendously botched. It is reassuring to think that the FBI roundups have left al Qaeda playing with its third string. I still chuckle every time I think of Richard Reid trying to light a fuse in his shoes. It reminds me of a *Roadrunner* cartoon. I imagine the exploding sneakers might have even been manufactured by Acme. A fitting punishment for the crime would be for the Pentagon to construct a working pair, stand Reid out in the middle of an open field, and send him on to his 72 virgins, marked “express.”

— Tim Slagle

### *It ain’t over till the fat lady blows up* —

The fight against terrorism got a little squirrelly in Switzerland in December. Vigilant Swiss police pulled a dawn raid on the five-star hotel room of famed French conductor Pierre Boulez, dragged him out of bed, confiscated his passport and questioned him for three hours. Why did they target the 75-year-old musician, widely viewed as the world’s top interpreter of Igor Stravinsky’s music? Well, back in the 1960s Boulez, always a self-conscious controversialist and pot-stirrer, told an interviewer that opera houses should be blown up as relics of a dead art that deserved to die. Somehow, Swiss

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**The War on Terrorism (Part I) • Durk Pearson, Richard Sanders, David Friedman, R.W. Bradford, and Fred L. Smith Jr.** discuss what will happen to our civil liberties in light of the recent terrorist attacks. (audio: A509; video: V509)

**The War on Terrorism (Part II) • Douglas Casey, Jeff Riggerbach, Randal O'Toole, Alan Bock, and R.W. Bradford** ask how terrorism will change our lives; for the better or for the worse. (audio: A510; video: V510)

reform that will end terrorism in America forever. (audio: A508; video: V508)

**Central Planning on Main Street • Randal O'Toole** makes the case against the cult of "smart growth" — and demolishes the plan to cram the world's population into an area the size of Kentucky. (audio: A511; video: V511)

**How Libertarianism Must Change to Succeed • R.W. Bradford** looks over the Libertarian Party's successes and failures and comes to a surprising conclusion: It's time for the LP to give itself a chance. (audio: A512; video: V512)

**Grass-roots Organizing for Liberty • Randal O'Toole** asks, Why has environmental activism been a rousing success and libertarian activism an unrelenting failure? (audio: A513; video: V513)

**A Short Introduction to Libertarian Anthropology • William Merritt** takes a hilarious look at differences between the sexes and how they got that way. (audio: A514; video: V514)

**Abandon the LP? • Bruce Ramsey and R.W. Bradford** discuss whether the Libertarian Party has failed in its mission — or whether that mission hasn't even been tried. (audio: A515; video: V515)

**Law in Cyberspace • David Friedman** explores how anonymity on the Internet can actually lead to a world of nonjudicial justice. (audio: A516; video: V516)

**Kicking the FDA's Ass • Durk Pearson and Sandy Shaw** recall their success over the Food and Drug Administration, and document the

state's continued refusal to comply with their landmark legal victory. (audio: A517; video: V517)

**Stalking Garet Garet • Bruce Ramsey** paints a picture of a paleo-libertarian from the *Saturday Evening Post* and his battle against the New Deal. (audio: A518; video: V518)

**The Comedy of Tim Slagle • Tim Slagle** takes on everything from vegetarians to the homeless in his classic comedy routine. (audio: A519; video: V519)

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police got the notion that this 35-year-old comment made him a potential terrorist threat.

— Alan Bock

## Happy New Year. Welcome to East Germany

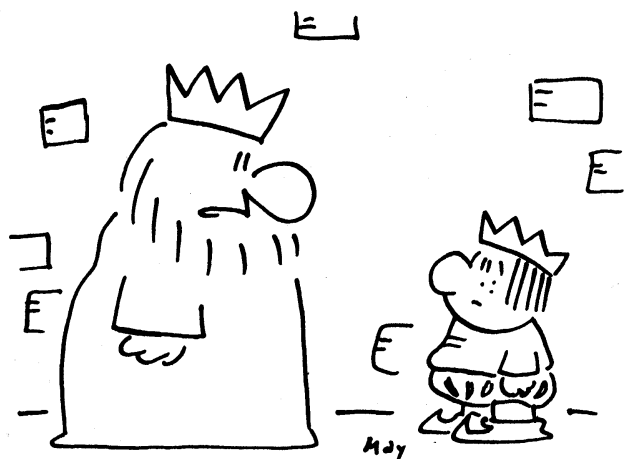
— On New Year's Eve I went to a party at a friend's house where I met a very nice woman that had just moved to this country from Germany. I asked her if she was from the East or the West — she said, with what seemed a thankful expression, that she was from the West. She said she had visited East Germany when she was a child and it scared her because everywhere there were men with machine guns and she did not understand what they were needed for.

I had flown home from Tampa, Fla., the day before, having spent Christmas with my parents. I had the exact same feelings about all the men with machine guns at the Tampa airport as the German lady had about the armed soldiers in the East. Why were they needed? Were they really expecting a frontal assault? They certainly wouldn't deter terrorists — if anything they would just increase the satisfaction terrorists would take from the success of their sneaky methodology. No, the men with machine guns were not there to discourage terrorists or to protect us. A machine gun in an airline terminal makes about as much sense as a fuel-air bomb in civilian-occupied theater of war. The men with guns at the airport were there for the sole purpose of getting the American people used to identity checks and interstate border crossings. That these efforts are succeeding is even more depressing than the success of the terrorists.

— Paul Rako

**Cataclysm, perpetually looming** — It snowed in Atlanta, and global warming alarmists are at it again. It doesn't matter whether it's warm or cold, dry or wet, stormy or calm; every severe weather event is now taken as proof of impending doom. The only way to disprove the environmental cataclysts would be if the weather was perfectly average for a year. On second thought, maybe not. That would only give them more ammunition as they raise the alarming question, "When has the weather ever been so predictable?"

Meanwhile, an article in the respected journal *Science* reports that the Antarctic ice cap is growing *thicker*. *The Wall*



"You've got it easy, Son — I had to seize power!"

*Street Journal* reported that "researchers said that if [these] data don't represent a brief fluctuation, they could shake assumptions on global warming"; i.e., the cataclysts will return to their claim that human enterprise is causing a global cooling.

— Tim Slagle

**The genius of John Walker** — Given the evident failure of American intelligence agencies to prevent the kamikaze attacks of Sept. 11, I was surprised that the chiefs of the FBI and CIA didn't submit their resignations the following day and even more surprised that President Bush soon afterwards expressed his support for the current administrations of those agencies.

Now I'm alarmed that the only Arab to be indicted so far was arrested before Sept. 11, implicitly discrediting the cases against the hundreds of purported terrorists and friends of terrorists arrested and held, exempt from legal niceties, after the attacks. Putting only him on trial makes me skeptical about the others.

I'm also alarmed at all the attention given the young man from Marin County who was captured fighting with the Taliban. How was a Hot Tub Prince able to join an organization that apparently resisted infiltration by intelligent, well-paid, and well-educated American intelligence operatives?

— Richard Kostelanetz

**Happier, not safer** — The lines-at-airports camera shot has become a staple of news programs, and most Americans seem to know what's expected of them when somebody shoves a microphone in their face: "Yes, it's time-consuming, but if it makes flying safer, anything for security." It's approaching the player on a winning sports team who says "We knew we would have to give 110% today" as an American cliché. Just once, I'd like to hear somebody say, "It's damned inconvenient, and I don't think it makes flying one iota safer," which has the added attraction of happening to be true.

— Alan W. Bock

**Foiled again!** — Airport lines are getting longer all the time, as incompetent federal bureaucrats double the security they couldn't provide in the first place. I can make a suggestion to shorten the lines just a little bit, stop asking those two stupid questions? All 19 Sept. 11 terrorists answered both questions, and it didn't trick any of them. I can't believe anybody really thought they might:

"Did anyone give you anything to bring on board?"

"Well, Allah gave to me this boxcut . . . Umm, I mean, no."

— Tim Slagle

**Remember Kennesaw Mountain** — Kennesaw Mountain sticks out of the rolling piedmont of North Georgia like the preposterously vertical subject of some romantic Chinese watercolor. It is so steep that, when I was a kid, I used to wonder whether anybody had ever climbed all the way to the top. But, of course, somebody had. On June 27, 1864, a good part of the Army of the Tennessee climbed up there, hoping Sherman would try to root them out.

Sam Watkins wrote about what happened in his memoir, *Company Aitch*. What he said was — I'm paraphrasing here — I don't have the book in front of me, but it's a good paraphrase because Sam used the kind of phrases that stick in

your mind: *Most veterans will tell you they don't know whether they killed anybody. But nobody who was on Kennesaw Mountain can say that. It was load and shoot. Load and shoot. Three. Four. Five dozen apiece.*

The men who tried to get by Company H that morning did something I never heard about in any other battle anywhere. They wrote their names on pieces of paper and pinned them to the backs of their tunics so their bodies could be identified.

They were right to do that. Not one of them made it to the top. And some 3,000 never came back down, about the same number of Americans as those who died in the attacks of Sept. 11, forgotten, now, in a minor battle of a single campaign six major wars ago.

As a Southern boy, I have a dispute as to what that fight was about, but I know this: Those guys thought freedom had a lot to do with why they were trying to get past Sam Watkins and Company H that day. And they went up that mountain, knowing they would not be shot in the back, so that people they could never imagine could live in freedom.

We do not honor those men, nor the million or so others over the past 225 years who died in defense of our freedoms, by so easily and willingly giving over the fruits of what they earned for the hope of some incremental increase in our own security.

— William Merritt

***It's good, but is it believable?*** — Aristotle said that there are certain things you shouldn't put into a work of imaginative literature, because people won't believe them, even if they're historically true. People will accept a plausible lie before they'll accept a flamboyantly ridiculous truth.

Aristotle's theory came irresistibly to my mind last night, when I watched a television documentary on the life of Sept. 11 terrorist Mohammed Atta. The guy was just too good to be true. The pinched little worried face that would have been handsome, if it hadn't spent most of its time peering out at the world — or at least the wicked Western camera — with hatred and envy. The moronic resentment against America, because Atta had grown up in a country (Egypt) where there weren't a lot of easy job opportunities for people like him, as there were in America. The furious contempt for the cheapness of American culture, which was presumably a main topic of conversation for Atta and his fellow terrorists during their last night on earth, which they chose to spend sleeping in a Comfort Inn, dining at a Pizza Hut, and visiting a nearby Wal-Mart. It's all a perfect, and perfectly incredible, portrait of the evil that is envy and arrogance. But if you put it into a satirical novel, it just wouldn't work. It would be too cartoonish. Yet that's what Mohammed Atta was. He was a cartoon.

I don't need to tell you that the same thing could be said about Taliban Johnny Walker Lindh, except that this time most of the color and detail on his section of the funny pages would come from the true-life stories of modern liberal America and its literally incredible self-conceptions. The allegedly brilliant, caring, and above all "nice" parents, who were brilliant, caring, and nice enough to send their 17-year-old son for a year's excursion to (you'll never guess! and what a perfect choice!) the Republic of Yemen, so that he

could learn to read the Quran in circumstances more congenial to his newly adopted fanaticism. The broken English that the "kid," the "youngster," the "nice young man" affected, even after he was discovered to be a homegrown product of the U.S.A., as if he was entitled by birth to continue telling any kind of stupid, obvious lie he wanted, whether anybody caught on to him or not. The furious umbrage shown by the good citizens of Marin County, "perhaps the wealthiest and best-educated county in America," when it was suggested that the atmosphere of the place might conceivably have had something to do with the way that T.J. turned out. And, best of all, the liberal papers and pundits that worked themselves

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*Mohammed Atta was a perfect, and perfectly cartoon-like, portrait of the evil that is envy and arrogance.*

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into a froth about the possibility that this sweet young child could actually be punished for adhering to the enemies of his country, and giving them aid and comfort. Where, pray, could the constitutionally required two witnesses to his overt act — fighting in an enemy army — possibly be found? Pundit-by-the-grace-of-God Eleanor Clift suggested that Johnny's ill-fated journey to spiritual discovery qualifies him less for a prison cell than for employment in the CIA — since he *knows* so much, you understand. Comes from such a good family, I presume.

Well, those are just a few things you couldn't work into a novel, not without being laughed to scorn. And I suppose you've noticed that whenever Osama bin Laden wants to denounce the Satanic nature of the West, he wears some Western military fatigues over his nightgown. A nice touch, a very nice touch. But you can't use it in fiction. — Stephen Cox

***Beware of rogue pretzels*** — Savagery took a new twist in January when the Leader of the Free World



"It's time I told you, Mark. Here at MicroSec, were all temps."

was almost laid low by a rogue pretzel. During the course of a football play-off game Mr. Bush apparently became so excited that he forgot to chew before swallowing. Irregularly shaped pretzel pieces bounced around his throat like the fractured syllables of an Oval Office speech. The result was temporary loss of consciousness (but how could anyone tell?) and a nasty fall.

Fortunately, the president pulled through, but the event reminds us that the War against Terrorism has been only half-waged. It's not enough to fend off radical Islam; we must also meet the threat of unregulated gluten. According to highly placed sources, Attorney General John Ashcroft is already drawing up legislation to allow the peremptory seizure and indefinite sequestration of suspicious snack products. And none too soon: The Surgeon General reports that some 90% of people who start off eating pretzels eventually turn to peanuts, a product that has sent many more people to the morgue than anthrax spores.

It was a close call, but once again our country has pulled through — pulled through and, perhaps, learned a hard but valuable lesson: Guns don't kill people; pretzels kill people!

— Loren Lomasky

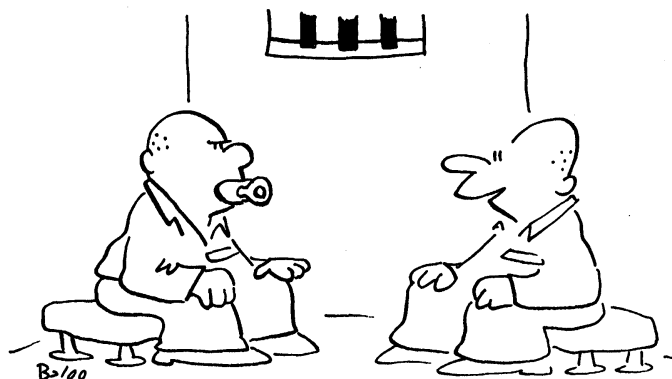
### *The trendy progressivism of the Taliban*

— There's been a push lately to compare the Taliban to the right wing of American politics, and I can see the logic of the view. But the left wing has a lot in common with the Taliban as well. The Taliban destroyed the 1,600-year-old pair of ten-story Buddhas carved into a mountainside. In this country, it is the leftists who endeavor to remove all religious symbols from public places. The Taliban forced women to cover up, and in this country, it's the feminists who complain about things like the *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issue. Pork was not allowed to be served anywhere under the Taliban, and there is a faction of the left that would do the same here, with all meat products. And I would bet that leftists also tend to grow beards at a greater rate than the general population.

— Tim Slagle

### *Friendly neighborhood utopian wackos*

— I grew up in a big city where political campaigns mean glitzy TV ads and junk-mail fundraisers, so I was a bit surprised to find a candidate for city council knocking on my door soliciting my vote. Politics is a bit primitive in the small town I've moved to; candidates here still actually talk to



"How long are you in for, Babyface?"

ordinary people.

That struck me as quaint, so I took the time to chat and look over the guy's campaign literature. Nothing odd: retired doctor running for city council, had been on some committees, the usual. And he seemed nice enough.

I ended up missing that election, and thought nothing of it until I read months later that the city council had gone berserk, proposing a litany of insane socialist programs like printing its own currency and — get this — banning automobiles completely from the downtown business district. And guess who's behind it? Mr. Neighborhood himself.

So much for truth in advertising. And nice gestures. But thinking back, I should've seen at least some of his wacko proposals coming. After all, the guy was riding a bike in the rain, wearing a suit, when he stopped in to chat.

— Andrew Chamberlain

***The Israelization of America*** — You feel a sense of relief when you leave behind a country caught in that never-ending cycle of violence, with all its consequences: The threat of terrorism in large urban centers by angry Arabs whose sources of hate remain unclear. The rise in nationalist hysteria and intolerance against those who don't share that feeling. Attempts by the government to restrict civil liberties in the name of national security. Growing power of the national government and the expansion of the national security state, including the worshipping of the military. Discrimination of the Arab citizens of the state (again, in the name of national security). The continuing use of military power against an Arab people so as to force them to replace their leader. The sense that the country is heading into a wide and costly war with the Arab and Muslim worlds, which might include the use of nuclear military power. Yes, that's right. I was leaving Israel behind, and a few days before Sept. 11, returned to the United States, a country that is supposed to be so, so different. Many Israelis have been frustrated over the lack of progress in Israel in the direction of "Americanization." Instead, America seems to have been Israelized in the last four months. Now, go figure that out ...

— Leon Hadar

***Defining terrorism down*** — One should probably not be shocked, of course, but it is still worth noting that the Knight-Ridder newspapers have documented the fact that the Justice Department has for years inflated its terrorist-related arrest-and-conviction statistics — and has continued to do so since Sept. 11. Cases cited as terrorism-related in reports to Congress have included erratic behavior by people with mental illnesses, passengers getting drunk on airplanes, and convicts rioting to get better food. Apparently even before Sept. 11 the Justice Department found it easier to squeeze more money out of Congress by creating the impression that terrorism was a huge problem. Hmmmm. If we could only get the department to view political corruption as terrorism that undermines credibility and support for the powers that be, it might do some good for a change.

— Alan Bock

***My madrassa*** — I was thinking recently about the long-term threat posed by the possibly millions of Muslim boys educated in madrassas (religious schools) in Pakistan,

Egypt, Palestine, and other Muslim countries. In the West, we consider these kids to be programmed like robots to pursue a narrow, dogmatic system. And they probably are. How much sense does it make to commit to memory a book written by a 7th-century bandit who claimed to hear voices from on high and to be able to commute nightly from Mecca to Jerusalem? Well, probably about as much sense as reading any other book of divine revelation. Better they should memorize a translation of Harry Potter.

Then it occurred to me that I been through something quite similar, if somewhat less extreme.

I attended St. Barnabas grade school in Chicago, where the nuns (sporting the outlandish penguin outfits of the era) drilled us mercilessly in the Baltimore Catechism. We parroted rote on all manner of preposterous abstractions like the Immaculate Conception, Original Sin, the Ascension, and the Trinity. We logged hundreds of hours attending Holy Mass, spoken in a language we didn't understand. We were often sent home with a graven image of the Virgin Mother, before which we were supposed to say the rosary, roping our families into joining us (Remember, kids: The family that prays together, stays together). We spent hours of valuable classroom time in church making the Stations of the Cross. In eighth grade, we spent much of May — "the Month of Mary" — singing interminable hymns to the latter-day reincarnation of Isis. By then I realized that our time would have been much better spent dancing around a maypole in a meadow with maidens, as my ancestors did before St. Patrick convinced them to join a puritanical cannibalistic death cult.

We were taught that anyone who didn't adhere to the True Faith would, regrettably but entirely justifiably, burn in hell for eternity. Our consciences, and senses of horror, were assuaged with the thought that there was a limbo for the unconverted righteous — but only those who, through no fault of their own, had never been exposed to The Message. We were regaled with innumerable tales of saints who, after a lifetime of severe asceticism (often involving self-mutilation), were granted the most gruesome martyrdom as a reward, in much the way, I would later discover, the Church often treated troublesome nonbelievers as a punishment. The Crusades were portrayed to us as a glorious endeavor to regain the Holy Land from the infidels who'd stolen it, rather than as a cynical adventure to get shiftless thugs to do to Muslims (and their fellow Christians of Byzantium) what they'd be executed for doing to fellow Christians at home.

Although I was always one to question authority, whisper in class, and make jokes about anything, I was subverted by all this for much longer than I care to admit. If called upon to engage in a jihad . . . er, crusade, I would almost certainly have joined my less introspective classmates in doing what I believed was in defense of faith and fatherland.

Fortunately, however, I was living in America, a secular society rife with a myriad of influences from which a thoughtful and independent person may choose. And so I became an apostate.

As socially liberal as it is, however, America presents the paradox of also being the most traditionally religious country in the West. I say traditionally religious, because there are

numerous religions out there that don't worship any God you find in a church, synagogue, or mosque. Communism, for instance, which at its zenith claimed close to 2 billion believers, was never more than a secular religion manufactured from a hodgepodge of nitwit opinion, irrationality, and psuedo-science. The most popular religion in today's Europe, and probably the most rapidly growing one in America, centers not on a successful tribal war god from the Mideast, or a Messiah, but a trinity composed of The Earth, The Environment, and The Ecology. Greenism, with dogmas and rituals as goofy as any, is well on its way to replacing Communism, and is making serious inroads on the older monotheistic religions from the Mideast.

That brings us back to the madrassas and Islam. I'm confident these things will eventually wind up on the scrap heap of history, although perhaps not for the reasons I'd prefer. But you've got to take what you can get. In the meantime, most Muslim societies are far poorer and far less open to outside influence than America was in the '50s and '60s, when I was growing up. I'm forced to conclude that the Forever War with the Muslims, terrorism, or whatever, now that it's started, has a long way to run. I just have to imagine me and my friends back at St. Barnabas, and multiply the fervor by ten. A scary thought.

— Douglas Casey

**Mandatory labeling** — Author Shelby Steele recently demonstrated one way — and a reasonably polite way — of breaking through the media's tendency to label only one side of the political debate. He had written a piece on John Walker, the "American Talib" and was discussing it on Aaron Brown's "NewsNight" on CNN. Here's how Aaron Brown introduced the discussion:

"Some conservatives jumped on Walker, saying he is a product of cultural liberalism — the California kind — helping to turn an impressionable kid against his own country. Joining us from Salinas, Calif., one of those conservatives, Shelby Steele of the Hoover Institution. Mr. Steele wrote a provocative article the other day in *The Wall Street Journal* — a column in the *Journal*. And here in New York, a columnist who thinks Mr. Steele is making an awfully broad generalization: Richard Cohen of the *Washington Post*. It's nice to

## Coming in Liberty

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have both of you here."

Steele, who has often objected to being called a conservative just because he has questioned affirmative action and other race-oriented policies, jumped in thusly:

"First of all, let me interrupt you just a minute. Is Richard Cohen a liberal?"

Brown: "Yeah, Richard Cohen's a liberal. I think he would say that, wouldn't he?"

Cohen: "On this issue."

Brown: "Okay. Everyone is now branded, I guess."

Steele: "Great, if I'm going to be, everybody's going to be."

Note that Cohen, who is an opinion columnist, not a news side journalist, would only cop to being a liberal "on this issue." Like most journalists, he probably doesn't view himself as being "liberal" or "on the left" but simply a common-sense analyst who just happens to agree with most of the people with whom he comes in contact on a daily basis. I don't mind people having opinions — I'm a daily journalist who has plenty. I just wish they'd own up to it more often.

— Alan W. Bock

**Dis guy gotta be nuts** — I guess Mike Bloomberg learned from New Jersey's junior senator Jon Corzine that an underdog who spends a lot of his own

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*In total, Bloomberg must have spent \$100 million on his NYC campaign — a hellavan investment for a bum job.*

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dough has a good chance of winning a free election. But rather than desire the cushy job of a U.S. senator, which can be kept into one's nineties, Bloomberg wanted to be New York City's mayor, which is a far more consuming, inevitably briefer position, now limited by law to two terms. A billionaire with a successful company, which Bloomberg created mostly by himself in his own name, he wanted to head another, more problematic company with an alien moniker. Less likely to survive a Democratic primary, he became a Republican and won in spite of minimal support from his chosen party. On the face, most would agree, this guy Mike gotta be nuts. Even though I normally support Libertarians, I voted for Bloomberg, not on the Republican line, which would have been unthinkable for me, but on a



"We need to invent a better method — spontaneous combustion is just too iffy."

third-party line intended solely for Mike to get votes from people with an allergy similar to mine.

Bloomberg spent a lot more money than Corzine did — not only during the year of the election but, more crucially perhaps, before it, circulating his name into every available corner of the city.

Before me is a rich black T-shirt distributed free two springs ago at a free installation at the 26th Street Armory by the Russian émigré artist Ilya Kabakov and his wife Emilia. On the front the shirt has in white letters the artists' names and the title of their art work in both English and Russian. On the back, also in white, it reads: "sponsored by Bloomberg 2000." I picked up a few of these high-quality T-shirts on the last day of the exhibition and when I wore them often during the next two summers, little did I think that I was unwittingly advertising the next mayor on my back. So did many others, for Bloomberg had strategically implanted his name on many other city projects as well. Not for nothing was Bloomberg's appointment as deputy mayor the woman who supervised his pre-election philanthropy. In total, he must have spent nearly 100 million bucks, which is a hellavan investment for a bum job.

Now that you've won the prize, Mike, what are you gonna do with it? Damned if I know. During his opening week, he distanced himself from his predecessor, Rudy Giuliani, by postponing Rudy's concluding project to arrange for the construction of more sports stadia in the city. As he established his own empire largely without government largess, he's apparently not enthusiastic about corporate beggars.

What's next? More challenges from those accustomed to getting their way with the city government — not just the owners of sports teams but the unions and the real-estate developers. My sense is that as a veteran businessman he knows how to deny supplicants, no matter how vehemently they badmouth him. If he does nothing else, especially in bad fiscal times, such resistance might rank him a success. On the other hand, whatever initiatives he will take as mayor I cannot predict now, but I think they will probably surprise everyone.

So far I see few signs that he's running for re-election, which is something every winner wants as soon as he takes charge. Nor has he initiated policies that would obviously benefit his own company, from which he refused to divest his holdings. All this reluctance to be a normal politician leads me to believe that perhaps the most serious danger of a Bloomberg administration is simply that Mike might quit and go back to running his eponymous biz, which has to give him fewer headaches, simply washing his investment away. Mark my words.

— Richard Kostelanetz

**The wrong target** — During the Gulf War there was a lot of chatter about how, if only we paid more attention to Iraqi culture, we wouldn't be bombing an entire ancient civilization back to the Stone Age just for the sake of our wasteful dependence on foreign oil.

It seemed to me that people who said things like that had it backwards; that Saddam Hussein would have been better off paying more attention to our culture. Fat, dumb, and happy as we may have been in 1991, our armed forces were at the beck and call of a commander in chief who had almost



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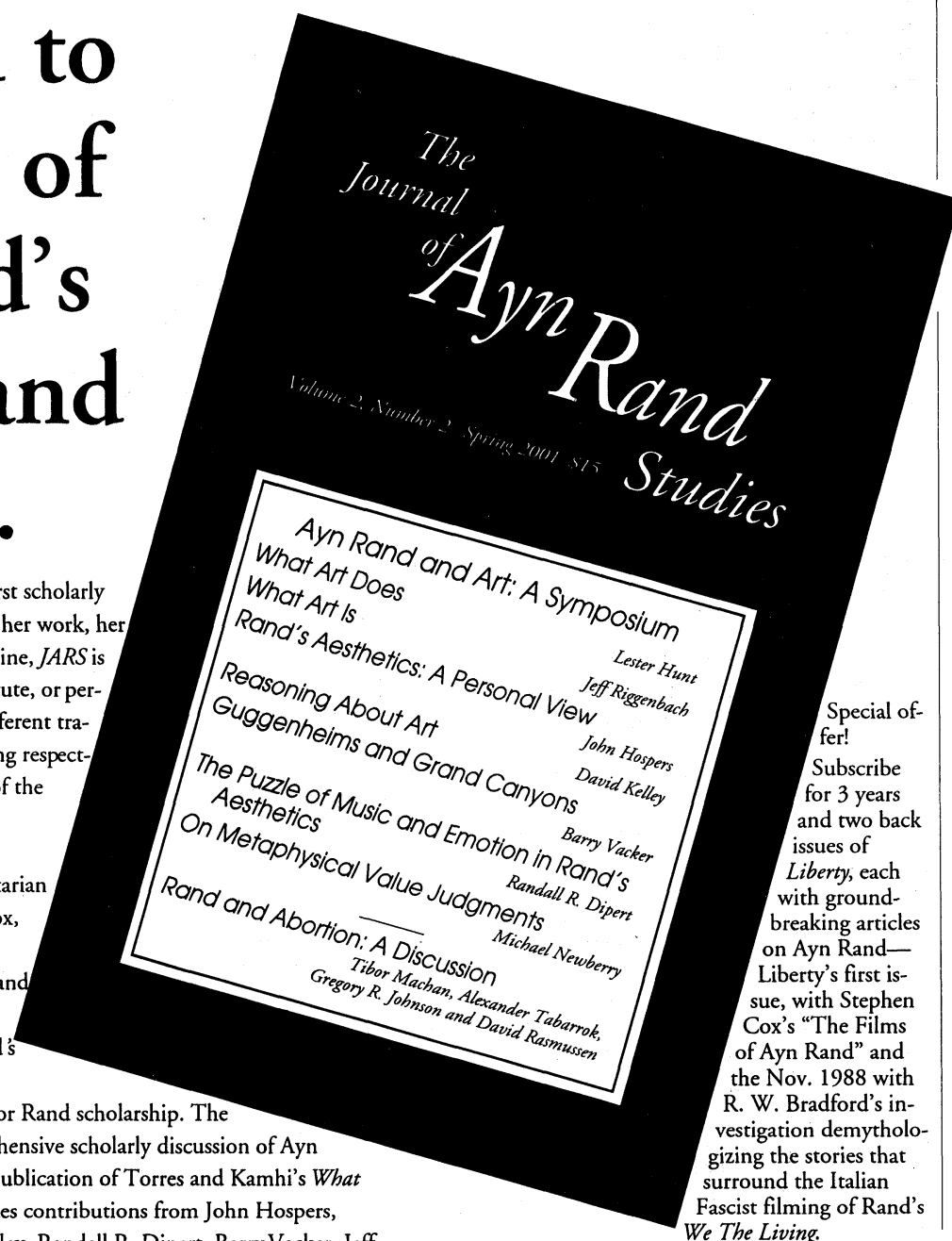
*JARS* is edited by R. W. Bradford, libertarian writer and publisher of *Liberty*; Stephen Cox, author of many books and articles on Ayn Rand, Isabel Paterson, and libertarianism; and Chris Matthew Sciabarra, characterized by *The Chronicle of Higher Education* as "Rand's most vocal champion in academe."

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gotten himself personally killed in a war that wouldn't have even happened if the world had stood up to a bully when he first got rolling. What possible lesson did Saddam think Mr. Bush had learned? Which brings us to Afghanistan.

Had bin Laden and his hangers-on known the slightest thing about America, they would have realized that New York City is the beating heart of the professional liberal establishment and that attacking anything on Manhattan would bring elite opinion-makers together with redneck yahooks in a common cry to tear al Qaeda a new asshole.

But he didn't see that simple fact and, when it came, Sept. 11 wasn't Pearl Harbor. It was the My Lai massacre of the Peace Movement.

Things could have easily gone the other way. All bin Laden had to do was take out the National Rodeo Championships in Las Vegas, and the liberal establishment would have waxed all superior and multicultural and started showing off their pet terrorists at fancy cocktail parties, and the biblical plague that rained down would have been upon American heads in an endless sanctimony about why the whole thing was our own fault, and how speciesist rodeos are, and all bin Laden did was send us a much-needed wake-up call, and at least he doesn't eat pigs, and we need to rethink this whole thing about how we treat animals and, besides, violence never solves anything.

I think the problem was too much formal education. Even a good Quranic education is too narrowing. Spend most of your days memorizing the words of the Prophet, and the rest praying, and you miss some of the big-ticket stuff, like understanding your enemy. And, the first thing you know, you attack the wrong target and bring down the wrath of Satan himself upon your head.

— William Merritt

**All-purpose flour** — A lot of people believe that an idle Congress is a good Congress. For the first time in history, they have an unique opportunity: Anybody with a stack of stamped envelopes, a five-pound bag of flour, and a willingness to sit in a federal prison now has the power to close down the Hill for as long as he likes.

— Tim Slagle

## ***The most dangerous man in the world***

— The Taliban waged a brutal war on drugs — executing users as well as traffickers, eventually ridding the country of the heroin trade. They held and practiced deep fundamentalist religious convictions. They believed all their problems would be solved if everyone just went to the same church. They supported prayer in schools. They believed women were best off barefoot and pregnant in the kitchen. They instituted a brutal crackdown on crime that instilled so much abject fear in their subjects that the streets of Kabul became as safe as the streets of Singapore. (Did they learn this from Rudy Giuliani or he from them?)

Who's the most dangerous man in the world today? I can tell you one thing for sure — it's not Osama bin Laden. That pathetic asshole is scruffling around the rocks and bushes in the high desert, freezing his ass off.

Soon he will be brought down by the braying staghounds of the mightiest war machine in history. Great plan, Mr. Oman. Crash loaded passenger planes into office buildings — yeah, that will really get world opinion on the side of your

warped and perverted view of Islam. Osama is just another run-of-the-mill nutcase.

I wonder if John Ashcroft doesn't harbor a tinge of regret that he has helped wage a war on a group with the exact same values as his. At least he can learn from their methods as he institutes his jihad against civil liberties here in America. That skin color and theological phraseology can make bitter enemies of identical spirits attests to the shallowness of both the Taliban's and Mr. Ashcroft's ideologies.

I've heard it said that "the liberal is afraid of every known phenomenon" I think it can also be said that "the conservative is afraid of every unknown phenomenon." Since unknown phenomena are infinite, conservatives are more dangerous. Liberals may be fools, but conservatives can be downright scary. Conservatives are busily convincing the American people that some terrorist hobgoblin lurks behind every bush. If you don't believe this just read *The Wall Street Journal's* Peggy Noonan raving about 25-year-old "Arab men" and snitching off her neighbors to the FBI because they take pictures of national landmarks (it must be that the shutters are clicked by brown fingers that makes this so insidious in her mind). See <http://opinionjournal.com/columnists/pnoonan/?id=95001349> if you think I exaggerate.

Thankfully, the American people, as always, show far more sense than the pundits on the left or right. The economy edges forward, our confidence returns and the feeble bleating of those of us more worried about the excess of our own government than any foreign threat are at least not ridiculed, even if not entirely heeded. That Osama bin Laden and John Ashcroft will both visit upon us their particular flavors of state-sponsored terrorism makes for a bleak few years, but this too shall pass and we can get on with our lives and loves and hopefully make some small progress for the cause of liberty in the new millennium.

— Paul Rako

**The trouble with Islam** — Despite what Mr. bin Laden may feel on the subject, Muslims don't have anything special on us in the grudge department. America has enemies everywhere.

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Vietnamese and Cubans have every right to hate us. Along with Serbs and Chinese. As do, I'm sure, plenty of Germans, Japanese, Russians, Latin Americans, Caribbeans, and Sikhs. I bet lots of sub-Saharan Africans don't wish us very well, either. So why is it just Muslims who try to purchase half-way tickets to Miami?

It's because there is something wrong with Islam, that's why. Two somethings, actually.

In the first place, Muslims pray too much.

Anybody who makes a point of getting up before dawn to take a compass bearing on which way to aim a rug so he can say his prayers, and does the same thing four more times before turning in for the night, and then starts all over again the next day, that person is truly righteous, clean living, and follows the tenets of his faith. But he is not a child of the Enlightenment.

And the only thing our poor species has ever done throughout the entire history of the world that's worth a jar of warm spit is the Enlightenment. Before the Enlightenment, it was all wars and princes and priests and people getting jerked around by bandits, famine, pestilence, and their own, rotten governments.

After the Enlightenment, well . . . afterwards there are still plenty of wars and preachers and princes, and lots of bandits and hunger and disease, and way too many rotten governments, but sometimes there's something else. Sometimes there's real change. Sometimes, now, we find a medicine that actually makes people better. Or build a machine that works. Or see nature as she really is. But none of that comes through faith.

A thousand generations of faith never looked into a spiral nebula, nor weighed a single atom of gold, nor saw the face of Earth from the moon. And all the faithful all the world over never listened to the background hum of creation, nor learned how to make economics into something other than a zero-sum game, nor discovered how to limit the power of kings.

And all of that, every bit of it, was earned painful step by painful step through a rigorous and unrelenting ethic of skepticism of endless suspicion of everything we are told and most of what we see; through unrelenting distrust of inherited knowledge, through constant doubt in place of belief. And, for every illusion we cast off, the reward was a deeper insight into the mind of God. And whatever else you say about somebody who prays five times a day, he is a man of faith, not skepticism.

A community of faith that stretches from Tangiers to Mindanao is bound to be impoverished, superstitious, and bitter of the success of others. But whether that community will breed up a generation of mass murderers requires more than naked religious conviction. It requires something that only Islam of all the world religions provides: a swarm of rich guys hogging the chicks.

For every extra woman a rich man locks behind his private walls, there is a young buck somewhere with no hope of ever finding a bride, or siring a son to carry on his name; someone whose only prospect of a normal life is to cash in on the 72 imaginary virgins rubbing their legs together in Paradise in hopes he will join them after the next B-52 raid.

You can see it in the papers, the stories from Kabul and

Kandahar of Northern Alliance fighters chatting with Marines and Rangers. When they ask about America, it's not to find out about video games or rock concerts or where you buy blue jeans. It's, how do you meet girls? And, what happens on a date?

It's not economic divisions between nations, nor cultural affronts, or anything else we as Americans have participated in, that inspires these guys to go up in a ball of flame along with a thousand innocents. It's the genuine human desire for the wife and family that's been kept from them, all mixed up with prayer and faith and other spooky nonsense.

— William Merritt

***Sex after marriage in New York*** — The most heartening thing about Mayor Rudolph Giuliani giving the oath of office to his successor Michael Bloomberg in Times Square on New Year's Eve was that two middle-aged divorced men appeared on national television with handsome women to whom they were not legally married. If any pundits commented critically on this fact, I didn't hear them. Such easy acceptance of public figures' sex after divorce wouldn't have been possible two decades ago, perhaps one. Recalling Paul Goodman's objections to nonsacramental marriage — that the state shouldn't be in the business of licensing sex — I wanted to add: especially for people who weren't virgins.

— Richard Kostelanetz

***An incredible vogue*** — I am deliberately using the word in its sloppy, vogueish sense. It and similar words (incredibly, unbelievable/bly, and, on Spanish-language TV, *increíble, increíblemente*) are widely used nowadays as all-purpose intensifiers and all-purpose labels for extreme conditions, whether excellent or execrable. Such vogue words, like slang, spare the user from figuring out just what he means.

Occasionally, I suspect, the vogue word is more accurate than the user intended. A radio interviewer identified Cornel West as a member of Harvard's "incredibly praised" African-American studies department. He evidently meant "highly praised," but a literal interpretation could be that the praise heaped on the department is not worthy of belief. TV pitchmen have urged me to "hurry to take advantage of this incredible offer." Well, why should one take seriously an offer that is not even believable?

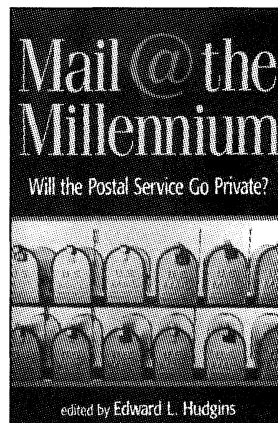
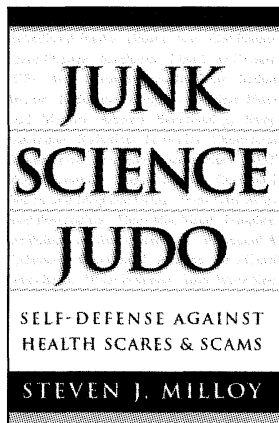
Let us laugh "incredible" and its ilk back into their narrow range of accurate applications.

— Leland B. Yeager

***No Zorro he*** — Among the larger disappointments to those of us who look for — sometimes stretch for — hopeful signs in the world has been Mexican President Vicente Fox. He did manage to break the 71-year stranglehold on power by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (don't you just love that name?) or PRI, but so far he has differed little from PRI presidents except in rhetoric. He came in talking about the importance of loosening the grip of the government on the economy to jump-start economic growth and promising to root out the corruption that permeates almost every corner of Mexican life. Instead he has raised taxes and done virtually nothing to reform the bureaucracy. He has raised important issues like regularizing immigration and even rethinking the drug war, but has done practically nothing

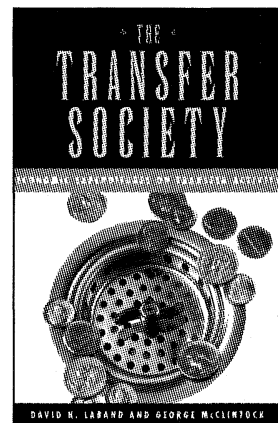
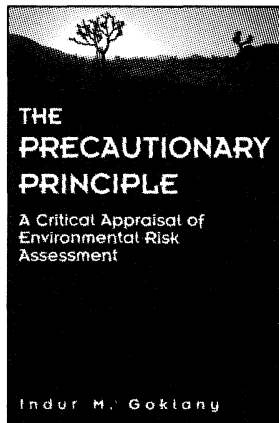
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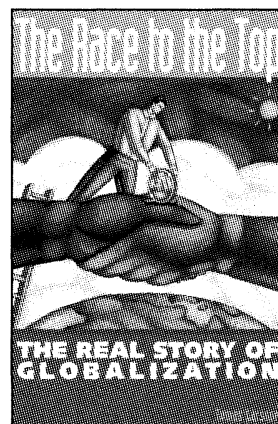
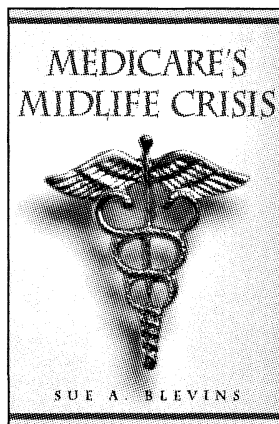
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about either except have well-publicized meetings with President Bush.

William Ratliff, a senior research fellow at the Hoover Institution, told me that he "keep[s] hearing about considerable quiet progress in lower levels of the bureaucracy." But Fox's recent promise to get really serious about corruption during his second year in office — accompanied by an acknowledgment that getting things done is harder than he had thought — looks to be aimed at petty corruption rather than the large-scale institutionalized corruption where the really big money is.

— Alan Bock

**A day that will live in infamy** — The Sept. 11 attacks naturally remind us of Pearl Harbor, and on Dec. 3 Robert Bartley, former editorial page editor of *The Wall Street Journal*, addressed the intelligence failures preceding the Japanese attack. In doing so, he alluded to the "wildly implausible" claim that FDR knew the assault was imminent but chose not to inform the Army and Navy commanders in Hawaii. Bartley calls this charge against FDR an old "chestnut" perpetuated only by lingering "anti-Roosevelt feelings" and the desire of some "partisans" to restore the reputations of commanders Walter Short and Husband Kimmel. I think he's all wet. Anti-Roosevelt feelings have nothing to do with my acceptance of the view that FDR and his top advisers blocked the Hawaii officers from receiving decoded warnings. Two books, one by John Toland and the other by Richard Stinnett, offer extensive circumstantial evidence, and the BBC has created a compelling documentary (based largely on Toland's book *Infamy*). Toland, respected as a historian of Europe (but pointedly ignored on this topic), has written three books on Japan and the war. In each one he came closer to the conclusion that FDR must have known the attack was coming, and finally he decided that no other interpretation fits the facts. Respected writers like Bartley and Dorothy Rabinowitz still dismiss the idea, but I have come across no sustained rebuttal.

In my view, Bartley (along with many others) has a blind spot. He just won't address the possibility that FDR might have done such a thing. Bartley's cavalier dismissal illuminates how the enigmas of history resist resolution. As long as those who experience newsworthy events are still alive, there is debate and disagreement. Reputations are at stake.

Someone is usually lying, but who? Often key players don't know; they just suspect, like the baffled cryptographer Laurance Safford who struggled for years to find out why his decoded messages did not get to the right people. Journalists struggle to find out the truth, but some relevant questions, such as whether FDR knew, are not even raised. Gen. George Marshall persuaded Thomas E. Dewey not to bring up the charges during the 1944 presidential campaign on the (probably correct) grounds that letting the Japanese know the codes were broken would hamper the war effort. Unless there is a "smoking gun" (like Monica Lewinsky's dress) these issues are rarely settled. After a while, those who know the truth die, and the task of discovery falls to the historian. The historian's advantage is that no one is any longer quite so eager to hide the truth. The disadvantage is that the trail of evidence has gone cold. Searching out and analyzing thousands of scraps of paper or microfilm or recordings or emails, the historian attempts to reconstruct from dry but tantalizing clues the flesh-and-blood moment of a rapidly distancing day. I venture that Toland and Stinnett have done that. From painstaking research they uncovered what only a select few knew in December, 1941, (and spent years covering up). But to succeed, the historian needs something else — a sympathetic audience, which Toland and Stinnett do not yet have. Their stories float in limbo, awaiting yet another generation, one that has no passion about these matters, but rather the curiosity of history buffs. Only then will Toland and Stinnett receive the recognition they are due.

— Jane S. Shaw

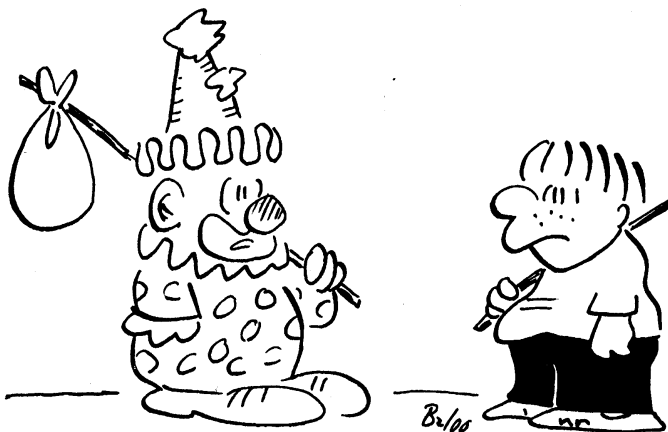
**Another day, another dollar** — In an interview on C-Span, a *New York Times* reporter named Jan Hoffman, the principal writer of the 200-word obits that continue to appear, noted in passing that none of the surviving friends and relatives talk about what their loved ones did at work, as though for all of them their time at the WTC wasn't as important to them as their lives outside. What a sad picture of pervasive wage-slave alienation that remark conveyed, I thought, suggesting that the WTC dead lost double, having been where they were, not for any love, but strictly for money.

— Richard Kostelanetz

**The benefits of burqas** — As Westerners, we have been much too judgmental about burqas; as if bagging up a nation's-worth of women has no purpose other than to perpetuate masculine prerogatives in a male-dominated society. But any custom that endures for hundreds of years in dozens of different places has got to serve some function. In the case of Muslim society, keeping women under wraps works toward the same ends as banning television served apartheid South Africa: It enhances contentment.

For starters, in a place where rich guys bogart all the chicks, hiding their booty under rolls of cloth is basic good manners, like the way rich Americans try not to be too ostentatious with whatever it is they do inside their walled compounds.

For the ordinary guy who somehow managed to glom onto one of the left-over chicks, universal burqaization eases the road to a long and contented marriage. Such a guy can spend 40 or 50 years looking forward to electric evenings of love with the most butt-ugly concoction of mustache hair,



"You are? Gee — I'm running away from the circus!"

greasy skin, and hippopotamus thighs ever plumped down upon this planet, with never a regret, even when the neighbor lady is a cuddly, flirtatious little dark-eyed houri of a Holly Hunter or a Mary Steenburgen under her cloth.

And it's not just in this life, either, that burqas make things easier. Paradise would be a poor place indeed if there weren't any distinction between those 72 virgins waiting up there for their martyrs, which probably has something to do with why burqas are divinely ordained, and not just an eccentric social custom.

Keeping women a mystery on earth gives St. Peter scope to sort through the opportunities later on, and save up the Daryl Hannahs and Sophia Lorens for the guys who take down whole plane-loads of innocents. As for the second-rate doofuses who blow themselves to pieces in the bomb lab before setting out for the kindergarten, well there's something for them, too: entire harem-loads of Madeline Albright and Janet Renos with nobody the wiser.

— William Merritt

### Who's hysterical now? —

John McGinnis writes in a letter to the editor (February) that "the word 'hysteria' derives from the ancient Greek word for womb, and that the ancients believed that hysteria was a distinctly feminine trait."

In a world in which the Taliban consists of all males, and male Afghans are shooting females in soccer stadiums for uncovering their heads, and in which Mohammed Atta and all of the enraged suicide bombers who dive-bombed planes into the World Trade Center towers were male, John McGinnis chooses to label as hysterical the angry emotional reaction of one female writer to all of this as female hysteria. A curious reaction indeed.

McGinnis may have forgotten that U.S. cold war policy for many years revolved around a plan referred to as M.A.D. — mutually assured destruction — and that Richard Nixon referred to the superiority of what he called "the madman theory." Certainly the architects of these planners were overwhelmingly male. The idea was to scare the hell out of one's opponents with rhetoric backed up by bombs as a

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deterrent to war. It worked because we were dealing with reasonable people, a condition that is absent from the culture of radical Islam.

I found it frightening that only a few hours after Sept. 11, an American general thought that his first message to Americans should be that "we don't want to be like them" — essentially the same politically correct and masochistic policy that had been enacted by the Clinton administration for the previous eight years, and the passive response that probably empowered and emboldened bin Laden. — Sarah McCarthy

**Standing up to a bully** — I've written in these pages before that the current inferno in Palestine began when Ariel Sharon marched with too many troops into the Old City of Jerusalem, purportedly to visit his normally vacant apartment. It was a provocation, to be sure, and the Palestinians fell for it, initiating a violent response. (Given his ulterior purposes, I wouldn't be surprised to learn that Sharon and his associates even paid some Palestinian kids to throw stones.)

By reviving the Intifada, the Palestinians prompted Israelis to vote for the party of the one man they felt capable of defending them — Gen. Sharon, otherwise retired. Indeed, he became prime minister. If Palestinians had simply let the Big Bully swagger through their town, he would have gotten fewer votes. Palestinian foolishness elected Ariel Sharon.

Even the Palestinian-American publicist Edward Said understood this cause and effect when he declared with typical convulsion: "The suicide bombers of Hamas and Islamic Jihad have of course been at work, as Sharon knew perfectly well they would be when, after a ten-day lull in the fighting in late November, he suddenly ordered the murder of the Hamas leader Mahmoud Abu Hanoud: an act designed to provoke Hamas into retaliation and thus allow the Israeli Army to resume the slaughter of Palestinians." Simply, without the suicide bombers Sharon would have no excuse for slaughter. Got it? Furthermore, for every Israeli killed, several Palestinians die. Statistics are brutally unequal. Another result of Sharon's election has been draconian policing that has devastated the Palestinian economy.

What to do? Palestinians seem to think that if they send into Israel yet more suicide bombers, they can undermine the Sharon regime. No go. Or that Israeli morale will crumble low enough to force its government to make greater concessions to Palestinian demands. Wrong again. They also apparently think that sending out such monumental self-fuckers, as I call them, can prompt intervention by sympathetic Arab nations. No go either, as Arab governments are not eager to get involved.

The truth is that the only people who can overthrow Sharon are those who got him elected in the first place — the violent Palestinians. Rest assured that standing by himself, without the threat of Palestinian provocations, Gen. Sharon is no more attractive to Israelis than to anyone else.

Don't attack a bully, I learned while young; outsmart him. Only by making Sharon unnecessary to Israeli security can Palestinians succeed. For Palestinians to rid the Jerusalem of Sharon the tactics of Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi would be considerably more effective — politically, economically, humanly. Universal Palestinian

pacifism would also require more discipline of their leadership and more saintliness of their people than has recently been evident. Cease falling for provocation bait, and eventually the provocateur will cease. People don't get rewards for being stupid, no matter how righteous their cause.

— Richard Kostelanetz

**Harrison A. Williams Jr., R.I.P.** — Join me, my friends, in a moment of silence to honor the memory of former U.S. Sen. Harrison A. Williams (D-N.J.), who departed this vale of tears on Nov. 17, 2001, at the age of 81.

Harrison Williams may be regarded as having been an outstanding member of what is sometimes hilariously called the World's Greatest Deliberative Body. (Barry Goldwater once remarked, "If this is the world's greatest deliberative body, I'd hate to see the world's worst.") Williams was first elected to that august legislative chamber in 1958 and served there continuously from 1959 until 1982, when he resigned in the wake of his conviction on nine counts of bribery and conspiracy and in anticipation of his impending expulsion.

"Pete," as he was known, met his Waterloo in the form of "Abscam," an FBI sting operation (1978–80) that undertook to shoot fish in a barrel by identifying members of Congress willing to accept bribes — the illegal kind, not the ones that all legislators take as a matter of course. Abscam, as older readers will recall, took its moniker from "Abdul Enterprises," a firm supposedly doing business on behalf of a mysterious Arab sheik named Abdul, which was created by the FBI to facilitate the enticement of lawmakers eager to collect a little extra compensation on the sly.

I shall never forget the *joie de vivre* that animated Pete Williams in those good old days. It was captured for all time on the FBI videotape, which was later described by the Senate's pro-expulsion statement (recorded by the Republican Policy Committee) as "the 'smoking gun' of this case — indeed, a 'smoking machine gun.'" While pocketing the loot, a smirking Williams exultantly declared (if my memory serves) the immortal words, "Money talks, bullshit walks." I count that moment among my most cherished lessons in political science.

Following his 1981 conviction, Williams dodged the jailer for a few years until his delaying tactics finally petered out. He then spent two years in prison, and was released in 1986. He continued to protest his innocence. "I broke no laws," he always insisted. "I believe time, history and almighty God will vindicate me," he declared in his resignation speech. As Bill Clinton was engaging in his end-game frenzy of issuing pardons, Williams sought a pardon, but the President gave him no satisfaction.

Mike McCurry, the Clinton press secretary, was once an aide to Williams, and he remembered the senator with warm respect. "Pete Williams was one of those guys who got more done than anybody will ever know," said McCurry, "because he was a quiet, behind-the-scenes orchestrator of legislation."

Well, Mike, you don't have to twist my arm to make me believe that Pete Williams got more done than anybody will ever know. Even if we must judge him by what we do know, however, he will stand in the annals of American democracy as a lion of the legislature, a thief among thieves.

— Robert Higgs

# Enron: Death by Free Market

*by Andrew Chamberlain*

Pundits are pitching Enron's implosion as a failure of the free market. They've got the story exactly backwards.

It took the death of the mighty Enron Corp. to ultimately bump the war on terrorism from page one. And right on cue, pundits searching for deep moral lessons shifted focus and started circling overhead.

Though it will take months to unravel the facts about Enron's demise, a consensus account is already emerging in much of the media. Enron's rise and fall — and indeed, its existence to begin with — are being viewed as what economists refer to as "market failure," or cases when markets need the helping hand of government regulation to function properly.

Examples of the "Enron consensus" abound. Paul Krugman, *The New York Times'* quasi-economist, is representative: "The latest revelations in the Enron affair will raise the lid on crony capitalism, American style." *The Nation* was a bit more dramatic: "The rise and fall of Enron is an instant classic in the annals of capitalism because, in one calamitous stroke, it wipes out so many sanctified illusions that rule in the magic marketplace." Conservative George Will dismissed Enron as "a glitch in the capitalist system." And a myriad of sneering op-eds in local papers everywhere painted an image of a firm too sexy and politically savvy to possibly be governed by market forces.

And, just like that, Enron was transformed into a sexy new symbol of the evils of the unfettered marketplace — exactly what contemporary opponents of liberalism needed. In one fell swoop, Enron's collapse did more to soil the image of Wall Street, the movement to deregulate power, and the entire accounting profession than ideologues on the left could've ever hoped to do.

All this is unfortunate. But the worst part is that these

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ideologues are partly right. The Enron debacle is shameful. It's not often that businesspeople so smugly disregard our most basic ethical and legal norms for personal gain. From Enron's murky accounting schemes to independent auditor Arthur Andersen's neglect and document dumping to C.E.O. Kenneth Lay's panicked last-minute appeals for a taxpayer bailout, the Enron story is an embarrassment to the whole system of free enterprise.

Yet for all the grief caused shareholders, employees, and customers, the story of Enron has a happy ending that's largely being ignored. The very fact of Enron's painful and embarrassing death is an unambiguous confirmation that competitive market forces are alive and well in the U.S. economy — claims of "market failure" notwithstanding.

## **The Case for Bankruptcy**

Three basic lessons are emerging from the rubble that used to be Enron. First is that healthy economies allow negative feedback to shut down economic losers. They don't try to suppress it to "save jobs," play favorites, or promote stability.

Enron got a hard lesson in this. As negative feedback rolled in, they went from being the seventh-largest firm in America to ignominious bankruptcy in half a year. Though on the surface this collapse seemed sudden, in reality it had been brewing for over a year. As Wall Street analysts began raising questions about Enron's spooky accounting methods

and the quality of their earnings, its stock drifted downward. Enron began 2001 at around \$80 but sagged to \$40 by October — the month when it announced a \$600 million “earnings restatement” and some accounting “mistakes,” kicking off an investigation into its now-famous book-cooking. Once it became clear that their superhuman earnings growth was just a rococo con game, investors dragged Enron into the street and shot it. In a matter of weeks, their stock went to pennies, was officially delisted from the New York Stock Exchange, and all remaining assets were trucked into bankruptcy proceedings. That’s how negative feedback is supposed to work.

That Enron disappeared once it was identified as an economic loser may seem trivial. But in much of the world it’s not. The notion that poor investments should get weeded out and dropped is surprisingly controversial in many European and Asian economies. And it explains a lot about their economic well-being.

One obvious example of this is Japan. The single most important factor behind Japan’s perpetual recession is that it

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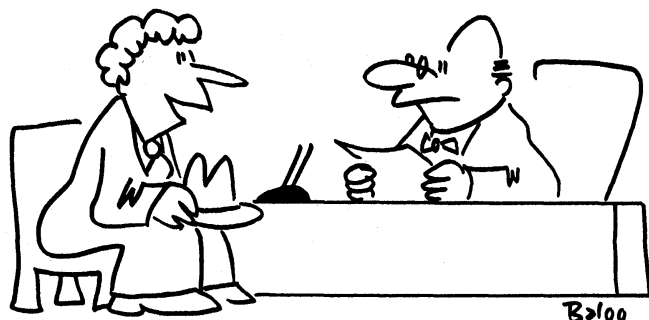
*Once it became clear that their superhuman earnings growth was just a rococo con game, investors dragged Enron into the street and shot it.*

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won’t let bad investments fail. Enron would never have happened if it had been headquartered in Tokyo. And that’s exactly their problem. No matter how many billions of yen the Japanese Finance Ministry pours into Keynesian stimulus packages, or how close to zero it cuts interest rates, there will never be a Japanese recovery until the real problem is dealt with. Economically unprofitable firms that are burning off resources from the rest of the Japanese economy need to go away.

This isn’t likely to happen any time soon. Propping up lagging firms has practically become an official function of the Japanese government, and one which voters have come to expect and value. After all, disguising economic losses puts off painful adjustments, preserves jobs, and gives the illusion of short-term stability.

This policy has had staggering consequences. There is now an entire generation of Japanese youth who have never



“Can we dispense with what I know, and get right down to who I know.”

lived outside a recession. The current estimate of nonperforming Japanese bank loans — in other words, loans on which borrowers are unable even to pay interest, let alone repay capital — is in the range of \$750 billion. That’s an amount equal to the GDP of Chile, Taiwan, Belgium, and then some. The American Enterprise Institute pegs the market value of the entire Japanese banking sector at a cool negative \$1 trillion dollars.

This is predictable. Over time, “loser-free” economies like Japan’s inevitably become cluttered with losers, and these unprofitable laggards burn off real wealth from the rest of society. These economic sinkholes can be put to rest now or later, but not never. Subsidies only postpone the ultimate day of reckoning. And the longer it’s put off, the more jarring the adjustment will be.

Japan doesn’t need a stimulus package. It needs bankruptcies. That’s the only way idle capital can be reallocated to profitable uses. The U.S. economy does this well, and Enron’s rapid liquidation proves it.

### Ethics and Enron

The second lesson of Enron is simple: Business ethics matter. They are not just window dressing or “fuzzy” public-relations gimmicks. They are what help our economy function in the absence of government intervention, and make it morally defensible against critics.

Defenders of free markets sometimes overlook the impact of individual morality on the marketplace. There’s a tendency to view markets as wild arenas of ethical egoism, constrained only by formal legal rules. This may be due to bad economists not teaching the difference between self-interest and selfishness, or maybe too many people thinking Ayn Rand’s novels depict anything like what actually happens in

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*The \$2.4 million Enron poured into political campaigns in 2000 may win the dubious distinction of being their worst investment of all.*

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business. Whatever its origins, it is false. Formal law matters, but informal law matters more. And ethics are the informal law that serves as the backbone of the free-market economy.

Whether these ethical values are called “Judeo-Christian” or simply “Western,” they operate in every legitimate market in the U.S. — simple things like honesty, the presumption of fairness, and promise-keeping. The further we stray from these basic ethical guidelines, the more everything we know about free-market economics becomes false. And our faith in that market becomes more of a blind one.

Enron had no illusions about its fraudulent dealings. The release of internal memos — in one of which an employee worried that they would “implode in a wave of accounting scandals” — made that clear. There is perhaps no industry more dependent on transparency and informal ethical rules than accounting, and yet Arthur Andersen, Enron’s independent auditor and co-conspirator, ordered the destruction of

*continued on page 40*



# Privatization Is Dead... Long Live Privatization !

*by Stephen Berry*

Tony Blair's New Labour proclaims that Thatcherism is dead. But you'd never guess it from looking at their latest agenda.

2001 was a good year for the British prime minister, Tony Blair. Even before the events of Sept. 11 placed him firmly in the eye of the world's media, he was enjoying the kudos of having inflicted a second crushing defeat on the Conservative party at the British general election in June. Indeed, so comprehensive was the victory of New Labour that the pundits felt emboldened to talk about the death of the Tories and the prospect of the U.K. being ruled by a left-of-center coalition for decades to come. Blair himself asserted that it was time to move beyond Thatcherism and the old right-wing agenda. But where would the seemingly unstoppable Blair juggernaut move to?

When dealing with lawyers it's always desirable to scrutinize the small print. When dealing with politicians, what is merely desirable becomes essential. With Sherlockian smartness, I have made the daring assumption that the small print in this particular case is the legislative agenda of the U.K. government for the year ahead. I can now reveal to where it is that Mr. Blair and his colleagues are going and how they intend to move beyond the old right-wing agenda.

It's generally agreed that the big issue at the last election was the condition of the public services in the U.K. Or, to put it bluntly, how the devil were the state education system and the welfare state to be improved? In my lifetime, the fortunes of public services seem to have paralleled those of the English cricket team, varying with unswerving monotony between the mediocre and the catastrophic. But this has never dented the confidence of a patient public that a new dawn was just around the corner. In June 2001, an unenthusiastic electorate gave the Labour Party the benefit of the doubt and five more years to produce the solution which had eluded both major parties for 50 years.

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How, then, does the Labour Party intend to solve the conundrum of the failing U.K. public services? The new education bill promises to increase the number of specialist schools and bring in private enterprise to take over underperforming state schools. Head teachers of these schools will be directly allocated more money by government, thus cutting local politicians out of the loop. They will also be allowed to bring more private business into the management of schools.

There is also a bill to reform the National Health Service (NHS). The intention, as with education, is to decentralize the NHS, expand private involvement in both the managing and financing of the NHS, and to try to create a market in which doctors and nurses control their own expenditure. I may be missing a clever New Labour nuance here, but it seems obvious that far from repudiating Thatcherism, Blair is extending the old right-wing agenda into education and health, areas where the Iron Lady and the Tories had previously feared to tread.

When in the 1970s a growing disillusionment with state intervention caused a number of people to look at market alternatives, it was mainly the Conservative party that took up these ideas. In the 1980s, Margaret Thatcher's governments implemented extensive measures aimed at privatization and deregulation. But Thatcher never dared to extend

this agenda to health and education in any significant way. On the contrary, she was always keen to reassure those who thought she had advanced too far with one of her favorite sayings of those days, "the NHS is safe with us."

If the Tories under William Hague had won the election in June 2001, would they have dared to do more than Blair? As far as I can make out, there are only two things that the Conservatives would now be doing differently from Labour. They would not have continued to reform the venerable House of Lords. Unless you are a we-must-preserve-the-British-Constitution-as-it-was-in-the-time-of-Richard-the-Lionheart freak, it's hard to get worked up about this. Sometimes it seems that the three main qualifications for being a member of the House of Lords are: you must be over 80, still able to hold an ear trumpet, and capable of sleeping undisturbed through any debate, particularly one which

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*Tony Blair is continuing the Thatcherite program whilst at the same time disowning it.*

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threatens to become interesting. And it is unlikely that the Tories would be set on banning hunting with the hounds, another venerable British institution. But the structure of a second chamber and fox hunting are not issues that most people will go to the barricades for. One might conclude therefore that the vote of the British citizen had next to no significance. Under both Labour and the Conservatives, the slow, measured dismantling of 20th-century state interventionism is continuing. No wonder so many voters couldn't be bothered to get to the polling booths.

I know that I really ought to be happy about the beginning of the long march to get the state out of education and health in the U.K., but I must confess to a few misgivings. I am not complaining about the fact that Blair is continuing the Thatcherite program whilst at the same time disowning it. I am not a spoilsport and I will not begrudge the politician his opportunity to lie. No, I worry that, as with the railways, a partial, half-hearted, and bungled privatization will bring a host of problems in its wake and tend to discredit the market.

In both health and education, it seems that the state will retain control of the purse strings, and funding will still be largely through taxation. The simple libertarian approach would be to allow private individuals to purchase the amount of health and education which is appropriate for them. This would also have the bonus of bringing

into play consumer pressure, which is a far more powerful force than the efforts of that well-meaning coalition of politicians and producers that dominates matters at the

moment. In the short run it would mean government returning tax money to the people to build health insurance policies. As a temporary measure, the government would keep some money to handle the transitional problem of those old timers who have assumed that paying taxes throughout their lifetimes ensured health care in old age. It would be stressed that this was only a transitional measure.

But it seems that for the present, we will have to be satisfied with *ad hoc* measures to bring the market into health and education. Amusingly, this will involve sending patients for operations to countries like France and Germany, which run insurance-based systems. Already certain European countries like Norway that run British-style, free-at-the-point-of-delivery type health systems are sending patients (with accompanying translators) to these countries for treatment.

In all this the Tories seem to have learnt a valuable lesson. At the last election they simply promised to spend as much, if not more, than the Labour Party whilst retaining the old system intact. But the public have always trusted Labour more than the Tories on the existing public services and last June Labour cashed in. The Tories have finally realized that they will have to offer a radical alternative to Labour on the NHS and Iain Duncan-Smith, the new Tory leader, has sent his officer corps around Europe to trawl other countries for an appropriate replacement to the NHS. At the next election we should have the gratifying sight of a major U.K. political party offering the voter an alternative to the NHS.

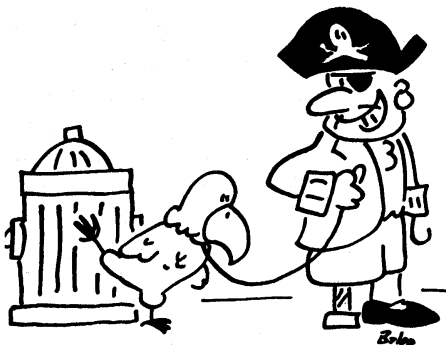
But the question remains to be answered. Is the U.K. going to be ruled by a left-of-center coalition for decades to come, crawling slowly towards market-oriented solutions

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*The Tory Party was in government for the larger part of the 20th century with Labour only in office for the occasional bout of revolutionary statist zeal. Will the 21st century see those roles reversed?*

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for health and education? This would be a dramatic political turnaround for the U.K. political establishment. The Tory Party was in government for the larger part of the 20th century with Labour only in office for the occasional bout of revolutionary statist zeal. Will the 21st century see those roles reversed? Labour is developing into the party of the status quo whilst the Tories, the party of Burke and Disraeli and a host of like-minded trimmers, may be becoming the bearer of the revolutionary torch. Stranger things have happened. The present Liberal Democrat Party, the heir to the great 19th-century Liberal Party of Cobden and Gladstone, now chases the votes of public-sector workers in a desperate attempt to capture the ground which it feels New Labour has recently vacated. To be honest, I don't care to which party falls the honor of demolishing the statist eyesores of the 20th century. I merely point out for the historical record that the Tory Party seems the most ready to move to the radical surgery most desired by those of a libertarian frame of mind. □



# All the Lies That Are Fit to Print

*by Jeff Rigenbach*

Everyone “know” drugs are addictive, ruining the economy, and killing addicts.  
How did they learn this?

According to Common Sense for Drug Policy (CSDP), a Washington, D.C.-based lobbying group, “The Public Is Saying, ‘No More Drug War!’” CSDP placed full-page ads in a number of influential political magazines — left, right, and libertarian — this winter, including *National Review*, *The Weekly Standard*, *The Nation*, *Reason*, and *The Progressive*. The ads point out that “a recent Ridder/Braden opinion poll in the state of Colorado” showed that “seventy-three percent of voters believe we should decrease criminal penalties for possession of small quantities of drugs from a felony to a misdemeanor and spend the money saved on prisons to increase drug treatment and prevention.”

This is, undeniably, good news. However, voters in Colorado seem to be somewhat more advanced in their thinking than most Americans. As the CSDP ads also point out, a significantly smaller proportion, “sixty-one percent of the American public,” according to a Zogby Poll conducted in November, 2001, “opposes arresting and jailing nonviolent marijuana smokers.” This too is good news. But, lest we get carried away with our celebrations of the long-awaited turnaround in public attitudes on this issue, let us consider: This also means that one American in three still believes that nonviolent pot smokers (which is to say, virtually all of them) should be incarcerated for their “crimes.” Moreover, according to the Ridder/Braden poll cited in the CSDP ads, not only do nearly one in three of the seemingly more enlightened Colorado voters cling to their belief that possession of any amount of drugs should remain a felony, but these voters also believe taxpayers should be forced to put up the money for “increase[d] drug treatment and prevention.” Most important of all, virtually all Colorado voters (and virtually all voters in the United States, for that matter)

cling stubbornly to their belief that those who possess more than “small quantities” of drugs — and even smaller quantities of drugs like cocaine, heroin, and LSD — should be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. The question is why.

Why do most Americans still support the government’s War on Drugs? It isn’t as though libertarians (and a great many others) hadn’t worked hard over the past 30 years or so to show how utterly pointless and destructive that “war” actually is. So why do so many people still support it?

Because they believe the use of drugs like heroin, cocaine, and marijuana is so harmful, not only to users, but to society as a whole, that government action is needed to reduce the harm. And why do they believe this? Because the news media have been telling them so — dinning it into their ears on a daily basis — for nearly a century, and go on telling them so day after day after day after interminable day.

It is generally acknowledged by historians of the government’s mindless crusade against certain psychoactive substances that the news media have played an important part in building public support for anti-drug legislation. Consider, as a case in point, the very first national law against intoxicants ever adopted in this country, the Harrison Narcotics Act of 1914. In the years leading up to the adoption of this pernicious legislation, numerous articles appeared in major publications detailing the supposed hor-

rors of cocaine and heroin use. On June 21, 1903, for example, the *New York Tribune* reported with a straight face that "many of the horrible crimes committed in the Southern States by the colored people can be traced directly to the cocaine habit." Five years later, on Aug. 2, 1908, under the headline "The Growing Menace of the Use of Cocaine" the *New York Times* announced that "the dull white crystals" we know as cocaine "contain the most insidious effects of any known drug" and that "there is nothing that we can do for the confirmed user of the drug, the best thing for the cocaine fiend is to let him die."

As congressional consideration of the Harrison Act approached, the drumbeating in the press became more shrill and insistent. *The Literary Digest*, a major magazine of the era, soberly announced on March 28, 1914, that "most of the attacks upon white women of the South are the direct

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*Virtually all voters cling stubbornly to their belief that those who possess more than "small quantities" of drugs should be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. The question is why.*

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result of a cocaine-crazed Negro brain." The redoubtable *New York Times* for Feb. 8, 1914, ran the headline "Negro Cocaine 'Fiends' Are a New Southern Menace." Beneath that headline, readers found the following assertions:

Stories of cocaine orgies, followed by wholesale murders, seem like lurid journalism of the yellowest variety. But in point of fact there was nothing "yellow" about . . . these reports. Nine men killed in Mississippi on one occasion by crazed cocaine takers, five in North Carolina, three in Tennessee — these are facts that need no imaginative coloring.

According to the *Times* report:

The drug produces several other conditions that make the "fiend" a peculiarly dangerous criminal. One of these conditions is a temporary immunity to shock — a resistance to the "knock down" effects of fatal wounds. Bullets fired into vital parts, that would drop a sane man in his tracks, fail to check the "fiend" — fail to stop his rush or weaken his attack. A recent experience of Chief of Police Lyerly of Asheville, N.C. illustrates this particular phase of cocainism. The Chief was informed that a hitherto inoffensive negro was "running amuck" in a cocaine frenzy. . . . Knowing that he must kill the man or be killed himself, the Chief drew his revolver, placed the muzzle over the negro's heart and fired — "intending to kill him right quick" — but the shot did not even stagger the man. And a second shot that pierced the arm and entered the chest had just as little effect in stopping the negro or checking his attack.

Needless to say, when the Harrison Act was passed in 1914, it had widespread public support; after all, who wants to run the risk of being attacked by cocaine-crazed Negroes who cannot be stopped even by bullets? But only three years after the adoption of the Harrison Act came U.S. entry into World War I, and only two years after that, in 1919, came nationwide prohibition of alcoholic beverages — so both offi-

cial and journalistic eyes were elsewhere for a while. There were more exciting things to focus on than cocaine-crazed Southern blacks.

But when Prohibition ended in 1933, an important employment problem arose. The assistant prohibition commissioner, Harry J. Anslinger, was out of a job. And since prohibition was the only line of work he knew, he badly needed something else to prohibit. He wangled a promotion of sorts and became commissioner of narcotics in the U.S. Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, and almost immediately began his campaign to expand his agency's mandate. Anslinger's idea was to expand drug prohibition to include marijuana. He began work on a draft of a new piece of legislation, called the Marihuana Tax Act, and on a series of articles which he hoped to place in national magazines to build public support for prohibition of his new drug menace. Over the next four years, he placed 21 such articles in important national magazines. Perhaps the most representative of them all was "Marihuana: Assassin of Youth" which he wrote with Courtney Ryley Cooper and which ran in the *American Magazine* in July 1937.

"An entire family was murdered," Anslinger wrote,

by a youthful addict in Florida. When officers arrived at the home they found the youth staggering about in a human slaughterhouse. With an ax he had killed his father, mother, two brothers, and a sister. He seemed to be in a daze. . . . He had no recollection of having committed the multiple crime. The officers knew him ordinarily as a sane, rather quiet young man; now he was pitifully crazed. They sought the reason. The boy said he had been in the habit of smoking something which youthful friends called "muggles," a childish name for marihuana.

In the wake of such a vigorous and fraudulent public relations campaign, Congress enacted the Marihuana Tax

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*For nearly a century, the news media have been telling Americans that drugs are so harmful, not only to users, but to society as a whole, that government action is needed to reduce the harm.*

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Act, the first national law against the leaves and flowering tops of the common hemp plant.

Four years later, of course, another war broke out. So, again, the minds of politicians and journalists were elsewhere for another few years. But no sooner had the war ended than Anslinger was back to his old tricks. The ever-vigilant and ever-opportunistic commissioner of narcotics came up with a new method of scaring the public, and horror stories of "heroin overdose deaths" filled the media.

Then came the notorious 1960s and the advent of LSD. This drug, which had first been synthesized in the 1940s and which had been legally available and widely used by physicians and psychologists and their patients for more than 15 years, suddenly became "dangerous" in the mid-'60s, thanks to the ever-vigilant and ever-ignorant news media. In a typical story, the *New York Times* for April 12, 1966, reported on a man who had murdered his mother-in-law and who said

he'd been "flying" on LSD and could remember nothing about the homicide. Many later reports of LSD users flying out of windows like stockbrokers in 1929 helped to build public support for new laws against this newest drug menace.

Since then, through the media-pushed drug scares of the '70s (angel dust — which, like the cocaine available in North Carolina in 1914, conferred "temporary immunity to shock — a resistance to the 'knock down' effects of fatal wounds" on its users), the '80s (crack cocaine), and the '90s (ecstasy), the barrage of ignorance and misrepresentation has continued. In the pages that follow, I'd like to focus attention on three perennial themes of the media ignoramuses. Then I'd like to add a few observations on why things are as they are.

The first of the themes is "addiction." The government must take action against illegal drugs because they are "addictive." On June 18, 1986, at the height of the crack cocaine hysteria, Tom Morganthau wrote in *Newsweek*, consistently one of the most ignorant and hysterical publications in the United States when it comes to the drug issue, that "when smoked, cocaine . . . can produce powerful chemical dependency within two weeks." More recently, journalist Bruce Ramsey intoned in the August 2001 issue of *Liberty* that "heroin is addictive."

What is the truth of the matter? Back in 1972, in *Licit and Illicit Drugs: The Consumers Union Report on Narcotics, Stimulants, Depressants, Inhalants, Hallucinogens, and*

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*In 1908, the New York Times announced that "there is nothing that we can do for the confirmed user of the drug, the best thing for the cocaine fiend is to let him die."*

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*Marijuana — Including Caffeine, Nicotine, and Alcohol*, Edward M. Brecher pointed out that there were three major theories of "addiction." First there were "Psychological theories. Theories in this group are in general the heirs to the old 'weakness of will' approach" — the notion "that any addict could stop taking an addicting drug if he wanted to and if he tried hard enough" (67). Then there were the "Sociological views. These views hold in general that society creates addicts and causes ex-addicts to relapse into addiction again. . . . An addict relapses . . . because he returns to the same neighborhood where he became addicted and associates with addicts once more" (67). Finally, there were the "biochemical theories," which asserted that drugs caused biochemical changes in the body of the user, which produced "addiction." Brecher concluded, after an exhaustive survey of the literature, that "the vast bulk of the evidence to date . . . favors the psychological and sociological theories" (68).

Since then, the debate has continued. In 2000, psychologist Jeffrey A. Schaler, whose practice is built on the "treatment" of "drug addiction," summarized the literature on the controversy in his book *Addiction Is a Choice* and concluded that "physical addiction" — what Brecher had called the "biochemical theory" of addiction — is a "far-fetched, scientifically worthless fantasy" (xvii).

What about the second theme of the media ignoramuses — the notion that "drugs cost the economy"? In the mid-1980s, I worked at one of the largest newspapers in the United States, the *Orange County Register*, for K.E. Grubbs Jr., who saw mandatory drug testing, then a trendy development in business and industry, as a "market response" to what he regarded as the self-evident "menace" of "drug abuse." Fifteen years later, these attitudes are still with us. Consider, for example, the following assertion from the aforementioned Bruce Ramsey: "As a practical matter, if we legalized certain drugs, I think civil society would have to campaign against them, and would have to approve of employers and landlords 'discriminating' against users." Do

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*"When officers arrived at the home they found the youth staggering about in a human slaughterhouse. . . . The boy said he had been in the habit of smoking marihuana."*

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people who argue in this fashion have even the shadow of a leg to stand on?

Sorrowfully not. As long ago as Jan. 23, 1995, Jonathan Marshall reported in the *San Francisco Chronicle* that:

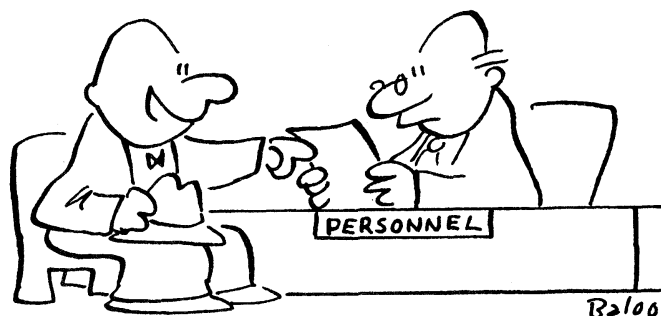
Much research into the effect of drug use on wages and productivity comes up with the puzzling result that young workers who report using drugs seem to enjoy higher pay, rather than ending up strung out and impoverished. One 1991 study even found that drug users earned twenty percent more than nonusers in the 1980s.

Now a new study sheds further light on this mystery by looking at men of two different age groups (18 to 29 and 30 to 45) and at two different levels of drug use, moderate and abusive, as defined by the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*.

Thomas Buchmueller, an economist at the University of California at Irvine, and Samuel Zuvekas at the University of Wisconsin analyzed a survey by the National Institute of Mental Health of 18,571 adults in New Haven, Connecticut; St. Louis; Baltimore; Durham, North Carolina; and Los Angeles. (B5)

Buchmueller and Zuvekas found that "for young men, neither moderate drug use nor abuse seem to make any substantial difference. For workers aged 30 to 45 . . . moderate drug use . . . makes no statistically significant difference . . ."

On Nov. 5, 1999, *Chronicle* reporter Sam McManis noted



"Yes, but notice all the time off for good behavior!"



that "in September, the American Civil Liberties Union issued a report based on studies by the National Science Foundation and the AMA [American Medical Association] showing that testing has been ineffective in reducing drug use and has no noticeable impact on reducing either absenteeism or productivity."

In effect, drug testing, Grubbs' idea of a "market response" to the "menace" of "drug abuse," has been a waste

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*Reports of LSD users flying out of windows like stockbrokers in 1929 helped to build public support for new laws against this newest drug menace.*

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of the participating companies' money. "The National Academy of Sciences recently found," McManis wrote in 1999 that:

... illegal drugs contribute little to workplace accidents and that off-duty drug use has about the same small effect on worker accidents as off-duty drinking.

And, in January's *Working USA* magazine, two researchers with the LeMoyne College Institute of Industrial Relations surveyed 63 Silicon Valley companies and found that productivity was 29 percent lower in firms with pre-employment and random testing.

This last finding may seem counterintuitive, but in fact, as McManis reports:

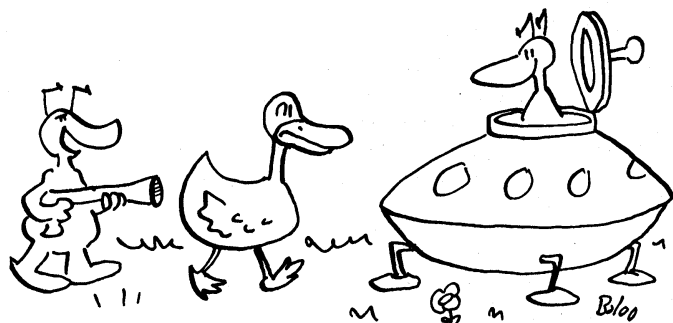
Eric Shepard, co-author of the LeMoyne study of drug testing in Silicon Valley, said his researchers combined each company's drug-testing data with its public-financial information.

"We found that productivity was 16 percent lower in companies with pre-employment testing than those that didn't test, and it was 29 percent (lower) in companies with both pre-employment and random testing," he said.

"Shepard said his survey didn't delve into the reasons productivity declined," McManis writes, "but he has a theory."

"If drug tests contribute a negative view toward the company, as other surveys have found, then workers may not contribute as much in return, or they may seek employment elsewhere," Shepard said. "You may lose your best workers to companies that don't test."

Dan Abrahamson, a San Francisco attorney for the Lindesmith Center, a national drug policy institute that opposes drug testing, said he receives at least one e-mail a



"Earth will negotiate now — I captured a hostage!"

week from high-tech workers who smoke marijuana away from the job and are concerned about drug testing at work.

"There are a lot of smart, creative people who work in Silicon Valley in programming and they feel it helps them intellectually to use marijuana," Abrahamson said. "So testing might actually hurt their work."

Then again, it isn't only drug users who shy away from companies that subject their employees to drug testing. McManis quotes "Ed, a twenty-seven-year-old financial analyst at Charles Schwab in San Francisco who declined to give his last name" as saying that:

... he would have thought twice about accepting an offer from the company six months ago if that company required pre-employment drug tests.

"I don't use drugs," he said, "but I would look at that company as not as trusting [and] more rules oriented, as opposed to a place that values its employees and entrusts them to do a good job." (B3)

Other workers who don't use drugs consider it none of any company's business what its employees choose to do on their own time. These workers are likely to avoid employers who don't mind their own business. Still others would tend to avoid drug-testing companies out of fear of the unreliability of the tests. And their fear is well founded. The British news service Reuters reported on Christmas Day last year on the gist of a new study presented in detail in the Dec. 26, 2001 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. That study, conducted by Dr. Lindsey R. Baden of Harvard Medical School, showed that "the use of certain antibiotics may cause an unsuspecting person to test positive for heroin."

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*The evidence that a junkie has died as a result of "heroin overdose" is usually based on nothing more than an officer's finding a junkie dead with a needle sticking out of his or her arm.*

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even though they've never touched the drug. . . . Baden told Reuters Health that . . . other types of chemicals could cause a similar reaction."

Finally, let's take a look at the third theme of the media ignoramuses — the notion that drug abuse kills. My own favorite example in this category is the "heroin overdose death." As Brecher observed in 1972:

Prior to 1943, there were relatively few deaths among addicts from overdose. By the 1950s, however, nearly half of all deaths among New York City addicts were being attributed to "acute reaction to dosage or overdose." In 1969 about 70 percent of all New York addict deaths were assigned the "overdose" label — and in 1970 the proportion was about 80 percent. (101-102)

What accounts for this sudden increase? Were junkies suddenly shooting up enormously larger doses of heroin? Or was this "epidemic" of "heroin overdose deaths" entirely a product of Harry J. Anslinger's propaganda? As Brecher noted 30 years ago:

It takes seven or eight milligrams of heroin per kilogram of body weight, injected directly into a vein, to kill unaddicted

monkeys. On this basis, it would take 500 milligrams or more (50 New York City bags full, administered in a single injection) to kill an unaddicted human adult. (104)

Moreover, as Brecher pointed out:

... virtually all of the victims whose deaths are falsely labeled as due to heroin overdose ... are addicts who have already developed a tolerance for opiates — and even enormous amounts of morphine or heroin do not kill addicts. ... In one Philadelphia experiment, 1,800 milligrams of morphine were injected into an addict over a two-and-a-half-hour period. This vast dose [nearly fifty times the usual New York daily dose of the time] didn't even make him sick. (104)

Note that Brecher writes "the victims whose deaths are falsely labeled as due to heroin overdose." In his discussion, he reviews the evidence available up to the time of his writing (1972) and notes also: (1) that autopsies are performed in only about ten percent of all deaths (a figure which is still valid today), and that autopsies are almost never performed for junkies; and (2) that the evidence for the claim that junkies have died as a result of "heroin overdose" is usually based on nothing more than a police report, in which an officer describes finding a junkie dead with a needle sticking out of his or her arm. Brecher speculates that it is not an "overdose" of heroin that has killed the junkies in question, but rather a lethal combination of heroin and barbiturates or heroin and alcohol.

But could it be that these junkies are actually unwittingly shooting themselves up with a much more powerful dose than they are used to, and that therefore their deaths are properly describable as "heroin overdose deaths"? On May 13, 1994, journalist Jack Shafer, then editor of the weekly *City Paper* in Washington, D.C., now deputy editor of *Slate*, addressed this question. "Washington police," he noted,

*It is not an "overdose" of heroin that has killed the junkies in question, but rather a lethal combination of heroin and barbiturates or heroin and alcohol.*

"routinely blame heroin deaths on 'especially pure strains' or 'unusually potent' or 'hot shots' of the drug." But this claim, he noted was difficult to reconcile with the findings back in

1989 in a detailed scientific study of Washington's heroin-related deaths published by the *Journal of Forensic Sciences*. The researchers focused on heroin overdoses in D.C. during 1985 and, thanks to cooperation from the police and the medical examiner, succeeded in measuring the purity of the heroin on the street, as well as the levels of heroin and other drugs present in the body fluids of the dead users.

They found no relationship between heroin purity and death-by-overdose or nonfatal overdose.

"The primary risk factors cited in this study and an earlier one of Washington heroin use (*Science*, 10/4/84)," Shafer wrote, "include ... the alcohol/heroin combination" something that would come as no surprise to Edward Brecher (*Washington City Paper*, p. 12).

These journalists, the ones who are so confident that

drugs are "addictive," that drug use costs the American economy, and that drugs kill their users — do they ever bother to check any of this before rushing into print with it? Do they do any research at all — even a simple Nexis search? Do they bother to keep up with the publications in the areas — like drugs — which they write about? Apparently not. Apparently they just go with what "everyone knows." After all "everyone knows" drugs are addictive, they render you unable to do your job, and they kill you. But as Milton Friedman has been quoted as saying, "If everyone knows it, it's probably wrong."

And if anyone should be aware of this truism, it is journalists. Aren't they always patting themselves on the back for their crusading lust for truth and their skepticism toward

*A detailed scientific study found no relationship between heroin purity and death-by-overdose or nonfatal overdose.*

official versions of reality? They have been since at least the mid-1960s. As journalist Neal Gabler put it on Jan. 24, 1993, in the *San Francisco Chronicle*:

Before Vietnam, it was uncommon for a person to doubt that what his government said, what he read in the newspapers, was fact. The official version of events was the accepted version — indeed, there was no other. It was only as the war disastrously proceeded and correspondents' dispatches from Vietnam didn't jibe with glowing administration reports that one began to suspect for the first time a deliberate conspiracy to lie, a conspiracy to keep the truth from being known.

The distance between what we were told was happening in Vietnam and what we learned was actually happening soon became known as the "credibility gap." It is difficult now, when everyone distrusts government pronouncements and even distrusts the press, to imagine what a shock the gap was to our system. But it is one of Johnson's most enduring lega-

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cies. And the disillusion Johnson set in motion with Vietnam, Richard M. Nixon accelerated with the Watergate cover-up, where the distance between lies and truth was more a canyon than a gap.

The credibility gap of Johnson and Nixon changed our attitude toward government and revised the practice of journalism by transforming journalists into truth hunters. Far more important, the gaps created a general skepticism toward any received wisdom. (*This World*, p. 3)

Except, of course, for the received wisdom on drugs.

I used to hear this kind of thing starting around 1966 in the various newsrooms in which I was employed back then — that it was a reporter's duty to question government news releases, look behind the statements of politicians and bureaucrats and see if the truth differed from their claims. To do otherwise, it was said, was "repeating, not reporting."

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*Apparently journalists just go with what "everyone knows" about drugs.*

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Yet, 20 years after this had become the "received wisdom" in newsrooms, when the *Columbia Journalism Review* ran a major article in its March/April 1985 issue called "When the Government Tells Lies," author Anthony Marro, then the managing editor of *Newsday*, was unable to find even a single example of government lies from the world of drug prohibition. As Jacob Sullum put it in the Jan. 24, 1993 issue of the *San Francisco Chronicle's This World* magazine, "a problem that stands in the way of a productive debate about U.S. drug policy" is the fact that "[w]hen it comes to drugs, usually responsible journalists and publications throw caution and skepticism to the wind, rarely bothering to question assertions about negative effects" (14).

Why are journalists so credulous when it comes to this issue? One reason is that so many of the absurdities about drugs that journalists uncritically pass along are provided to them by police officers. And it is a rare reporter indeed who ever met a cop he didn't like. As the *Columbia Journalism Review* noted in its September/October 1991 issue, "[c]overing police misconduct has always posed a problem for reporters, who sometimes form a symbiotic relationship with

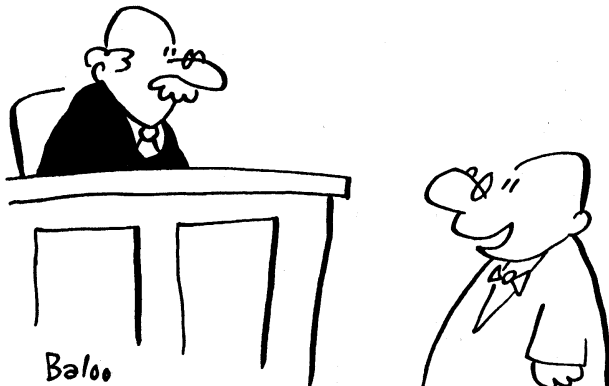
the cops. Television reporters, with their need for images and on-camera interviews, have had a particularly tough time covering the subject" (15). After all, as Jon Katz pointed out in the January/February issue of the same magazine, the traditional "urban police reporter" came "most likely, from a working class background" and "identified with and protected the men he covered, becoming their ideological comrade-in-arms rather than watchdog or chronicler" (25).

Another reason so many journalists are so eager to believe government lies about drugs may be that those lies are profitable. In the mid-'80s, at the height of the crack hysteria, the editors of *Insight* magazine noted that "CBS's '48 Hours on Crack Street' reached 15 million viewers and became one of the highest-rated documentaries of all time," and that *Newsweek's* "'Kids and Cocaine' issue sold about 15 percent more than the average issue at the newsstand and . . . other cocaine covers have sold as much as 35 percent more than normal" (Oct. 27, 1986, pp. 8, 10).

A final reason for the amazing credulity of journalists is the fact that the average journalist, like the average practitioner of any other trade or profession, is, shall we say, not that well-educated. In the 1960s, when I entered the field, it was still common for the typical journalist to have no more than a high-school education. The techniques of the trade itself were typically learned on the job. Since the mid-1970s, it has become increasingly common for the typical journalist to be a college graduate, usually with a degree in . . . journalism.

The problem with this will be evident to anyone who has any knowledge of what goes on in "J-School," as journalism graduates so fetchingly call it. What goes on there is not education at all, as that term is ordinarily understood, but vocational training. There are classes in how to write articles for newspapers and magazines, and in how to write news stories for broadcast. There are classes in proofreading. There are classes in news photography. There are classes in how to conduct interviews. But there are far too few classes in subjects like history, which, by acquainting student journalists with the context in which current events occur, would enable them to judge those events for what they are, rather than being the dupes of any smooth talker that holds the reins of power. A solid grounding in history is absolutely essential to any journalist. Journalism and history are, after all, intimately related — journalism being merely a sort of rough draft of history.

As one of America's greatest journalists, H.L. Mencken, put it half a century ago, "journalism, to be intellectually respectable, requires a kind of equipment in its practitioner that is necessarily rare in the world, and especially rare in a country given over to the superficial. He should have the widest conceivable range of knowledge, and he should be the sort of man who is not easily deluded by the specious and the fraudulent. Obviously, there are not enough such men to go round. The best newspaper, if it is lucky, may be able to muster half a dozen at a given moment, but the average newspaper seldom has even one. Thus American journalism (like the journalism of any other country) is predominantly paltry and worthless. Its pretensions are enormous, but its achievements are insignificant" (*Minority Report*, p. 74). □



"Your Honor, I'd like to have my name changed to protect the innocent."

# Rothbard on Szasz

by Thomas S. Szasz

Although Murray Rothbard once harshly criticized Szaszian psychology, he came to see it in a different light.

My book, *The Myth of Mental Illness*, was published in 1961. Its message is stated unambiguously in the title: Mental illness is a fiction, a metaphor, a myth — on a par with fictions such as witch, unicorn, mermaid, sphinx, ghost, or, *horribile dictu*, God. Translated into some 20 languages, the book is still in print in English, in a mass paperback edition. The Italian edition will be reissued in the spring and a new Hungarian translation will be published in March.

In "A Memo for the Volker Fund," dated May 25, 1962, Murray Rothbard reviewed *The Myth of Mental Illness*. On Jan. 17, 2002, the review, titled "Rothbard on Szasz," suddenly reappeared on the Llewellyn Rockwell Website. Two days later, the Rockwell Website featured Rothbard's keynote address, "Psychoanalysis as a weapon," delivered in 1980 at a symposium celebrating my 60th birthday. (<http://www.lewrockwell.org>)

Regardless of the reasons for the reprinting of these pieces at this time, I believe it is fair to say that psychiatry sits uneasily in the belly of libertarianism. Until recently, public mental health facilities were called "state hospitals." This alone ought to be a warning that libertarians cannot avoid reckoning with the force represented by the alliance of psychiatry and the state. Is psychiatry a friend or a foe of libertarianism?

The reprinting of the Rothbard pieces on an influential libertarian Website presents an appropriate occasion to engage this question head-on.

## Rothbard on Szasz: Part 1

Rothbard's 1962 review was partly laudatory. He praised the book as "a highly original and unique work . . . scattered throughout are intriguing libertarian points, . . . attacks on

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governmental responsibility for inflation, on progressive income tax, on exploitation of one group by another, on totalitarianism, and on infringement of civil liberties, particularly in the practice of compulsory commitment of the (non-criminal) 'mentally ill.'" Approvingly, Rothbard acknowledged: "There is also certainly much value in criticizing the prevalent use of the cliché of 'mental illness' and the consequent linkage with somatic medicine. There are precious-few books on psychiatry, furthermore, which refer to Hayek's *Constitution of Liberty* or to Popper's *Poverty of Historicism*."

"Yet, despite these merits," Rothbard continued, "the book must be set down as an overall failure, for the bulk of the book consists in the setting forth of Szasz' own positive theories, which must be considered totally erroneous. . . . Szasz tosses out the crucial concepts of 'consciousness' and the 'unconscious.' . . . There are many weird results of this: one is that the crucial philosophic-psychologic concepts of individual will, responsibility, the line between the willed and the unwilled, etc. are tossed away . . ."

Faulting me for being an atheist, Rothbard added: "Furthermore, in a fashion rather reminiscent of Ayn Rand, Dr. Szasz is almost fanatically anti-religion, and especially anti-Christian. Religion, and especially Christianity, are held to be responsible for a large part of the world's neuroses, for fostering 'childish dependency,' as well as for encouraging

behavior not proper to man's life: e.g., humility, meekness, naiveté, etc., all of which add up, in Szasz' view to 'incompetence.' Ministers and priests parasitically exploit their supporters, keeping them in this dependence, etc."

*The Myth of Mental Illness*, Rothbard concluded, "eliminates the whole problem of moral responsibility for actions because it eliminates the whole problem of whether an act is consciously willed or decided upon, or not. . . . Szasz' fundamental philosophic error, perhaps, is his deliberate over-throwing of thinking in terms of 'entities' and 'substances,' i.e. 18th-century, natural-law, Aristotelian thinking."

Rothbard's criticism — epitomized by the charge that my argument "eliminates the whole problem of moral responsibility for actions" — was not merely erroneous, it stood the thesis of the book on its head. Rothbard blamed me for a feature intrinsic to the idea of mental illness and to the psychiatric coercions and excuses it justifies — precisely the errors and evils I attacked in *The Myth of Mental Illness*. My aim in

*Rothbard blames me for the fundamental fault intrinsic to the idea of mental illness and to the psychiatric coercions and excuses it justifies — precisely the errors and evils I criticize.*

writing *The Myth of Mental Illness* was to demonstrate the error in the belief that "mental illness" is a medical disease, and to delegitimize its use as a weapon in the unholy alliance of the war of psychiatry and state against the individual — epitomized in the incarceration of innocent persons justified with the mendacious euphemisms of "hospitalization" and "treatment." Rothbard duly acknowledged this contribution.

### Rothbard on Szasz: Part 2

In his later writings, Rothbard expressed unqualified agreement with my critique of the therapeutic state and the pivotal role of psychiatry in it. In his book, *For a New Liberty* (1978), he included a three-page section titled "Compulsory Commitment," devoted almost entirely to my efforts: "In the last decade, the libertarian psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Dr. Thomas S. Szasz has carried on a one-man crusade, at first seemingly hopeless but now increasingly influential, in the psychiatric field against compulsory commitment . . . (pp. 90–92). And again: "The libertarian Dr. Thomas Szasz has almost single-handedly managed to free many citizens from involuntary commitment . . ." (318).

In 1980, Rothbard was invited to present a keynote address at a three-day symposium given in honor of my 60th birthday, hosted by the State University of New York in Albany. In his address, Rothbard praised my efforts to defend individual liberty and personal responsibility against the threat posed to these values by psychiatry. "Thomas Szasz," he wrote, "is justly honored for his gallant and courageous battle against the compulsory commitment of the innocent in the name of 'therapy' and humanitarianism. But I would like to focus tonight on a lesser-known though corollary struggle of Szasz: against the use of psychoanalysis as a weapon to dismiss and dehumanize people, ideas, and

groups that the analyst doesn't happen to like. Rather than criticize or grapple with the ideas or actions of people on their own terms, as correct or incorrect, right or wrong, good or bad, they are explained away by the analyst as caused by some form of neurosis. They are the ideas or actions of neurotic, or 'sick,' people." (See, <http://www.enabling.org/ia/szasz/rothbard.html>.)

Which brings us finally to the issue of religion. In the West, we no longer live in theocratic states. We live, as I have argued for 40 years, in therapeutic states. We give medical, not religious, explanations for human behaviors (if we deem them bad, but not if we deem them good); and we justify the routine psychiatric imprisonment of innocent persons on medical, not religious, grounds. If those explanations and justifications are erroneous and invalid, as I maintain, they are erroneous and invalid regardless of a person's religious belief or unbelief.

### Do Libertarians Oppose or Support Civil Commitment?

One of the besetting sins of psychiatry and psychoanalysis and all so-called mental health professions is that, as Rothbard himself observed, instead of criticizing and grappling "with the ideas or actions of people on their own terms, as correct or incorrect, right or wrong, good or bad, they are explained away by the analyst."

Sadly, this sin is not limited to psychoanalysts. All human beings are susceptible to it, libertarians included. Attributing embarrassing ideas and practices to mental illness is not the only way to avoid dealing with them. Ignoring them and refusing to take a stand about them is just as effective.

*The Myth of Mental Illness* was intended to be more than just an academic exercise in semantics. It was also intended

*In his later writings, Rothbard expressed unqualified agreement with my critique of the therapeutic state and the pivotal role of psychiatry in it.*

to be a denunciation of the moral legitimacy of the most violent method that the modern state possesses and wields in its perpetual effort to domesticate and control people, namely, depriving innocent individuals — with the full support of physicians and lawyers — not only of liberty but virtually of all of their constitutional rights, in the name of helping them.

Most libertarians are interested mainly in economic policies and philosophical issues, such as monetary policy, taxation, deregulation, foreign aid, welfare, the rule of law, justice, rights, and responsibilities. I am also interested in these policies and issues. However, the impact, on the everyday lives of ordinary people, of such social policies and scholarly debates is, for the most part, remote and indirect. Hence, I have been even more interested in certain social practices whose impact on the daily lives of people is immediate and direct, such as crime control, the regulation of drug

*continued on page 40*



# The Trouble with Harry

by R. W. Bradford

Harry Browne finally responded to *Liberty*.

Last August, former two-time libertarian party presidential candidate Harry Browne publicly charged that I had “imagined” and “invented” certain items about his presidential campaign in articles that I had written for this magazine. When I challenged him to back up his charges, he demurred, saying that he would respond on his website within “another couple of weeks.” I checked his website every few weeks or so, but I didn’t find so much as a word about my moral and intellectual flaws.

Finally, on Jan. 12, 2002, Browne published his response. First, he sought to prove that I consciously publish false information:

*Liberty* has published many articles about the LP, virtually all of which involved very careless reporting. But most of this report will examine only two *Liberty* articles, published in 2000. Even so, those two articles contained so many falsehoods that this report will be much too long. I hope you’ll bear with me, though, as I believe it’s important to understand that something that appears in a libertarian magazine isn’t necessarily true. And it’s important as well to understand the harm that is being done to the Libertarian Party . . .

Unfortunately, most of the coverage of the LP is written by the magazine’s publisher, R.W. Bradford (Bill Bradford), who is a very sloppy reporter. Consequently, many people have gained an erroneous impression of the Libertarian Party and the last two presidential campaigns from reading *Liberty*.

Okay, so just what “very careless reporting” had this particular “very sloppy reporter” done? Which of the “falsehoods” that are “so many” that discussing them all would make his 10,000-word attack on me “far too long”?

Well, Browne was content to cite the following specimen of such a “falsehood”:

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On page 31 Bradford refers to David Bergland as “Browne’s hand-picked candidate for National Chair.” (In 1998 Bergland had been elected by the national convention to be the Chair for the next two years.)

I sent an email to Bradford telling him that I had nothing to do with picking David Bergland to be the National Chair, that I hadn’t even known he was running until he announced it.

In a November 13, 2000, email reply to me, R.W. Bradford said, “Of course, I did not mean the term ‘hand-picked’ to be taken literally.” Then what did he mean? Did he really expect people to interpret the phrase “Browne’s hand-picked candidate” to mean that I had nothing to do with picking him?

He also said, “I had one unimpeachable source on the Bergland claim.” So he had an unimpeachable source tell him that I had hand-picked David Bergland, but he didn’t mean literally that I “hand-picked” him?

When I told Harry that I didn’t mean that he had literally “hand-picked” Bergland, I meant that I did not mean that he had literally picked him by hand to run. But that literal meaning is not the only meaning of the phrase “hand-picked.” My dictionary (*Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate*, if you want to look it up) lists the following meaning: “to select personally or for personal ends.”

At the time, I didn’t know when Browne learned of Bergland’s candidacy or whether he personally encouraged

Bergland to run. But I did know that Bergland was a close associate of Browne's, having been the national chair of Browne's 1996 campaign and part of his brain trust. And I knew that Browne was an extremely strong supporter of Bergland's campaign, and that he considered Bergland's election to be a matter of "life or death" for Browne's prospective candidacy in 2000. I also knew that the other major candidate for the position was generally critical of Browne's 1996 campaign and was believed to want to investigate charges that Browne had suborned various LP staffers during the campaign.

How did I know how strongly Browne supported Bergland? How did I know that he considered Bergland's election to be a matter of "life or death" for Browne's proposed 2000 campaign? As I indicated to Browne in the email he quotes, I had one "unimpeachable" source.

As a general rule, I do not reveal sources of facts reported in my stories. There are two reasons for this: Many stories

are so full of facts that listing sources would take up a huge amount of space and be of little interest to anyone; and, as a journalist, I must protect my sources. With regard to the LP and its presidential campaigns, I have gotten information from hundreds of people, including dozens who have worked for the LP or one of the campaigns. Reporting the source of who told me what could put their present or future jobs in jeopardy. If I freely reported the sources of every fact I report, people would not provide me the information that I need to report accurately and completely.

Having said that, I have decided to make an exception in this case, on grounds that the source has implicitly given me permission to do so.

The person who told me that Bergland was Browne's candidate was Harry Browne himself. In telephone conversations in June 1998, in which Browne was trying vigorously to convince me to attend the convention so that I could cast a vote for Bergland, Browne told me that he considered it

## Background: Harry Browne and *Liberty*

Browne didn't always harbor his current low opinion of *Liberty* and of my reporting. He formerly praised both in enthusiastic terms. Indeed, he publicly endorsed *Liberty* as recently as July 2000, and he lavishly praised my coverage of the 1996 convention. But his view of *Liberty*, its reporting and me in particular changed when *Liberty* began critical reporting of his campaign.

The first time he criticized our coverage was in the summer of 1998. At the time, Harry was a senior editor at *Liberty*, so when we prepared to publish a report on the 1998 convention, I sent a copy to him as a courtesy. The report, written by *Liberty* contributing editor Brian Doherty, was in my judgment a fine piece of reporting, describing what happened both on the podium and on the floor of the convention. Harry, however, was very unhappy about two things: first, Doherty reported comments from a Pennsylvania delegate that were critical of Michael Cloud, who had been Browne's chief fundraiser; second, Doherty reported a conversation between himself and the daughter of Steve Dasbach, the retiring LP national chair, who had been promised the paid position of national director if Browne's candidate for chair, David Bergland, was elected. "Dasbach's young daughter was hanging around the soda machines, expressing her eagerness for Bergland to win so that her Dad 'will get a good job and we can move to D.C.!'"

Browne argued that the anti-Cloud remarks were insignificant and should not be reported. I considered this opinion but decided to leave the passage in the article. It provided some local color. In addition, I suspected that Harry's real motivation for wanting it cut was that it portrayed Cloud in a unflattering light.

Doherty's second piece of reportage he claimed was simply an outright lie. This surprised me. Doherty had just finished a stint as a researcher and ghostwriter for Browne, who, I assumed, would not have hired him if he thought he was dishonest. So I called Doherty, who stood by his story, and provided additional details, which I passed on to Harry.

One detail Doherty had told me proved him a liar, according to Harry: Doherty's claim that the conversation had taken place next to the pop machines by the doors of the convention hall. The nearest pop machine to the convention hall was a good deal further away, Harry said, so Doherty must have fabricated the whole story. I called Doherty with this news, and he said that Harry had simply been misinformed and that there were indeed soda machines outside the doors that led to the loading dock. There followed phone calls and emails with Harry, who continued to insist that the conversation never happened and to condemn Doherty as a liar. Doherty surmised that Harry had asked someone at the convention where the nearest pop machine was and had been told it was farther away, and that therefore Doherty was lying. Both Doherty and I were taken aback by the whole matter. I didn't remove the passage from the article, and the issue died.

As early as 1997, I had heard rumors that the Browne campaign had misspent campaign funds. But the rumors came from Browne's severest critics, and I didn't attach much credibility to them. Sometime in 1998 or 1999, I went to the Federal Election Commission Website and began to look at the reports that the Browne campaign had filed. To my surprise, I learned that several members of Browne's staff were paid salaries that seemed a bit, well, exorbitant, and that the campaign had spent relatively little money on conventional campaign activities. I filed this information away, figuring that it merited further investigation and, perhaps, an article in *Liberty* at some time in the future, a time when reader interest in politics would be much higher.

Early in 2000, the staff of *Liberty* began a systematic examination of the Browne campaign's spending, based entirely on the reports that the campaign had made to the FEC. We discovered that Browne's campaign manager had been paid nearly \$130,000, despite having no previous political experience, and that the campaign had paid over 40% of its funds to staffers and consultants. But this wasn't

absolutely critical to the future success of the LP that his close friend Bergland be elected, and that he would drop out of the race if Bergland lost. He urged me again and again to attend the convention so that I could vote for Bergland.

The situation was pretty simple. Browne wanted to get the 2000 nomination. He believed that if his close political associate David Bergland were not elected national chair, he would not be able to get that nomination.

I concluded from this that he had, in *Webster's* words "selected" Bergland "personally or for personal ends." And I reported this in *Liberty*.

What's curious is that Harry charges me with making "numerous factual errors," yet provides only a single example of what could be considered, at worst, to be a slightly inaccurate characterization. This is the example that Browne suggests can "best establish" his charges against me!

Apparently on the theory that this pathetically limp example demonstrated my mendacity and incompetence, he

what was really disturbing. We also learned that, despite promising to spend considerable funds on the purchase of advertising and claiming in its report on the campaign that it had indeed spent over \$238,673 on advertising, the campaign had reported to the FEC that it had spent only \$8,840 for advertising purchases.

While that story was developing, another aspect of Browne's involvement in the Libertarian Party came under scrutiny. Jacob Hornberger, head of the Future of Freedom Foundation, publicly accused Browne and his staff of an improper relationship with the LP, which had resulted in conflicts of interest. In particular, he charged that Project Archimedes, an outreach project designed and managed by Browne's close associate Perry Willis, for which the party had raised hundreds of thousands of dollars and which Browne and Willis had said would result in 200,000 new members, had been a colossal failure and had wasted huge amounts of party funds.

We investigated Hornberger's charges, concluding that Project Archimedes had resulted in far less growth than it had promised, but had actually cost the party far less than Willis, Browne and other LP figures had claimed. We also concluded that its managers had systematically misrepresented its prospects and costs in order to maximize fundraising, and had spent the money they raised for Project Archimedes for other purposes.

We published a report on all this in our July 2000 issue, which appeared in May. In addition to our audit of Browne's 1996 campaign and Project Archimedes, we explored charges that Browne had fraudulently raised funds in early 2000 and that there had been a serious conflict of interest between him and his staffers, on the one hand, and the LP, on the other. We found both of these charges to have a certain merit, but we also found that the fund-raising campaign in question escaped qualifying as fraud as defined on technical legal grounds and that there was insufficient evidence to conclude that a conflict of interest had harmed the party.

None of this was enough to preclude Browne's agreeing to endorse *Liberty* for a direct mail circulation campaign in July, for which we agreed to use Browne's newest book as a premium. □

went on to attack me, as nearly as I can tell, for not stating my case against him in sufficiently strong language:

On the bottom of page 40, Bradford says:

... whatever Browne's ethical shortcomings, he's really the only plausible candidate.

Since Bill Bradford doesn't mean to be taken literally, I guess we don't need to wonder how someone with "ethical

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*Harry goes on to attack me, as nearly as I can tell, for not stating my case against him in sufficiently strong language.*

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shortcomings" could be "the only plausible candidate." But it should indicate something about Bradford's own ethical standards that he could consider someone with "ethical shortcomings" to be "the only plausible candidate."

Leaving aside the curious logic — from the fact that I once used an expression figuratively, he concludes that I never intend to be taken literally — Harry turns to impugn my "ethical standards" and claiming that I never specified exactly what "ethical shortcomings" I thought he had displayed.

This simply stuns me. I shall not reiterate here all Browne's ethical shortcomings that I, along with other editors of *Liberty*, have detailed in these pages. When the article he's criticizing appeared, *Liberty* had just published a 16-page investigation of charges of various ethical shortcomings that Browne had been publicly accused of, and concluded that Browne and his close associates had engaged in systematic misrepresentation of a whole raft of facts in order to maximize fundraising, and had avoided committing fraud, in one case, only by a legal technicality. Now he's criticizing me for not spelling out the sordid details again?

Despite his claimed inability to understand what charges I'm talking about, Browne seems at least vaguely aware of the charges I'd made. In his very next paragraph, he takes up one of the specific charges that we made: that his 1996 campaign had spent far less to purchase advertising than it had claimed in its fundraising activities and its lengthy report on its campaign expenditures:

But what are the ethical shortcomings? Bradford doesn't say. Have I lied to anyone? Have I corrupted people? Have I shaded the truth?

Perhaps . . . I've been raising money and spending it on myself and my "consultants." On page 30, discussing the 1996 campaign, Bradford refers to . . . the reports the campaign filed with the Federal Election Commission (FEC). It turns out the campaign spent less than \$9,000 to purchase advertising, out of \$1,430,000 spent.

The actual figure for advertising was \$211,226. But I suppose the figure of \$9,000 is close enough for government work or for *Liberty*. The \$9,000 figure didn't come from the FEC reports; they came from a rumor that's been floating around the LP for several years. . . .

Did we spend a lot of money on advertising in 1996? No, we

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\*The correction of a minor clerical error since discovered raises the total expenditures to purchase advertising to \$9,585.50.

didn't have a lot of money (as we didn't have in 2000 either). I wish we had spent millions of dollars on advertising, but such sums weren't available. In any event, we spent about 21 times as much as *Liberty* reported.

In my analysis of how the 1996 Browne campaign spent the money donated to it, I listed in detail how I concluded that "the campaign spent less than \$9,000 to purchase advertising, out of \$1,430,000 spent."\* The staff of *Liberty* systematically examined the reports the campaign had made to the Federal Election Commission. Peter Gillen, Martin Solomon,

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*Apparently, Browne believes that his mere assertion is enough to disprove the mountain of documentary evidence that anyone can obtain from the FEC website.*

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and I spent hundreds of hours, downloading nearly a thousand pages of documents from the Website, printing them, copying the data into a database, then checking and cross-checking the numbers. Our database lists every expenditure the campaign had made, along with the purpose of each. Only seven expenditures were made for the purchase of advertising, and those seven expenditures totaled just \$9,585.50. The details of our investigation, along with publicly available documents that substantiate every figure we published, were included in the *Liberty* report. (Strangely, Browne doesn't extend his attacks to Gillen, now a reporter with a Massachusetts newspaper, or Solomon, now an attorney in private practice in Florida.)

Browne claims that our figures didn't in fact come from the FEC and that they came from a "rumor." He offers no evidence for this. He claims that he actually spent \$211,226 on advertising, but offers no substantiation.\* He merely asserts that the figures we got from the FEC are wrong and that his are correct. Apparently, Browne believes that his mere assertion is enough to disprove the mountain of documentary evidence that anyone can obtain from the FEC website, and that *Liberty* did in fact obtain.†

Then he challenges my claim that he had gone "so far as to promise that he would not run again unless Project Archimedes achieved its goal," going on at length about how I must have hallucinated this claim, and, again, challenging my sources.:

Promised whom? For what purpose? When did I promise this? Who heard the promise? Why did I make it? What "reliable source" told Bradford this?

These are intended, I believe, as rhetorical questions,

intended to show what a mendacious journalist I am. Harry apparently thinks that I cannot answer such questions without embarrassing myself. He's wrong. All of them can be easily answered by anyone who reads the *LP News*, an article that was the "reliable source" that Harry is so confident I didn't have.

From *LP News*, April 1997§:

In a letter to his 1996 major donors in mid-February, Browne wrote: "I won't run again if it has to be the same kind of campaign we ran in 1996.

"To make an impact on the future of America, we have to run a campaign that's comparable in size to those of the Republicans and Democrats," he said. And to have that, "it all comes down to one thing: How big the Libertarian Party is."

"Today the LP has about 22,000 members," he noted. "While that's the largest membership in its history, it is still way too small to make an impact on American politics. We need a party at least 10 times that size — 200,000 or more members."

When Browne said this, Project Archimedes, though it hadn't yet been christened, was already in motion. It was a proposal to use direct mail to recruit enough new members to bring LP membership to 200,000 — exactly the growth that Browne said the party must get by the "beginning of 2000," or else he "won't run again."‡

\* \* \*

Browne's attack on me goes on for nearly 10,000 words. I suppose that I could go on and refute virtually every claim Browne makes. But I don't see any reason to do so. Suffice it to say that I stand by every word I've written on the subjects he discusses.

Harry Browne is old news. Yes, he's still raising money

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*Harry heaps scorn on me for not revealing the "reliable source" from whom I obtained this information. I am happy to reveal my source: the information came from an article in the Libertarian Party News.*

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from donors to his past presidential campaigns to fund his new foundation's efforts to put libertarian ads on television. (It's been raising funds for more than a year, but is yet to purchase a single ad.) Nevertheless, the LP has all but repudiated him for his role in yet another scandal: the discovery last year of evidence that Browne had, as had long been charged, conspired with the LP's chief executive to deceive the party and exploit it for their own personal ends, and the party has refused to rent Browne's new organization its mail-

§ Available at <http://www.lp.org/lpn/9704-Browne.html>

‡ Project Archimedes was eventually implemented. It almost immediately became obvious that while the project could recruit a modest number of new members, it could not recruit anywhere near the number its managers' claimed it would get. Nevertheless, its managers claimed it was "on target" and they continued to raise substantial sums of money — far more than was actually spent on it — to fund the project. In the end, it fell about 94% short of its goal. And Browne ran for president again, despite his earlier promise. See "Project Archimedes," *Liberty*, July 2000.

\* This figure is \$27,447 less than the figure the Browne campaign provided in its "1996 Presidential Campaign Report." Browne offers no explanation for the discrepancy.

† All of the 1996 Browne campaign's expenditures are detailed in its reports to the Federal Election Commission, available at [www.fec.gov](http://www.fec.gov), in the form of photocopies of the original documents. Downloading them and printing them up is a bit tedious, and curious readers can find a list of all expenditures at [www.libertysoft.com/liberty/hbfec96](http://www.libertysoft.com/liberty/hbfec96).

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ing list or allow it to advertise in the *LP News* until such time as Browne at least publicly admits his role in the whole sordid affair.

Many of Browne's followers will, I am sure, accept his demonization of me. I've already received a couple of semi-literate emails, and I am sure that better-written emails will come my way. It is not surprising that some of those who have generously supported Harry Browne have an inclination to believe in him, despite the abysmal absence of merit in his attack. Just as there's a natural human tendency to support what you believe in, there's a tendency to believe in what you support. Harry Browne may not have been very

good at getting votes, but he was very good at raising funds.

As for me, everything about this has been sad. It's not just that I supported Browne so strongly and now see him in such a different light. It's that he did things that were wrong, and he cannot acknowledge that they were. Of course, none of us is without sin. But it would be a lot easier to come to grips with what Harry has done if Harry would voice even the slightest regret.

He had the ability to articulate libertarian ideas equal to any public speaker of our era. And now he's reduced to writing dim but impassioned defenses of his record in a pathetic attempt to maintain his dwindling donor base. □

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### Enron, from page 24

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reams of incriminating documents.

It's reassuring that so many investors put their cynicism and moral relativism aside long enough to mercilessly pummel Enron for its transgressions. And it all happened in the unregulated marketplace — just as free-market advocates predicted it would.

The final lesson of Enron is probably the most surprising. And as the facts unravel it may ultimately turn out to be illusory. But for now, it's reassuring that in an age when White House bedrooms and presidential pardons have their price, the Bush administration isn't offering a taxpayer bailout. Or helping arrange credit from banks. Or doing much of anything else except issuing subpoenas and distancing themselves from Enron's fallout.

It appears that having a web of Beltway connections in both parties and being the single biggest contributor to President Bush's political campaigns wasn't enough to buy Enron an economic bailout. It's sweet justice that the company that lobbied so heavily for power deregulation is now being left to its own devices in that market. The \$2.4 million Enron poured into political campaigns in 2000 may win the dubious distinction of being their worst investment of all.

In Enron's waning days, executives' repeated calls to Commerce Secretary Donald Evans, Treasury Secretary Paul

O'Neill, and Treasury Undersecretary Peter Fisher were essentially ignored. Even calls by former Treasury Chief Robert Rubin — chairman of Enron's biggest lender — were blown off. Now that's what I call a principled commitment to deregulation.

Treasury Secretary O'Neill showed unusual clarity of thought regarding the Enron debacle in an appearance on "Fox News Sunday." "Companies come and go," he said, adding that "part of the genius of capitalism" is that "people get to make good decisions or bad decisions. And they get to pay the consequences or to enjoy the fruits of their decisions. That's the way the system works." That may go down in history as the single most sensible remark ever uttered by a government employee.

And so, the story of Enron may end happily. Sort of. The bad guys lose their shirts, California Gov. Grey Davis gets his wish about Kenneth Lay sharing an 8'x10' cell with a guy who says "Hi Honey, my name's Spike," and free-market economics still holds. This may not mean much to the employees whose 401(k)s got vaporized, but it's good news for defenders of free markets. More importantly, it's bad news for those peddling the bogus story of Enron as a case of "market failure." □

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### Rothbard, from page 34

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use, and psychiatric coercions and excuses.

In the United States alone, there are approximately one million civil commitments per year, that is, more than 2,500 per day. (The practice is common in all advanced societies.) This figure does not include the countless times minors are assaulted with unwanted psychiatric interventions. Depriving defendants of their right to trial by declaring them mentally unfit and depriving them of finite prison sentences by declaring them not guilty by reason of insanity are two other obvious and important instances in a long list of psychiatric violations of human rights.

The reactions of psychiatrists and other mental health professionals to my likening involuntary psychiatry to involuntary servitude and organized psychiatry ("psychiatric slavery") to chattel slavery is not my concern here. Instead, my concern is to suggest — more pointedly than I have done in the past — that libertarians, as self-defined guardians of

individual liberty and responsibility, have a duty to confront and articulate their position on psychiatric coercions and excuses, all of which rest on the concept of mental illness as squarely as the beliefs and practices of theistic religions rest on the concept of God.

The issue before us is whether psychiatric coercions and excuses are — by the light of what we know today — virtuous or wicked, praiseworthy or blameworthy, social practices. Where do libertarians stand on the practice of depriving innocent people of liberty in the name of "mental illness"? I believe it behooves libertarians to candidly acknowledge whether they support or oppose statist-psychiatric interventions and articulate the reasons for their position.

Psychiatric slavery — like chattel slavery — is an either-or issue. A person either supports it or opposes it. *Tertium non datur.* □

# Bad Boy of the WPA

*by Miles N. Fowler*

How does a good writer get mixed up in a welfare program for writers?

Under the title “Federal One,” Franklin Roosevelt’s Works Progress Administration set up the Federal Art Project, the Federal Theater Project, the Federal Music Project, the Historical Records Survey, and the Federal Writers’ Project (FWP). The last is among the most fondly remembered WPA programs because of its often-colorful American Guide Series. The task of each state branch of the FWP was to contribute a newly researched guidebook to its state and to publish separately whatever related material seemed appropriate. In the words of Harry L. Hopkins, the WPA’s director, the project was “to present to the American people a portrait of America — its history, folklore, scenery, cultural backgrounds, social and economic trends, and racial factors.” Such is the nostalgia for those times that the state guides have become collector’s items. Even the editions reprinted after World War II, whether to promote tourism or exploit interest in the guides, are collectible.

Popular history has expunged from memory the project’s reality of wasteful spending, inefficient bureaucracy, and partisan politics. Historian Petra Schindler-Carter, who is sympathetic to the FWP, admits that romanticism has distorted the picture. Many of the accounts she read in her research “erect an image of the FWP as an administrative chaos constantly careening towards dissolution.” The project “had to overcome countless internal and external hardships to produce the American Guide Series.” Whereas, in the popular imagination, “the FWP also tends to be reduced to the big city offices of New York and Chicago where the small band of later famous writers like Richard Wright, John Cheever, and Saul Bellow congregated . . . the vast majority of the FWP experience was vastly different from the commonly held view of a bohemian confusion.” There was confusion, but it was caused by bureaucracy, not bohemianism.

The FWP experience left many of its participants frus-

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trated and disillusioned, including a writer named Vardis Fisher. As he conscientiously tried to accomplish the job assigned him as director of the Idaho FWP, his superiors hindered and delayed his efforts, bedeviled him with ludicrous directives, and gave him a lesson in how government programs not only waste money and energy but undermine their own goals.

Fisher was born in 1895 in eastern Idaho and grew up in the Antelope Hills area where people did not know that the frontier was supposed to have closed. He came from a long line of pioneers so independent that they barely lived within the law. (His father and uncle never bought hunting licenses because they refused to acknowledge laws that had not existed when they were young.) Fisher and his younger brother were taught at home during their early years and later attended distant public schools where they were outcasts because of their ragged clothes; but there was nothing impoverished about the Fisher boys’ minds; each went on to earn a Ph.D.

After stateside military service during World War I, Fisher flirted with socialism, but, while he did not immediately abandon the notion that government intervention might sometimes be appropriate, he soon recognized radical socialism to be an illusory ideology. He later wrote:

The communist intellectual, as I have observed him, if he is not a cynical opportunist, is an evasive emotionally immature idealist, full to his gullet with loneliness, impractical idealism,

wishful thinking, and impatience with the existing order. He really believes — and this, born of ignorance, is his fatal weakness and his vice — that if he were in a position of power, entrusted with the greatest happiness of the greatest number, he would be wise, able and incorruptible. He scornfully dismisses Lord Acton's famous statement that power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. His blind self-love, his narcissistic self-indulgence, and his fanatical talent for converting truth into error in the service of his ends, are possibly the worst that can be said about him.

In 1935 Fisher was a poet and novelist with six published books to his credit, but he made no more than \$800 a year from them. Fisher had recently lost a teaching job at the University of Montana at Missoula and lived with his wife and two sons on his parents' Idaho ranch and was close to

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*How could professional writers become civil servants, and if this was make-work for unemployed writers, what was the sense of it in Idaho?*

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being a subsistence farmer. In spite of his family's poverty, Fisher had not contemplated accepting help from the government until he received an unexpected telegram from Washington, D.C., offering him the job of Idaho FWP director.

Bernard DeVoto later wrote that "only a small fraction" of FWP employees were "even in the humblest sense, genuine writers." This was true even of some of the FWP's state directors who were, after all, political appointees. Fisher was somewhat unusual in being both a writer and unemployed. Throughout the WPA, most people took whatever work was available whether it suited them or not, and this was especially true on the Writers' Project. But reality did not keep proponents of the FWP from pretending that everyone on the FWP was a writer. In a Jan. 4, 1936, letter to the *Saturday Review of Literature*, the FWP's director, Henry G. Alsberg, proclaimed, "For the first time in the history of the United States writers are working for the government as writers." Neither did the facts keep them from holding out great expectations for the brave new partnership between the government and the artist. Historian Ronald W. Taber says that Hopkins' assistant, Jacob Baker, who is credited with suggesting a relief project for writers, "maintained that these writers could produce material of permanent value for the nation" and that "such a cultural project would nurture literary talent which might otherwise grow stale during depression times." Katherine Kellock, a co-creator of the FWP, hoped that the government would "be fathering and producing the masterpieces — dramas, pictures, novels, operas, epic poems — a crude commercial world had scorned." The reality, of course, was that FWP employees worked within a bureaucracy. Most of them were nonwriting clerks and researchers. If they wrote anything it was only what they were told to, and only about their state or locality.

Finding the right state directors for the FWP was a continuing problem, and one that held back the progress of some state branches. When Harold G. Merriam was

appointed state director of the Montana Writers' Project in 1935, he was asked whether he could recommend any suitable writers to be directors of other states. As head of the Department of English at the University of Montana at Missoula, it was Merriam who had recently let Fisher go. Believing him to be in financial straits, Merriam decided to send a job his way.

"Out of the blue," Fisher wrote more than two decades later in *Orphans in Gethsemane*, "there came a messenger from the telegraph office twenty miles distant." The telegram read:

THE WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION IS  
ESTABLISHING WRITERS PROJECTS IN ALL THE FORTY  
EIGHT STATES EACH UNDER A STATE DIRECTOR STOP  
WILL YOU ACCEPT THE POSITION AS DIRECTOR FOR  
IDAHO STOP CAN OFFER SALARY OF TWENTY SIX  
HUNDRED STOP PLEASE WIRE COLLECT STOP DATA  
AND LETTER FOLLOW  
ASSOCIATE NATIONAL DIRECTOR  
ROBERT BINGHAM

The fictional "Robert Bingham" appears to stand in for George Cronyn, assistant national director of the FWP. (I will try to distinguish between Fisher's novel and what a historian and a biographer have confirmed. While much of what takes place in *Orphans in Gethsemane* corresponds to history, I have noted some minor discrepancies and am wary that dramatic license might lurk even where I least expect it.)

In the novel, Fisher's alter ego, Vridar (pronounced Freeder) Hunter, stares at the telegram wondering whether they have completely lost their minds in Washington, D.C. How could professional writers become civil servants, and if this was make-work for unemployed writers, what was the sense of it in Idaho? "There aren't [but] three writers in Idaho and the other two don't need jobs," the novel's protagonist says to his wife. ("Idaho has no unemployed writers,"

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*Katherine Kellock hoped that the government would "be fathering and producing the masterpieces — dramas, pictures, novels, operas, epic poems — a crude commercial world had scorned."*

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the real-life Fisher stated flatly in a letter to Washington, D.C.) Looking more closely at the telegram, Hunter says, "Forty-six words, and they could easily have cut ten." He also notes that the type of telegram Bingham sent cost the taxpayer more than necessary.

Though Hunter is skeptical, he decides that he cannot turn down any job offer when he has a family to support. Besides, he is curious to see the leviathan from the inside. While he thinks it over, another telegram arrives "which with profuse apologies said that it was impossible to offer a salary of more than twenty-three hundred." (This, in fact, was Fisher's annual salary as director of the Idaho branch of the FWP. For the sake of comparison, Fisher's assistant professor's salary from New York University in 1929 had been \$1,800.) Hunter muses that he had better hurry and take the

job. "Tomorrow, there will be a third wire, still longer, saying that the salary offer is two thousand. I begin to understand that one of the best places to observe a man is in the telegraph office when he is spending someone else's money."

Fisher, like his fictional protagonist, vowed that he would take the job only if he could actually do what he was paid to do. He promised himself — as he would later promise others — that the Idaho Writers' Project would not become a boondoggle. He did not waste the taxpayers' money in replying to Cronyn. On Oct. 2, 1935, he sent a telegram collect:

I ACCEPT  
VARDIS FISHER

"Merriam saw the job as a way for Fisher to pick up some easy money," says Fisher's biographer, Tim Woodward, but Fisher, in his novel, goes further, ascribing a telegram to "Professor Elmer T. Merrick" that advises, "Don't take it seriously . . . It is not intended that we should achieve anything but only that we should put the jobless to work so they will vote for Roosevelt." Other WPA minions tell Hunter much the same thing. Indeed, the WPA wanted its project directors to hire Democrats before they hired Republicans or independents. (The U.S. Senate's Committee on Campaign Expenditures investigated the 1938 midterm elections in four states and found a pattern of WPA officials pressuring workers to support the Democratic party and its candidates.) Hunter is not explicitly penalized for voting Republican while working for the WPA, but that might have been different in a state with a strong Republican party.

Fisher reported to the office of J. L. Hood, the state WPA administrator in Boise, on Oct. 25, 1935. Jacob Baker, the WPA administrator who was then in charge of Federal One, had informed Hood of Fisher's coming, but Hood "had no idea what Fisher was supposed to accomplish." If his novel is any guide, Fisher and Hood (renamed "Roger Wood") took an almost instant dislike to each other. The same was to be true of Fisher's meetings with some other WPA officials. By his own description, he was still "standing around in the halls looking like a fellow hunting for a job" in early November. Fisher also said that he was forced to make his office in "a packing box in the hallway," though it is not clear whether this was during the "standing around" period or whether it refers to the little one-room office Fisher was given before the end of the year.

Somehow, perhaps through wishful thinking, Hood was under the impression that Fisher's project would last only six months and employ only ten people. In December, Fisher complained to FWP director Alsberg that "some persons of importance in the WPA set-up here have said my project was only a gesture and would collapse in a month" and that he was facing contempt "from certain sources within the WPA." I presume that these complaints refer not only to Hood but also to the man in charge of the labor pool (called "Archie J. Reese" in the novel). Fisher's letter relates the last straw: "[A] man furiously tells me that my progress is to be penalized by the incompetence within his department." Fisher put pressure on Washington, D.C., until he was given a decent office and a good secretary, but his main problem remained finding and keeping competent workers.

Initially, he made do by choosing among unemployed

truck drivers, grocery clerks, blacksmiths, dry cleaners, and a lawyer, but the paperwork on new hires for the Writers' Project was given the lowest priority and took weeks. Fisher complained until the interval was moved up to a few days. WPA headquarters mandated new hires by looking at unemployment statistics. The higher the unemployment rate, the more employees the state director had to hire from relief rolls. Because Fisher's project was the newest one making demands on the WPA job pool, he was getting employees that other projects did not want. Fisher suggests in his novel that some of the people he was given to work with were unemployed for personal and psychological reasons rather than because of a poor job market. (One urinates on the floor in the middle of the office.)

Fisher was among the lowest paid state directors, with (according to his novel) the second-lowest budget. Idaho FWP workers not only received less than FWP workers in more urbanized states, but FWP wages were the lowest in the WPA — on average, \$63 a month. When the local economy improved, Fisher's best workers left for better-paying jobs.

Fisher needed genuine help. He wound up doing nearly all of the writing and most of the research, which involved

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*Alsberg answered a House inquiry into why the FWP had produced only one guide after nearly two years: "The tour form is a difficult form. It is like a sonnet."*

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driving throughout Idaho. His most valued employees were a secretary, a stenographer, a cartographer, and a former schoolteacher who was able to do well at research tasks. All four were hired from the open job market. Fisher was allowed to hire only one competent employee from the open market — paid as much as \$100 a month — for every ten useless ones hired from relief. Early in his tenure, Fisher received a telegram, that read, "Put on ten more writers. In two weeks, put on ten more." "I'm sitting right in the middle of one of the swellest ironies life ever threw my way," he wrote to Cronyn. "It's profanity and hair-pulling and many a sardonic chuckle." He soon wrote to Alsberg, begging him not to require the Idaho FWP to increase its staff size.

Fisher sent drafts of material to be included in the guidebook to headquarters as early as the spring and summer of 1936. The FWP's official anticipation of great art was belied by less lofty actual expectations. When Fisher submitted a particularly lyrical description of the Salmon River, Alsberg wrote back, "To be quite frank, I didn't expect any real literature from our Directors. . . . I passed [your piece] along to the higher-ups, so they could see the quality of work being turned out in Idaho." Cronyn wrote to Fisher, "In spite of the many handicaps you have had in your organization and editorial work, yours is the only body of State Editorial Copy which we have retained as being suitable for Central editing. The copies from other states so far have not been in any condition to edit here. I think, therefore, you are to be congratulated on making a fine effort in the face of difficulties."

This flattery, in all probability, had the ulterior motive of lulling Fisher into complacency. The FWP was first amused and then alarmed by Fisher's intention to publish Idaho's guidebook before any other. His superiors had their own timetable for publication of the American Guide Series, and Idaho did not figure so prominently in it. The FWP originally planned to stall all the state directors until Washington, D.C. had published the first guide. In their minds, Fisher was the greatest threat to this scheme, although the actual problem was that the D.C. guide was barely begun while Fisher was sending in suitable material.

Whether or not they were deliberate delaying tactics, Fisher received countless communications from headquar-

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*State directors like Fisher were expected to sit around collecting their paychecks until they received the go ahead to publish.*

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ters telling him to conform to complicated guidelines that prevented early publication. The FWP wanted all of the state guidebooks to be uniform in many details of format, but memoranda sent to the state directors were contradictory and likely to be rescinded shortly after being issued. Many directives were completely unworkable. At one point, headquarters insisted that each of the guides begin describing "tours" of their state in the north and work their way south, which happened to be impractical for a tour of Idaho because most of the traffic in the state flowed from south to north and, accordingly, the forestry service had placed all of their signs so that they only faced travelers coming from the south.

"I don't like all this bewilderment of orders that rescind orders or contradict orders," Fisher complained to Cronyn. "The discrepancies in the various instructions we have received leave our finance administrator throwing up his hands. What I want is explicit and irrevocable orders to go ahead as I was first instructed to or an invitation to resign." Fisher got neither. Nor were such arbitrary directives aimed at Fisher alone. Taber quotes a verse from a California FWP writer:

I think that I have never tried  
A job as painful as the guide,  
A guide which changes every day  
Because our betters feel that way.

Alsberg dismissed Fisher's complaints, saying that the state guides must be uniform without any exceptions. He would later answer a House inquiry into why the FWP had produced only one guide after nearly two years: "The tour form is a difficult form. It is like a sonnet." This is as if the tour form's complexity, having been set for four centuries, was beyond his control.

Editors at the national office even wanted to change the text of the Idaho guide in ways that were factually incorrect. They told Fisher that the Grand Teton National Park is in Idaho (it is entirely in Wyoming). Alsberg told Fisher that there could be no "unusual natural bridge" near Arco, Idaho because "consultants in Washington [D.C.] know nothing of

the bridge east of Arco and doubt that it can be particularly unusual inasmuch as they were unable to find anything on its existence." Fisher answered, "Well let the gentlemen try again. The bridge, on the contrary, is one of the most remarkable natural phenomenon in the state and we shall have a photograph of it in the Guide — if we have a Guide."

Fisher was not only hectored about style and geographical facts. He was censored when he wrote about union violence in Idaho 30 years earlier. Headquarters worried that such material might be construed as being unfavorable to labor unions. Yet the FWP let the Massachusetts guide include a leftist account of the Sacco and Vanzetti case, which got the FWP in trouble with the House Un-American Activities Committee and led Alsberg to set up an official system of censorship. Fisher was also told that he could not include pictures of Idaho potatoes in his state's guide because that might be regarded as excessive boosterism.

While FWP higher-ups viewed Fisher as oppositional, he was actually a team player when a task contributed to the accomplishment of the project's goals. Alsberg and Fisher both contacted Idaho Gov. C. Ben Ross, who asked the state's forest supervisors to provide technical help and tourist information to the Writers' Project. In spite of Republican opposition to the WPA and FWP, Fisher, a political independent who understood their skepticism all too well, succeeded in reassuring many that he did not intend to let the Idaho Writers' Project become a boondoggle. He found it most effective to appeal to state and regional pride against the arrogant East by making his disagreements with headquarters known to local politicians, newspaper editors, and chambers of commerce so that they could send their own complaints to Alsberg. This ultimately served the purpose of the FWP, however, by turning principled opposition to spending any tax money at all on the project into opposition

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*"Don't take it seriously. It is not intended that we should achieve anything but only that we should put the jobless to work so they will vote for Roosevelt."*

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to the mismanagement of the project from Washington, D.C. In enlisting the help of skeptics, Fisher must have made many of them forget about their principled objections to the whole project and imagine themselves to be helping to eliminate government waste. By August of 1936, Fisher could report that "not even the most invincible Republicans of this state believe that this project has been one of boondoggling."

Although he may have rationalized his participation in the federal bureaucracy by focusing on the goal of actual, timely publication of a guide, Fisher's seduction by the leviathan was hardly complete or painless. In the novel, he tells a story that, although not confirmed in my nonfiction sources, is included here because so much else that is outrageous in the novel turns out to be true. In mid-1936, "Maxwell Cahan," the fictional Alsberg, calls all of the directors to a conference in Salt Lake City. The novel's Idaho director writes a letter to his wife from Utah:

What a damned innocent naïve thickwitted hillbilly I am! I traveled by the cheapest means; ate sandwiches on the train; checked in at a second-rate hotel, all to save public funds; and though I was not able to verify this I was told (1) that the California directors (two short fat fellows built like barrels) came by special plane; (2) that after two or three days of it they quit in disgust and chartered a plane to fly home (I'd like to see their offices down there!); (3) that most of the directors, some with entourage, demanded only the best accommodations (I can say this, that I was invited to one of the parties and saw some of the directors so stinking drunk that they didn't know whether they were in Zion or Stalin's Utopia). A rumor went around that our boss himself got bored with Mormon food and took off for San Francisco. I know this, that he vanished; that a full-dress meeting was called for ten one morning and the boss was not there, nor did any of us see him again before the conference adjourned. I guess I was the only one in the whole damned outfit who misunderstood the purpose of Mr. Harry Hopkins.

Thousands of dollars were absolutely squandered, while so-called public servants drank and wenched and raised hell. Not a single iota of good was accomplished — and at last I have got it into my simple Antelope Hills head that accomplishment was no part of the purpose. The boys and girls just got together at public expense — and I stood around and watched them, who only three or four years ago actually wondered if Communism might be a good thing!

The moment is an epiphany for Hunter:

Filled with disgust, shame, and anger he returned to Idaho, believing that his disillusionment was now complete. Those who founded the American system, he told himself, had not been foolish idealists like him, but wise men, not cynical but knowing; not without faith in the future of mankind, but without faith in any man when given too much power. They had known, even more than Lord Acton was to know later, that absolute power corrupted. Looking back across the empires that had risen and fallen, they had known that the power to tax was the power to destroy. They had known that restless itch in most people to manage the affairs of other people — and their inordinate vanity — their incredible capacity for self-deception. These things he told himself, riding back on the bus.

Fisher's disillusionment never led him to abandon his original promise to publish a guide to Idaho with all due speed. Such ambition was rare in the FWP. Well over a year after the beginning of the FWP, only a tiny bit of local and no statewide material had been published. On Sept. 23, 1936, Fisher told Alsberg's office that Caxton Printers, under the management of J.H. Gipson, would publish *Idaho: A Guide in Word and Picture* by Jan. 2, 1937. Alsberg told Fisher to go ahead, but the Washington, D.C. staff spent the next three months quibbling and demanding text revisions. Toward the end of October, Fisher received harassing telegrams and letters from Alsberg and Cronyn questioning the suggested price of the guide and demanding 439 revisions of the tour of the state; threatening to withhold authorization for publication if their demands were not met. By this time, Fisher fully understood that Alsberg wanted the District of Columbia to produce the first guidebook, followed by the "most important" states. State directors like Fisher were expected to sit around collecting their paychecks until they received the go

ahead to publish. This offended his work ethic, and he reiterated his pledge to produce a guide for the state of Idaho before any other state.

Alsberg put Cronyn on a train for Boise to tell Fisher and Gipson face-to-face that they were not to publish until they had made "two thousand changes, corrections, and additions." Fisher picked up Cronyn at the train station on Nov. 7. The story in *Orphans in Gethsemane*, the gist of which Fisher later confirmed to be true, has Hunter and "Reuben T. Rhode" (Gipson) drink whiskey-colored water while "Bingham" downs Rhode's best whiskey. In perhaps the funniest scene in the novel, an inebriated Bingham reviews photographs intended for inclusion in the guide, rejecting nearly every one by sailing it across Rhode's dining room. The two Idahoans humor all of Bingham's demands and then load him onto the midnight train for D.C.

Hunter's secretary asks him the next day:

"What'll he think when he sobers up?"

"He may decide he's not quite the man of destiny he thought he was.

"What'll Harry Hopkins do?"

"He's too busy trying to make the Social Register to do anything."

Once back in the nation's capital, Cronyn did send further instructions. He wanted Fisher to make half of one tour north to south and the other half south to north. Kellock, the

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*The national office told Fisher that the Grand Teton National Park is in Idaho and that there could be no "unusual natural bridge" near Arco, Idaho.*

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project editor who dreamed of the government becoming the "unfailing patron" of "masterpieces," continued to issue numerous tour-form revisions of her own (though she might have been sending hers to all of the state directors, not just to Fisher). Without paying any further attention to these bureaucratic absurdities, Fisher and Gipson went ahead with the Idaho guide. It was published — complete with the forbidden pictures of potatoes — in January 1937, and Fisher had personally written 374 of its 431 pages.

Alsberg and his staff changed their tune once the book was published, praising Fisher and his work. Naturally, Alsberg was willing to shoulder his share of credit, too. Two principle motives for Alsberg's embrace of the insubordinate Idaho director soon became obvious. Sen. Pope had warned Alsberg that it was "paramount" that the FWP publish a guide by the time Congress met in January 1937. Remarkably, it seems that it was not until Congress actually began asking questions about what the FWP was up to that Alsberg took Pope's warning seriously. Suddenly he needed the Idaho guide, the only evidence he had that the American Guide Series might fulfill its goal. Alsberg had to put the best face on Fisher's insubordination when literary critics began praising the Idaho guide in the leading newspapers and magazines. Bernard DeVoto, in the *Saturday Review of Literature*, called it "an unalloyed triumph." Bruce Catton



declared that not only the FWP but the WPA had "justified itself abundantly. . . . Less than \$15,000 was spent on the book from first to last. . . . [N]ot merely a comprehensive and readable guide to the state of Idaho . . . ; it is actually a bit of literature, worth reading for its own sake and reflecting vast credit on everybody concerned." Someone fed Catton incomplete numbers; Taber says that the cost of the Idaho guide was well in excess of \$16,000. (He also estimates that the FWP spent a total of more than \$27 million and that the average state guide cost \$100,000 to produce.)

Alsberg made sure that copies of the guide were sent to all of the state directors. He even circulated a four-page summary of the largely positive press reviews; but he also complained to a WPA superior, " . . . Fisher, who is a well-known novelist, was rather obstinate in his insistence on doing

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*Fisher must have made many of them forget about their principled objections to the whole project and imagine themselves to be helping to eliminate government waste.*

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things his own way — in fact, we had a constant struggle with him to make him adhere, even to the extent he has, to the prescribed forms." In the novel, Hunter visits D.C. and learns that around the national headquarters "Cahan" (Alsberg) calls him "my bad boy."

Alsberg let Fisher stay on long enough to prepare two more books, *Idaho Encyclopedia* (1938) and *Idaho Lore* (1939), for publication. Then he promoted Fisher to director for the Rocky Mountain Region. Essentially, this thankless position required Fisher to do other state directors' work for them (that is, where there were active state directors) but left him with no say as to how or whether any of the material would be published. In Fisher's novel, much of Hunter's research notes and writing for other states ends up in the trash.

Fisher resigned in 1939. That same year the WPA, including Federal One, lost much of its funding. Many of its responsibilities were transferred to other agencies. The Theater Project was dismantled altogether. The Works Progress Administration and Federal Writers' Project underwent name changes, becoming, respectively, the Work Projects Administration and the Federal Writers' Program. Alsberg also left his position as director of the FWP in 1939. (Harry Hopkins had already left the WPA in 1938 to become Secretary of Commerce.) Under Fisher's successor, the Idaho Writers' Program floundered until 1940 when it finally died. Meanwhile, other state Writers' Programs continued with partial local funding until June 1943 when the WPA officially ended.

A few state FWPs went on after 1943 with strictly local, sometimes private support. (Lyle Saxon, director of the Louisiana Writers' Program, who published a state guide in 1941, did not publish his state's book of folklore, *Gumbo Ya-Ya*, until 1945.) In many states, city and county guides for the populated urban areas were published as early as 1937, but much local material never was. "Many of these works were never printed because the local sponsoring agencies lost con-

fidence in the projects, often due to controversial passages." Also, thousands of oral or "life" histories were collected and shelved without publication.

Schindler-Carter writes, "The making of the American Guide Series was deeply troubled by staff incompetence and personal anguish and anxiety of the workers, while at the same time it succeeded in fostering creativity and mental recovery." The inconsistency of this statement is heightened in view of Vardis Fisher's experience. His troubles with staff incompetence and personal anxiety were caused by the same FWP directives that tormented all state directors, ordering them to hire useless workers and micromanaging the writing and editing of their state's guides. Fisher's attempts to function in his job, let alone to be creative, were frustrated so often that he repeatedly threatened to resign — and finally did. "Mental recovery," clearly, was what took place after one quit the FWP.

Would Fisher have been better off had he found some other way to support his family? Remarkably, while Fisher worked on the Writers' Project, he found time to write two novels (which, I suspect, kept him sane). One of these, *Children of God: An American Epic*, which was a historical novel about the Mormons, won the 1939/1940 Harper Prize for best novel. Besides receiving a cash award, Fisher got to see the book promoted throughout the United States and other countries. Fisher was also able to turn his experience with the WPA into one of the more entertaining sections of his last autobiographical novel.

A better question is whether it would have been better had Fisher not been around to make the FWP look good in January of 1937. Political graft had been exposed in the Kansas Writers' Project, Ohio and other states had gone through successions of do-nothing state directors, and Congress wanted to know why so much money was being spent on so little. Later that year, four New England states came through with their guides but, at the outset of 1937, all the FWP had to show for itself was a short book on hiking in Pennsylvania and the Idaho guide. Without Fisher, one wonders whether the boondoggle might have been closed down much sooner than it was.

Fisher's later thoughts on the value of his government service are oddly mixed. Referring to the FWP, he complained, "the cost was ridiculous" and, as a rule, "subsidized art becomes propaganda in support of the government in power." On the other hand, he told a historian in 1967 that "Government is waste, but if we can get a percentage of our tax money back in productive things or things which add not only to the economic but to the cultural life of the nation we should be glad for it." Fisher even called the FWP "a unanimous gesture." I know of no other positive words about big government programs attributed to Fisher. Certainly there are none in his novelistic account of his experience. Perhaps, after 30 years, Fisher still indulged in the same rationalization that must have motivated him during his time at the WPA.

A fitting postscript: All of the states published their guides between 1937 and 1941. Several cities also published local guides within that time frame (Philadelphia in 1937 and New York City in 1939). *Washington, D.C.: A Guide to the Nation's Capital* was not published until 1942. □

# Reviews

*The Lord of the Rings, Part I: The Fellowship of the Ring*, New Line Cinema, 2001.

## Lord of the Epic

Stephen Cox

At this moment, the most popular film in the world is *The Lord of the Rings*. This is a remarkable phenomenon — more remarkable, indeed, than the intrinsic properties of the movie itself, which will be discussed in due course. For now, suffice it to say that nothing within the film, including its sumptuous special effects, accounts for the intense public feeling. Judging by the favorable press reports, the long and loud preliminary buzz, and what I saw and heard in the opening night crowd, the public's interest in the film is largely attributable to the public's interest in the book on which the film was based.

Very few books have this kind of draw, and nobody could have predicted that one of them would turn out to be J.R.R. Tolkien's novel, published almost a half-century ago. *The Lord of the Rings* is not a thrilling romance, à la *Gone with the Wind*. Neither is it a frolicsome story of myth and magic, à la *Harry Potter*. It is, indeed, a book of myths and "fantasies," but the fantasies are very sober stuff, and the myths were invented, not to create a certain quantity of fantasy effects, but to pursue a deeply private obsession with, of

all things, historical linguistics.

When he was a very young man, Tolkien (1892–1973), later Merton Professor of English Language and Literature at Oxford University, began inventing languages. Not content with evolving mythical tongues, he evolved a mythical history to explain them. This, so far as I know, is something that nobody else ever did, at least in grand and plausible detail. (For a detailed treatment of Tolkien's languages, visit Helge Kare Fauskanger's website "Ardalambion": <http://www.uib.no/People/hnohf/>.) The languages worked like real languages, and the histories worked like real histories. True, Tolkien's stories pertained to hitherto unknown races, but they had both the generality and the specificity of veritable history. Within them, continents rose and fell, empires flourished and decayed, and individual beings lived and loved and seemed to work out their own destinies with the inexhaustible particularity of actual human choice — despite the fact that it was all happening within the imagination of one homely, fussy, modern young man.

Now, this young man's imagination, as it happened, had a strong Victorian tinge, which was another

thing that, one might predict, would distance his literary publications, if any, from the interest of either our century or his own. Tolkien, a very devout Christian, excluded all religious observances from his imaginary world, because religion was too serious a subject to transform into fantasy. But if God does not appear in Tolkien's "Middle Earth," the moral forces that his contemporary Rudyard Kipling called "the gods of the copybook headings" are omnipresent there. Good is good, evil is evil, and if there is any determinant of history, it is stern moral struggle, not technological innovation, industrialization, class warfare, or any other purely secular development.

While Tolkien was working out the course of moral struggle among his imaginary families of elves, dwarves, ents, Numenoreans, and so forth, other writers, people like Hemingway, Sartre, Freud, Proust, and Mann, were working on their own, very different projects, and it is easy to see why their concerns were regarded as characteristic of their century, and Tolkien's were not — at least by the intellectuals who were self-appointed to judge such things. This was a handicap. It is safe to say that during the first 40 years or so of Tolkien's work on his own mythology, there was nothing less fashionable than what he was interested in. An even severer handicap was Tolkien's way of constructing his stories, which he often elaborated as if they could stand on their own as histories, without the benefit of any particular literary charm or concession to accessibility.

This was strange, but then a stranger thing occurred. Tolkien found a way to translate his highly individual obsessions into the form of a popular novel.

Bear in mind that his obsessions were not about sex, money, drugs, nuclear weaponry, or any other remotely popular topic of obsession. They were about the evolution of

Quenya and Sindarin, languages spoken by immortal beings called “elves” in some era of history that had never happened. Bear in mind, also, that no other author, not even Joyce, Faulkner, or the Marquis de Sade, was ever obsessed in as much detail and with as many complications as J.R.R. Tolkien was obsessed. Yet few authors have awakened as much instinctive sympathy in the breasts of ordinary readers as Professor Tolkien.

How did he do it?

He did it by reverting, as instinctively as his readers, to a story-mode supposed (again, at least by the intellectuals, who are always supposing things) to be virtually extinct. He returned to the epic.

By “epic” I do not mean what is implied by movie trailers that announce yet another EPIC MOVIE OF OUR TIME. “Epic” means more than “big.” “Epic” means more than “long.” An epic is a narrative that embodies, in the adventures of an heroic character, the life and ideal values of a civilization. Originally, it was a long narrative poem.

Now, epics, as Isabel Paterson said about literature itself, are “not to be expected every minute.” In English, the last great exemplar of epic poetry was John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (1667). There have been many modern attempts at revival, some of them good or at least interesting, such as Thomas Hardy’s *The Dynasts* (1903–1908) and Stephen Vincent Benét’s *John Brown’s Body* (1928). There have been many poetic efforts that attained “epic scope” but lacked any gift for epic narrative: Goethe’s *Faust* (1790–1831), William Blake’s *Jerusalem* (c. 1821), Walt Whitman’s *Song of Myself* (1855), Hart Crane’s *The Bridge* (1930), to name a few. By the mid-18th century, however, narrative expectations had been transferred to prose, and to the novel. Whether these expectations could be fulfilled or not depended in large part on the interest that an author took in the ancient techniques — dating back to the Greek poet Homer (c. 750 B.C.), who seems to have discovered them — that can be used to weave the many small details of life into one vast fabric of meaning.

Find a character who embodies your ideals. Find a story that chal-

lenges him to act up to those ideals, against all opposition, external and internal. Begin in the middle of the story, at some crucially interesting point, so that your work has focus from the very start, then use a multitude of flashbacks to show how matters ever got to that exciting juncture. Throw your character into situations that force him to learn everything that’s important about the world he inhabits. Send him on a journey in which he meets a multitude of other characters, each of them mirroring either his problems or the possible solutions to his problems, and each of them, like a magic mirror, having some story of his own to tell. Then leave the story, as you found it, at some crucial, but this time some definitive, point.

*The Lord of the Rings, Part I:  
“The Fellowship of the Ring”*

New Line Cinema

Directed by Peter Jackson

Screenplay by Fran Walsh,  
Philippa Boyens, and Peter  
Jackson

From the novel by J.R.R. Tolkien

Starring:

Frodo: Elijah Wood

Gandalf: Ian McKellen

Sam: Sean Astin

Bilbo: Ian Holm

Aragorn: Viggo Mortensen

Saruman: Christopher Lee

Those are the techniques of Homeric narration. Those are the techniques of the epic novel, wherever that form is practiced.

In the 20th century, it has been practiced less and less by “serious” authors — partly because the theory of high art in the 20th century tended to discredit traditional techniques, even when they worked, and partly because much of 20th-century experience seemed to indicate that life could not fairly be represented as an incomparably rich but perfectly organized story. The general opinion was that life was more like a series of unfortunate chances, and that art should represent that reality, instead of seeking to

“evade” it by means of its own contrivance.

Such opinions were sheer nonsense to Tolkien, not because he himself had escaped the century’s accidents (he was a soldier on one of the bloodiest battlefields of World War I), but because of his peculiarly conservative aesthetic sensibility. He was obsessed not with accident but with order. The often wild improvisations of his mythical histories were so many wild thrusts at the discovery of an underlying organization of things. But what kind of literary order was best able to communicate his myths to other minds?

It wasn’t the suave Homeric epic that appealed to him, temperamentally; it was the rougher, blunter epics of the Germanic peoples (e.g., *Beowulf*, about which he was his century’s greatest and most perceptive literary critic). He was strange enough even to deny that *Beowulf* is “an ‘epic’ . . . No terms borrowed from Greek or other literatures exactly fit.” While he was shaping *The Lord of the Rings*, however, something happened that almost never happens to either an obsessive (which he was) or a bigoted devotee of one form of literature (which he also was, and almost every author is). What happened was that he was kidnaped by common sense — and common sense finally led him to adopt the Homeric wisdom. Out of his vast lumber room of unsalable myth Tolkien extracted enough materials to build a great story, as Homer had done with the endless treasure rooms of myth that were available to him for the construction of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Then Tolkien shaped his story in the Homeric way.

Here is the story. There exists a ring, a ring forged long ago, before this age of the world, and in it is imbued the spiritual power on which this world subsists — enough of that power, indeed, to control the world. For Tolkien, as for any conservative moralist from Homer to the Victorians, only one set of conclusions can be derived from a statement like that. Total control must lead to total slavery. If you are evil, you will want to possess the Ring; if you are good, you will want to destroy it. The attempt to destroy the Ring is the great adventure of Tolkien’s epic. As in many ancient epics, the adventure is a quest, and in

its course the person charged with it becomes increasingly isolated. Tolkien's hero roams the wide world, meeting characters who mirror, oppose, or instruct him, and who work their own stories into the story of his quest. But his decisions remain his to make, alone.

The desperation of his adventure is emphasized by the new turn that Tolkien gives to the old idea of the quest itself: In *The Lord of the Rings*, the quest is not an effort to gain something but an effort to lose something, to lose, indeed, the greatest prize in the world. Tolkien gives a similarly ironic emphasis to his choice of hero. The hero is not

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*Tolkien's myths were invented, not to create fantasy effects, but to pursue a deeply private obsession with, of all things, historical linguistics.*

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a mighty man of valor but a "halfling" or "hobbit," a diminutive manlike creature who steps forward to undertake the quest in full knowledge of the odds against his success. The goal of his journey is the citadel of the evil Lord who lost the Ring, 3,000 years before, and who is now trying to get it back. Quest and counterquest, and an encircling order: The Ring must come back to its place of origin, either to be destroyed, or to destroy all else.

Here, indeed, is an epic enterprise; here, indeed, is an epic embodiment of individual virtue, exerted in a great and crucial cause. And here, indeed, is one of the world's great stories.

As in Homer's epics, the main story begins *in medias res*, at a dramatic moment in the middle of things. It begins at the crucial point where the halfling understands that he is possessed of the One Ring and must do something about it; an apparent accident of history must yield to some shaping plan. And, as in Homer's epics, the story ends at the point, the rather mysterious point, where the audience is willing to relinquish the adventure, realizing that the adventure has assumed its final shape. (For the benefit of people who haven't read the book, I won't divulge where that point

is, but it's not where you might think it is.) Along the way, many other stories are told as they prove useful in explaining or extending the main story; and these stories evoke still other stories, stories of ever more distant lands and ever more distant eras — but all of them are curiously related, as stories of real life always are, and all of them swell up, as stories of real life always do, if you let them, into a climactic image of the world as it really is.

Except, of course, for one thing . . . Tolkien's world isn't literally *this* world; it is "Middle Earth." The name itself went out of fashion in the 11th century; the geography, Tolkien suggests, was "altered" even further in the past, along with its population. Tolkien's Middle Earth contains many more races of thinking beings than our own (this is where the elves and dwarves and ents come in), and many more varieties of "power." Much the same could be said of Homer's world, of course, but Tolkien's is in certain ways much closer to our own. The central character, the halfling Frodo Baggins, is basically a nice young English gentleman; his friends are like that, too, except for some, who are irascible old English gentlemen. It's hard to warm up to Odysseus when he's priding himself on his ability to lie or having his wife's maidservants slaughtered, but it's not hard at all to warm up to Tolkien's morally worthwhile characters. They are, in every psychological sense, modern people.

His villains are largely modern people too — power-drunk dictators such as Sauron, power-corrupted intellectuals such as Saruman, and a host of "orcs," soulless, Nazi-like thugs. This does not mean that Sauron is an allegorical stand-in for Hitler or Stalin. Things didn't work that way in Tolkien's imagination. Sauron is, in fact, debased by the comparison. But the world of *The Lord of the Rings* is close enough to our world to constitute a perpetual temptation to people who would like to dodge across the border and escape.

That would be great fun, if you could manage it without getting caught by Sauron the Great. The fact that none of the thousands of semiprofessional participants in Tolkien role-

play has ever, so far as we know, been eaten by orcs or heaved alive into the Cracks of Doom is sufficient indication that the Tolkienish world to which they escape is not precisely the world of *The Lord of the Rings*. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that Tolkien's work is vulnerable to the charge of escapism, if only because reading *The Lord of the Rings* actually does enable one to escape temporarily from a world in which the heroic enterprise of a given year may be nothing better than a doomed attempt to escape the unblinking eye of the IRS.

And "escapism" is a serious charge. For almost 100 years, the word has been one of the dirtiest in the literary critic's vocabulary. It is interesting, though, that escapism never seems to have been much of an issue at any other time. Up until the 20th century, as it appears, everybody always knew that when one reads a book or sees a picture that represents some ideal of human life, one is necessarily "escaping" out of one's normal circumstances — and so what? Obviously, one is escaping *from* something, but one is also escaping *to* something. So long as the escape is well-conducted, so long

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*Tolkien, a very devout Christian, excluded all religious observances from his imaginary world, because religion was too serious a subject to transform into fantasy.*

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as one escapes from something less intensely meaningful to something more intensely meaningful, who cares? That is the ordinary attitude of humanity toward this mighty question. But it didn't prove sufficient for the 20th century. In that century, *The Lord of the Rings* became a battlefield in the long, dreary war between "escapist" literature and literature supposedly possessed of what American courts used to call "socially redeeming value."

The conflict was often politically charged. Political activists have always believed that any book that fails to rub one's nose in social reality as they define it is *ipso facto* "escapist," no mat-

ter how far from reality their own notions may actually be. Thus, leftist critics of the 1930s persecuted Willa Cather, Thornton Wilder, and a host of other distinguished writers because they failed to attain the standards embodied by such communist nonenti-

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*Tolkien's Middle Earth contains many more races of thinking beings than our own, and many more varieties of "power." Much the same could be said of Homer's world, of course.*

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ties as Michael Gold. And Cather and Wilder at least wrote about the world we know; Tolkien wrote about Middle Earth, which was a hundred times worse offense to social realists — to

those social realists, at any rate, who considered him worth the passing tribute of a sneer.

About the outraged opponents of escapism, Paterson long ago made the definitive judgment: They want to make sure that no one ever escapes from *them*. She also pointed out that the measure of literature's success is its ability to evoke the real and present world, and yet to escape far enough from that world to attain "perspective" on it.

Does *The Lord of the Rings* attain perspective?

The answer is an emphatic yes. And here, in fact, we appear to have found the major reason for the book's immense and long-continued popularity. *The Lord of the Rings* not only attains perspective; it attains a variety of perspectives, and it shows that those perspectives can be maintained harmoniously.

The great story of human life can be told from many points of view. For some, it is a story in which people are always trying to find their counterparts; it is thus a story of families, friends, alliances, parties, political causes. For others, it is a story in which people try to assert their independence; it is a story of loners, outcasts, exiles, pioneers. For some, the important story is one in which people try to do something that no one has ever done before; this story depends for its life on the great innovators and inventors. For others, it is a story in which people try to maintain earth's ancient, necessary ways; this story draws its strength from the great nurturers, commanders, and resisters of change. For some people, the big story is one in which somebody tries to get something he wants; for others, it is one in which somebody tries to get rid of something that nobody ought to want. The list might be extended: The point is that these are more than just stories; they are accounts of the real motives of real people, motives that can be seen if we look beyond the superficial details of daily life and seek to discover the pattern of life as a whole.

Nor are these stories necessarily independent of one another. The motive of my life may be to find the strangers who should be friends, and

simultaneously to win my independence from the friends who should be strangers. My motive may be, as a great storyteller once said, to "lose" my life, so that I can "find" it again, and find it "more abundantly." Correctly understood, these need not be contradictory impulses or opposing stories.

It is enough for a great book to attend to one type of story and attain to one type of perspective, but *The Lord of the Rings* attains to many more than one. Its protagonist separates himself from all normal human contact; he also finds, for the first time in his life, the true fellowship of his peers. (The initial installment of the three-part movie, like the initial volume of Tolkien's three-volume book, is called *The Fellowship of the Ring*.) The protagonist has to perform a new and unexampled deed, in order to save as much as possible of Middle Earth's traditional ways of life. The protagonist has to find a whole new world, within and without himself, and make it his own,

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*Reading The Lord of the Rings actually does enable one to escape temporarily from a world in which the heroic enterprise of a given year may be nothing better than a doomed attempt to escape the unblinking eye of the IRS.*

---

so that he can surrender his and the world's most important possession, the Ring of Power.

This harmony of apparently divergent stories and perspectives expresses a truth that is often missed in a world — our own, 21st-century world — that gyrates unhappily between dogmatism and relativism: All perspectives are useful if they allow us to see essential truth. Tolkien said something analogous to this at the climax of his famous essay on Anglo-Saxon literature, "*Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics*" (1936). Discussing the diverse and purportedly shoddy materials of

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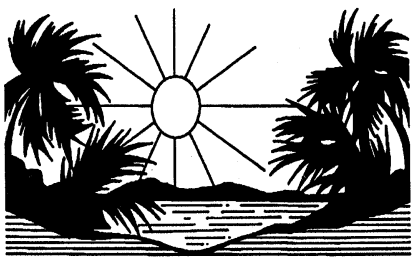
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which the *Beowulf* poet constructed his poem, Tolkien likened its creation to the building of a tower. Other people, assuming that they are brighter than the builder, murmur against it, not realizing that "from the top of that tower the man had been able to look out upon the sea." The sea really exists; it is an objective reality, but knowledge of the sea can be reached in a number of ways. The important thing is to reach it.

How much of Tolkien's lofty vision asserts itself in the film? Not all of it, certainly. Even though the segment currently released takes three hours and represents only the first third of a work that will not be fully released

*Elijah Wood as Frodo is about the best that could be desired — young but strangely finished-looking; mysterious, but mysterious in a strangely obvious and concrete way.*

until the end of 2003, no film could ever deal adequately with the complexities of an epic novel. Much is omitted, but to the credit of the filmmakers, no essential fact or perspective is changed. This is one of the miracles of film history. Ernest Hemingway may be famous for his clean-limbed plots and sparkling dialogue, but that hasn't kept the dramatizers of his stories from fudging up his plots and supplying their own lame dialogue. The usual premise of adapters-for-film is that of Howard Roark's uninvited architectural collaborators: "We want to express our individuality, too."

Epic complexity cannot be reproduced in film; but epic scope can at least be suggested, if only in such magnificent visual effects as those with which this film abounds. The sweeping mountain vistas, the evocations of the Byzantiumlike city of Gondor, the stunningly beautiful scenes of war, provide strong evocations of much that cannot be rendered in dialogue. The film's opening sequence, the Battle of Dagorlad, offers some of the most astonishing effects I have ever seen.

Every admirer of Tolkien has found problems with some of the movie's characterizations. To put the complaints in Patersonian terms, some of the characters are accused of a failure to attain perspective. They look too much like the guys next door. Galadriel, the lady of the elves, is far too commonplace, until the climax of her big scene, when she's far too weird. Aragorn is too conflicted and insecure, too much the literal exile, too little the ideal king. Boromir, the good man who stumbles in his pursuit of

power, seems more dumb than tragic. Frodo's hobbit friends lack the small-town social status that Tolkien respected and gently satirized.

These complaints are well taken, but they are complaints about the mantle, not the core. Elijah Wood as Frodo is about the best that could be desired — young but strangely finished-looking; mysterious, but mysterious in a strangely obvious and concrete way. Ian McKellen as the wizard Gandalf isn't quite as well cast, but only Alec Guinness was truly suited for that role,

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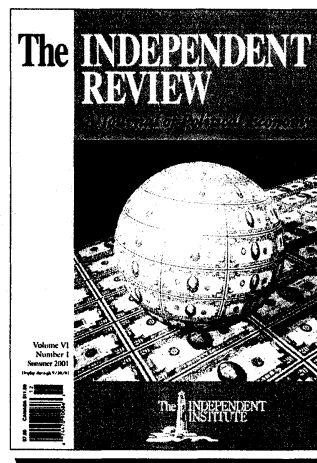
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and McKellen is close enough. Christopher Lee would be a consistently impressive Saruman, if his powerful characterization of the intellectual-turned-politician weren't overshadowed by the dumb physical activity, approaching comedy, of his battle with Gandalf. This is the least Tolkienish part of the movie. Look: Nobody wants to see wizards twirling around on the floor.

In general, the film relies too much on purely physical struggle, which is far from the major emphasis of the book. Aragorn and his friends should not be playing kung fu with multitudes of orcs and ring-wraiths; you can't attain perspective on reality if

*The film relies too much on purely physical struggle, which is far from the major emphasis of the book.*

you abandon reality completely. Fortunately, however, these objections pertain largely to the physical details of certain scenes; people who care about the meanings of Tolkien's book can simply close their eyes when those things happen, as people often have to do, even when they're having sex. The great things are still there — the epic framework and the ennobling idea, implicit throughout the Western epic tradition, that the fabric of the world itself can be affected by the choices of individual men and women.

There is a scene in *The Lord of the Rings* in which the protagonist struggles to decide whether to use the Ring or not.

The two powers strove in him. For a moment, perfectly balanced between their piercing points, he writhed, tormented. Suddenly he was aware of himself again. Frodo, neither the Voice nor the Eye: free to choose and with one remaining instant in which to do so. He took the Ring off his finger.

This is perhaps the deepest existential reality in *The Lord of the Rings* — the resistant strength of the individual mind. Behind and beneath the mighty forces sweeping Middle Earth, the individual mind is always working.

Indeed, this is the secret of evil as well as good in Tolkien's epic. T.A. Shippey, author of the state-of-the-art book in the field (*J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century*, Houghton Mifflin, 2001), accurately observes that the Ring operates by getting "a hold on people through their own impulses, towards pity or justice or knowledge or saving Gondor, and gives them the absolute power that corrupts absolutely" (p. 138). From Tolkien's point of view, there's nothing wrong with any of the goals just listed, but there is something wrong with the individuals who cherish them, and the Ring exploits that individual weakness.

It's noteworthy how little is vouchsafed or attributed to ideology in *The Lord of the Rings*, how little explanation is provided by recourse to a general system of thought, as opposed to individual values and choices. Perhaps Tolkien's strange obsession with linguistics tended to repress an interest in other general systems; perhaps his inability to apply his Roman Catholicism directly to the issues at hand tended to leave his characters freer to operate; but for whatever reason it happened, rational beings are always seen as individuals in *The Lord of the Rings*, and praised or blamed on that basis. That freedom, once granted, extends to the reader, too. Because Tolkien offers imaginative myth, not religion or political ideology, readers are free to exercise their own degree of imaginative freedom. As Shippey says, "Myths are what is always available for individuals to make over, and apply to their own circumstances" (192).

A final question may therefore be posed: How much freedom does the film version of *The Lord of the Rings* allow to its characters and its viewers? The answer is, Very much indeed. It would have been easy to use the camera to suggest that the central characters are merely specks on the landscape, but the wealth of closeups, the close attention to the human (or humanlike) face and form and to objects of human scale, prevents any such lingering impression. It would also have been easy to interpret Tolkien's epic as if it were in fact an ideologized comment on modern times, much in the way that, for instance, Wagner's operas are staged

as if they were about the struggles of labor and capital in the 19th century. So far in this three-part film, nothing like that has happened. The story

remains a true epic, a true expression of mythology, and a true vehicle of escape to loftier perspectives on the nature of human life. □

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*The Skeptical Environmentalist: Measuring the Real State of the World*, by Bjørn Lomborg. Cambridge University Press, 2001, 515 pages.

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# Litany of Errors

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William Merritt

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Bjørn Lomborg did not believe economist Julian Simon's well-known claim, and set out to prove that it was simple American right-wing propaganda. No one could have been in a better position to set the record straight. Lomborg is an associate professor of statistics at the University of Aarhus in Denmark. And he is also, as he puts it, an old left-wing Greenpeace

The first thing these conclusions led Lomborg to do was examine his personal beliefs. When he decided that it was his gut, not his figures, that was lying, he opened a debate in the Danish press.

His careful, systematic approach won the debate hands down. No honest observer who read the more than 400 articles, commentaries, and critiques that were published on Lomborg's work would ever again believe the standard pap put out by

The material conditions of life will continue to get better for most people, in most countries, most of the time, indefinitely. Within a century or two, all nations and most of humanity will be above today's Western living standards.

I also speculate, however, that many people will continue to *think and say* that the conditions of life are getting worse.

— Julian Simon

member who had for a long time been concerned about environmental questions. So he assigned ten of his brightest students to perform careful, statistical reviews of all sorts of environmental claims. And, everywhere his students looked closely, they came to the same conclusion. Simon was right: The air in the developed world is becoming less polluted, people in developing nations have more to eat, the world has more forest now than it did 50 years ago...

environmental organizations. Nevertheless, the only reaction from many environmentalists was complete denial.

From a public-relations point of view, Lomborg was at a disadvantage. Statistical analysis is arcane and complex, and even intelligent, committed people find it easier to rely on critiques of Lomborg's work than to actually to wade through his arguments. And environmentalists nudged readers down this path by providing critical

commentaries that made it easy to avoid his articles.

I doubt that *The Skeptical Environmentalist* is any easier than the articles from which it is drawn, but it is a good deal more convenient to have everything in one place. Three hundred fifty pages of statistical argument, followed by 150 pages of notes and sources, is not an easy read for anybody; even for those of us who suspect Lomborg is on to something important.

At bottom, *The Skeptical Environmentalist* is a lot like a good encyclopedia. You're not apt to read the thing from front to back but you do have access to some first-rate information. And it's going to come in very handy.

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*Lomborg decided that it was his gut, not his figures, that was lying.*

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In my case, when some of my more environmentally minded friends drop by for a beer and a harangue. Here's some of the stuff I'm going to surprise them with as soon as I can lead the conversation in the right direction:

*The year the world caught fire:* This is what the World Wide Fund for Nature calls 1997, the year the forests in Indonesia burned up, proving, to the WWF, that the world's forests are out of balance. In fact, 1997 was far from a record fire year and only about one percent of even Indonesia's forests were affected. What was affected was city dwellers who had a lot of smoke blown their way. And, when the news crews got hold of the story, the rest of

us had a lot of smoke blown our way, too.

*Half the world's species will disappear within the next 75 years:* Greenpeace has been ballyhooing this statistic for years. The correct figure is more like 0.7% over the next 50 years.

*Since 1940, chemical pollution has caused breast cancer to increase at the rate of 1% per year:* If true, by 1996, this would have amounted to a 75% increase in breast cancer, yet the actual rate fell 18% during that period. The rates of colorectal, pancreatic, and ovarian cancer have fallen, too. Uterine cancer has dropped by two-thirds, and stomach cancer by almost 80%. Of all cancers, only lung and prostate show upward trends since 1940 — and both of these are down sharply since 1990.

*The world is running out of fresh water:* The fact is, there is plenty of water to go around. The problem is that the water is not going around far enough, and lots of people in the Third World still don't have access to clean water. But this is a problem of sanitation and of delivery infrastructure: exactly the sort of thing humans are very good at fixing with technology. And we are fixing it. Over the last 30 years, even with the doubling of the Third World population, the percentage of people with access to clean, fresh water has risen from 30% to 80%, and the trend shows no sign of slacking.

*Tuberculosis is coming back:* Since 1950, the rate of tuberculosis has fallen 89%, declining every year except 1985 and 1991. The tuberculosis scare statistics are based on figures for those two years only; information about other

years is ignored.

*Everybody is going to starve to death:* Hunger is another problem we are fixing through technology. Since 1970, the number of people starving has dropped from 700 million to 330 million, despite a huge increase in population.

*We are killing the forests:* Since the late 1940s, the amount of land covered by forests has increased from 26% of the earth's surface to 32%.

*We're all gonna fry:* Global temperatures are up just short of .8% since 1856. But, in 1856, they were .4% below normal, so it's hard to say what the recent rise means. At the very least, we are no further on the warm side now, than we were on the cool side 150 years ago. And whether greenhouse gases have anything to do with this is not particularly well understood. A lot of the recent rise may have something to do with the sun's long-term energy cycles.

And there's more. Worldwide, infant mortality is down 84% since 1950, infectious diseases are down 90% since 1900, per capita real income has

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*All research projects need to justify their budgets. Someone who investigates something and doesn't find a problem has investigated himself out of a job.*

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doubled since 1950, and illiteracy in the developing world has fallen 80% since 1910. For many scientists working with developing-country issues, it has long been difficult to reconcile findings from field studies in Africa, Asia, and Latin America with the pronouncements from environmental pressure groups in the industrialized world.

The question that hangs in the air is, why should this be? Lomborg spends an entire chapter suggesting reasons why we hear so much bad news. As he sees things, we get information on the environment from three sources: research, organizations, and news media. All three have reason to be biased in favor of bad news.

For one thing, all research projects



"It's agreed then. We'll destroy the environment."

need to justify their budgets. Someone who investigates something and doesn't find a problem has investigated himself out of a job. And an awful lot of environmental research involves taking measurements of things that have never been carefully measured before. So new findings turn up like periodic oxygen shortages in the Gulf of Mexico. Without any previous measurement, it's hard to know what, exactly, these fluctuations mean or whether they have anything to do with human activity. That they might mean something bad is always one of the possibilities. And it's the only one, of all the possible explanations, that is of much interest outside the scientific community. So it gets featured in the press.

Organizations have their own biases toward gloomy reporting. Once a scientific specialty gets rolling, it becomes very hard for a scientist within that specialty to challenge the premises upon which his field is based. Specialties that reach this point begin to create their own reality, like Freudian analysts manufacturing and curing neurotics. In the case of envi-

ronmental research, the received wisdom is that things are terrible and getting worse. Otherwise, why would you need environmental researchers?

Of course, it's not just scientific organizations that play a role in what we hear. Environmental organizations have powerful interests in making sure their supporters continue giving them money to take care of penguins or possums or whatever, and that also plays a big role.

Similar dynamics operate in the mass media. For the news media to have an audience, news has to be interesting. Well-fed babies in Africa simply are not news in the same way starving kids in Ethiopia are news. So we never hear about happy, well-fed African babies.

Or the media can cherry-pick the bad news from a much more complicated event. Remember the fuss over El Niño in 1997 and 1998? All the talk was about weird weather and we were told how cities were bracing for the climate event of the century. El Niño was blamed for everything from mudslides in California to melting ski slopes in

Colorado to the falling value of Disney stock.

But there was another side to El Niño you did not hear: The 850 fewer deaths from cold while the East Coast sunned itself through the warmest winter in memory, huge energy savings from lower heating costs, reduced damage from spring floods, and billions saved because, in 1998, not a single Atlantic hurricane hit the United States.

And, always, there is the matter of guilt. Guilt makes a story more personal, it lets the teller point the finger and, I suppose in liberal society, guilt is the preferred emotional state. Given a natural disaster that can remotely be tied to human greed or stupidity, newspeople can lay on guilt thicker than lard at a Southern fryoff.

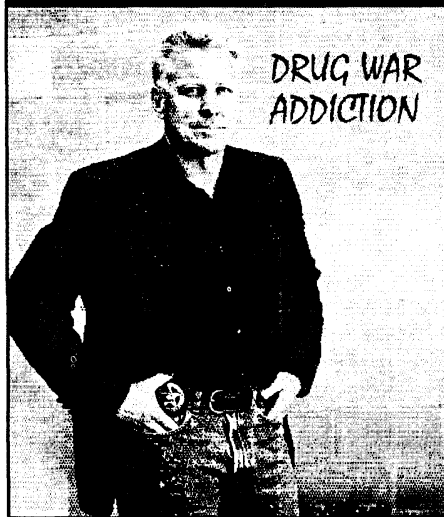
So where does all this leave us?

It leaves us with a book. Hard as it is to argue against all the so-called authorities whose financial and personal biases fit so directly into a single, dystopic world view, at least Lomborg has given us some real authority to back up what a lot of us suspected in the first place.

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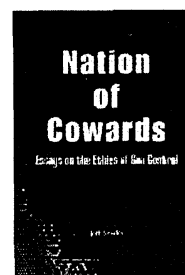


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the environment, but aren't committed to the end of the world, see things a bit more realistically. And that will be good for all of us. □

*The Death of the West*, by Patrick J. Buchanan. St. Martin's Press, 2001, 308 pages.

# Go Forth and Multiply?

Bruce Ramsey

Patrick Buchanan argues that the drought of births in the West is a deep cultural change, persistent enough to foretell an implosion of white populations. He argues that the West will have to let in hordes of African, Asian, and Latin American immigrants to do its work and fund its pensions. And that will be *The Death of the West*.

He is not making up the numbers behind his argument. But he will be tagged as a racist — and a sexist and a homophobe — for this book because of the way he has written it. He has done it to irritate his enemies and to have his fans gleefully underlining the good parts.

The numbers behind *The Death of the West* apply equally well to Japan as to Germany, Italy, and Russia. Japan is not of the West. A book about depopulation might therefore have more accurately been called "The Death of the North" or even, "Death of the Rich." But that would not have been this book.

This book is an attack on cultural leftism among whites, which he largely blames for their selfish unwillingness to breed. Buchanan's most obvious target is feminism. And indeed, it would be interesting to ask the feminists, who have spent decades campaigning for abortion, birth control, careers, and small families, for their advice now that they have succeeded, and the birth rate in Europe has fallen to 1.4 per

woman. That rate is one-third below 2.1, the rate needed, absent immigration, to hold population growth at zero.

"Only the mass reconversion of Western women to an idea that they seem to have given up — that the good life lies in bearing and raising children and sending them out into the world to continue the family and nation — can prevent the death of the West," Buchanan proclaims.

He may be right about that. But what will reconvert them? What will reconvert their men, who are co-conspirators in the decision to embrace sterility?

Buchanan suggests a \$3,000-per-child tax credit and a repeal of the discrimination laws so that employers can pay "parents" (read: fathers) a family wage and mothers can stay home. Even as he offers this answer, he senses how lame it is. American business is not going to pay bonuses based on how many kids its employees have. And welfare states of Europe already have cash subsidies for children, and their birth rates are lower than ours.

All the alarm in this book is more applicable to Europe, with its 1.4-per-woman fertility rate, than to the United States. Buchanan doesn't care about Europe; he is famous for his argument (with which I agree) that America should have no obligation to defend the Europeans. He is an American making a political argument to Americans. In this very American book, he slaps his customers with the

scary statistics about Europe without mentioning that the fertility rate in the United States is a far less scary 2.06.

Indeed, after a century of population explosion, and entering the new century with population still swelling, the U.S. rate is not bad. For now, it might be just right.

For decades, fertility rates have been falling everywhere, including in Brazil, Mexico, India, and Iran. They are falling faster in those places than here. But medium-income and poor-country rates are well above 2.1, which does mean, as Buchanan says, that at the moment they are on the path of growth while Europe faces imminent decline.

Buchanan allows that these trends might change, but says he can't see how they will. Fair enough. But 30 years ago, when people were obsessing about the "population bomb," they couldn't see how that trend would ever change. But it did. In the 20th century, fertility trends reversed several times.

Assume today's low fertility rates will tend to stick. How would

*Buchanan chooses his numbers selectively, more for dramatic effect than for understanding.*

Buchanan get them up? He would make abortion illegal. That would help. But he would not do this to save the West. He would make abortion illegal even if the birth rate were at the baby-boom level of 3.5. And his opponents would keep it legal even if the birth rate were at the European level of 1.4.

Buchanan also wants to revive the stigma against homosexuals, and to justify that with population arguments. But declines in birth rates cannot be the fault of homosexuals. The gay birth rate was nearly zero to begin with. And homosexuality is not catching. It seems to be hard-wired, like left-handedness. The decline in birth rates is the fault of the straights.

Buchanan also wants to support traditional religion. He notes that of all U.S. states, Utah, the Mormon state, has the highest birth rate. Lowest is

Bernie Sanders' Vermont. America is more religious than Europe, and has more babies. He could also have added, when noting that rich countries have fewer babies, that the big exceptions are Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf States, which are rich, fecund, and religious.

He may be right, but will this argument convert the infidels? I doubt it. People do not embrace God in order to have kids.

One policy idea a libertarian might suggest is to wean people from their reliance upon the state, so that they would have to rely more on their families. That might affect their willingness to have families, and might not. We have pensions now, and 401(k) plans, and if government stepped out of old-age provision, the private sector might just take it over and do just as well. Or better.

That is not his answer. There are many ideas this book could have

the pointy-headed progressives die out.

What about libertarians? How are they doing at providing a new generation to reproduce themselves? The Bureau of the Census keeps no statistics on us, but a picture does come to

mind. Libertarians have even fewer children than Italians, fewer than Russians, fewer even than Marxist professors of women's studies, who may have an occasional red-diaper baby. Most libertarians are men, and have no babies at all. □

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*Ludwig von Mises: The Man and His Economics*, by Israel M. Kirzner. ISI Books, 2001, 226 pages.

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## An Unfashionable Mind

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Bettina Bien Greaves

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*Buchanan wants to revive the stigma against homosexuals, and to justify that with population arguments.*

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explored but didn't. There are no charts and tables; Buchanan chooses his numbers selectively, more for dramatic effect than for understanding. Thus we learn that the Russian fertility rate is 1.35, but not that the American one is 2.06. Buchanan also quotes the most outrageous commentators, such as Spike Lee opining on American history, or a Mexican-American professor the reader will have never heard of, who proclaims, "We have an aging white America. They are not making babies. They are dying. The explosion is in our population. They are shitting in their pants in fear."

Pat's advice to his alarmed customers is to give up on electoral politics — here he speaks from experience — and decouple from mainstream culture. "If raw sewage is being dumped into the reservoir, buy bottled water," he says. Maybe by homeschooling, attending church, and unplugging the idiot box, traditionalists will defend the cultural homeland of woman as mother, keep up their birth rates, and survive, while

Israel Kirzner is well-qualified to write about Ludwig von Mises. He studied under him at New York University, earned his Ph.D. under him in 1957, and then joined the NYU faculty where he taught economics until his recent retirement. Kirzner has written eleven books which apply and expand on the economics he learned from Mises, treating such topics as competition, entrepreneurship, the market process, and justice. In this book, Kirzner summarizes Mises' major contributions — in areas of economics like competition and monopoly, price theory, monetary theory, the trade cycle, and the economics of socialism — as well as the epistemological and methodological basis for economics and all of the social sciences.

He also shows how Mises' teachings were eclipsed by the rise of Keynesian and "neoclassical" economic concepts such as "economic equilibrium" and "perfect competition," how they were increasingly side-tracked and ignored as irrelevant, old-fashioned, and out-of-step with modern developments. And he reports that Mises' ideas have undergone a stun-

ning resurgence since his death in 1973. Kirzner's final judgment is that Mises' teachings will endure.

Who was Ludwig von Mises? If asked this question, most people would probably answer "Ludwig who?" After all, Mises is not in the news; he is not a mainstream figure; he was not in politics or entertainment; and he died almost 30 years ago. So, who cares?

Ludwig von Mises might be considered by some to be an unimportant "has-been." He was born in 1881 in Austria-Hungary — a country that no longer exists. His first book was published a century ago, in 1902. He was a soldier in World War I — and fought on the losing side. After the war ended, he returned home to Vienna, taught there at the university, and became an economic adviser to the Austrian government. When Hitler came to power in Germany and it became apparent that Austria would not be able to remain independent, Mises went to Switzerland to teach. All chances of going back to Vienna were foreclosed when the Germans annexed Austria in 1938, and the Nazis stripped him of his Austrian citizenship. World War II overwhelmed Switzerland with war refugees and Mises began to feel he was no longer welcome there. In



1940, he finished the spring term at the Graduate Institute of International Studies and left for the United States, arriving in New York on Aug. 2, 1940.

### Stranger in a Strange Land

Ludwig von Mises had earned considerable renown and respect in Europe during the 1920s and 1930s as a serious scholar and author of several important books. But when he arrived in this country in 1940, he was a rather

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*Kirzner portrays Mises as a man dedicated uncompromisingly to scientific inquiry, who refused to compromise or to be deterred by the unpopularity of his ideas.*

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obscure 59-year-old scholar. Only two of his books had been translated into English and their distribution had been limited. "For all his renown in the German-speaking (and German-reading) segment of the economics profession," Kirzner notes, "Mises' books and papers were virtually unknown to the vast majority of the international profession, for whom the only language of relevance was English" (p. 53). He was a stranger in a strange land. Moreover, the rise of Keynesianism and "[t]he dominant changes in economic theorizing and economic methods (characterized by the explosive growth of mathematical economics and econometrics) since 1930," not to speak of changes in eco-

nomic ideology, "made Mises appear, to U.S. economists, thoroughly old-fashioned and out of step, both doctrinally and methodologically" (23). Kirzner believes Mises probably didn't even realize himself the extent to which his views on economics differed from the mainstream ideas that were emerging. However, as Kirzner points out, Mises' ideas were to undergo a stunning resurgence after his death.

Mises' approach to economics represented a startling departure from that in vogue when he was writing. In his first important book — *The Theory of Money and Credit* (German, 1912; English translation, 1934) — he traced monetary theory back to basics. He pointed out clearly that money was a market phenomenon arising out of the actions, decisions, and choices of men on the basis of their subjective values; it was not a government creation. In contradiction to the orthodoxy of his day, he maintained further that (1) subjective value marginal utility theory applied to money, (2) money was not "neutral," and (3) government has no special role with respect to money other than it did generally in commercial matters.

His second really important work was *Socialism* (German, 1922; English translation, 1936). Here Mises attributed the economic failures of a socialist society to the absence of private property and a market economy. In a socialist society without private ownership and exchanges there would be no owners and traders competing with one another to generate prices for property, goods, and services. Without private ownership and exchanges, without what Kirzner calls the "dynamic competition of free markets," and the "entrepreneurial-competitive market process" the planners would lack prices to serve as guidelines for the "allocation of society's resources" according to consumers' wishes (80). Without prices, the socialist central planners would have no way to decide what to produce, how much to

produce, where to produce it, or how to produce it.

### The Law of the Market

It became evident with the publication of Mises' *Epistemological Problems of Economics* (German, 1933; English translation, 1962), that his views on epistemology and methodology were, in Kirzner's words, "intellectually revolutionary" (71). For Mises, the science of economics was neither a historical nor a mathematical discipline; it was the study of purposive, conscious, intentional actions, choices, and decisions of men based on their preferences and subjective values. As a result of countless individual human choices, actions, and decisions there develops a tendency toward regularity in the market. "These systematic tendencies make up the so-called 'laws' of economics" (80). As Mises put it, just as there are laws of nature in the natural world, so there are economic "laws" in the social realm, "which power and force are unable to alter and to which they must adjust themselves if they hope to achieve success" (72).

To illustrate, economic laws decree that — other things remaining equal — if the price of a good rises, the demand for it on the market will fall and, at the same time, producers will strive to expand its production. Mises saw the trade cycle and the failures of socialism as consequences of the workings of economic law: Government manipulation of market-determined interest rates lead to the boom-and-bust cycle; government interventions prohibiting private property and preventing voluntary transactions and cooperation among market participants are responsible for the failures of socialism.

Mises realized economic laws were "not easily discernible to the eye of the historian or statistician. . . . Only abstract economic theorizing, recognizing the nature and operation of human purposefulness, and recognizing the nature and thrust of human entrepreneurial resourcefulness, is able to identify the systematic tendencies which shape the entrepreneurial — competitive market process" (80). A correct understanding and interpretation of these laws is of concern to everyone, however, for they can guide public policy so as to violate, or to protect, private property ownership and volun-



"Housing starts are up 40% since we invented the shovel!"

tary interpersonal transactions, so as to foster, or to avoid, inflation, government controls and regulations and other interventions that misdirect and distort economic arrangements. Thus, "[a]wareness of these 'laws' on the part of governments can help avoid disastrous policies that might unwittingly run afoul of these systematic tendencies" (80).

When Mises arrived in the United States, he was pretty much ignored by academia. However, a number of businessmen, lawyers, and persons in the medical profession were among those who were at first attracted to him and his ideas. It seemed to outsiders at that

version (*Human Action*), Mises presented the orthodox Austrian ideas in a manner which constituted an almost dramatically fresh statement of that orthodoxy" (59). Its "sheer size and comprehensiveness . . . did not permit it to be entirely ignored, even by a profession which considered Mises an old-fashioned relic of premodern economics. . . . *Human Action* articulated an entirely fresh restatement of the foundations of Austrian economics in a manner that most definitively and with

commanding clarity set that economics apart from the economic thought which had, by mid-century, swept the mainstream stage. . . . When Mises published his *Human Action* in 1949 the profession considered it as perhaps the last gasp of a moribund tradition; it certainly failed to recognize it as a seminal, original work that for perhaps the first time spelled out with clarity and vigor the distinctive aspects of the Austrian tradition" (62–63).

*Human Action* was published when

*Mises probably didn't even realize himself the extent to which his views on economics differed from the mainstream ideas that were emerging.*

time that Mises' teachings were aimed primarily at promoting the special interests of conservatives and businesspeople. Then, in 1945, Mises began teaching a class at New York University and in the fall of 1948 the NYU Seminar started attracting a few students who would "make a not insignificant impact on late-twentieth-century perceptions of Austrian Economics." He encouraged "his small number of close students, pointing them toward academic careers and nurturing their efforts at continuing the purely intellectual tradition of Austrian Economics. . . . [I]t was from this seminar that Mises' influence toward the late-twentieth-century resurgence of Austrian Economics was to radiate outwards" (24, 26).

Kirzner portrays Mises as a man dedicated uncompromisingly to scientific inquiry, a man who was determined to improve his understanding of economic principles, who refused to compromise or to be deterred from his pursuit of economic understanding by the unpopularity of his ideas. "In his 1940 treatise,\* and especially in its 1949 English-language, substantially revised

Baloo is a nom de plume of Rex F. May.

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Leland B. Yeager is Ludwig von Mises Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Economics at Auburn University.

## Notes on Contributors

\**National Ökonomie*, written and published in Switzerland in 1940.

Mises was 69 years old. Yet he did not rest on his laurels but continued writing books and articles that have made significant contributions — “Profit and Loss” (1951), *Omnipotent Government and Bureaucracy* (1944), *Planning for Freedom* (1952), *The Anti-Capitalistic Economy* (1956), *Theory and History* (1957), *The Historical Setting of the Austrian School of Economics and The Ultimate Foundation of Economic Science* (1962).

### The Austrian Revival

Since Mises’ death in 1973, there has occurred what Kirzner describes as a “remarkable resurgence of Austrian Economics.” The “vitality and cogency of Mises’ ideas” have been rediscov-

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*As Mises put it, just as there are laws of nature, so there are economic laws, “which power and force are unable to alter and to which they must adjust themselves if they hope to achieve success.”*

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ered (193). Many younger economists, having become “disenchanted with the aridity and artificiality of the model-building approach,” have “found intellectual stimulation and satisfaction in Mises’ relatively simple, but powerful and fundamental, insights” (194). The result is that after decades, when public policy favored much government intervention in the market economy, “Misesian views concerning the economic incoherence of socialism — and the case for complete, or virtually complete, laissez faire — have somehow become part and parcel of respectable public policy discourse” (194).

Books and articles are being written on various aspects of Austrian economics, and debates and discussions are taking place. Many of the new Austrian economists question some parts of the Misesian system. “But there can be no doubt that the prime moving element responsible for the resurgence of the Austrian tradition was the impact of the work of Mises himself. . . . Out of the debates on these issues . . . a broad group of scholars

has emerged who are all working within the Austrian tradition, and who recognize the work of Mises as being the most powerful and radical expression of that tradition in the twentieth century” (195).

For Mises, the pursuit of economic science called for “strict adherence to the canons of scientific investigation generally. . . . [A] genuinely practiced policy of *wertfreiheit* [freedom from value judgments] was absolutely *essential* for economists, if their views were to have salutary influence and to command the respect ordinarily accorded to scientific pronouncements” (89–90). However, Mises believed that an economist could keep his scholarly endeavors separate from his personal value judgments, and that science could furnish grounds for making value judgments. Just as value-free medical research can yield sound medical advice, “[v]alue-free economic science should be able to generate sound economic policy advice” (165). Thus, although Mises insisted throughout his career “on the objective, nonpolitical, impartial character of his science,” he also “passionately believed in and advocated (as a nonscientific, value-laden ideal) the political program of classical liberalism” (181–182). Liberalism\* was the ideology derived from the positive economic theory that free markets enable individuals to achieve their goals through mutual cooperation and exchange. Liberalism applied that theory to develop a political program. Thus, in Mises’ view, in advocating liberalism, free markets, and limited government, Mises the scientist was “simply articulating the straightforward implications of his own strictly scientific contributions to the positive, objective discipline of pure economics” (190). For Mises, the teachings of economics seem inevitably to lead (on utilitarian grounds) to free markets and limited government.

Mises’ reputation as an economist is solid; it rests on his scholarly and logical analysis of the workings of the market. Reasoning from the basic *a priori* that men act in the hope of attaining their various ends, he developed economic theories and explained economic phenomena as no one had before. “Only abstract economic theorizing, recognizing the nature and oper-

ation of human purposefulness, and recognizing the nature and thrust of human entrepreneurial resourcefulness is able to identify the systematic tendencies which shape the entrepreneurial-competitive market process” (80). And only such theorizing can explain such phenomena as prices, money, profits, losses, competition, monopoly, interest, and the complexities of the trade cycle.

“Mises’ entire career as an economist — from his Vienna days as a brilliant young scholar and as one deeply involved in the hectic world of post-World War I public policy, to his years in Geneva as a renowned senior scholar, to his three decades of lonely unfashionable teaching and writing in the U.S. during his old age — represented Mises’ extraordinary, courageous, sustained fulfillment of this ideal,” Kirzner observes. “He never faltered in his belief that the ‘body of economic knowledge is an essential element in the structure of human civilization; it is the foundation upon which modern industrialism and all the moral, intellectual, technological, and therapeutical achievements of the last centuries have been built.’ Mises persisted ‘in the search for truth’ in the face of the disdainful dismissal of his work by the professional economics establishment of his time because he saw his work as essential for the preservation of human civilization” (191).

*Ludwig von Mises: The Man and His Economics* is a remarkable tribute to a remarkable man. In it, Kirzner provides a concise and masterful presentation of the major economic theories Ludwig von Mises developed. Mises is more than a sincere and dedicated economic scientist and outspoken advocate of free markets. Kirzner shows how Mises’ methodological approach and his “focus on human action, on the purposefulness of action, on the entrepreneurial element in the market process, on the subjectivism with which economic understanding must be pursued” (196) has expanded the field of economics and opened up new areas for investigation. □

\* In America and Britain, the term “liberalism” has come to refer to a vaguely center-left ideology, and the term “classical liberalism” is generally used to refer to what Mises called “liberalism.” On the Continent, the term retains its original meaning.

*A Moral Temper: The Letters of Dwight Macdonald*, ed. by Michael Wreszin. Ivan R. Dee, 2001, 512 pages.

# Principled Critic

Ron Capshaw

As a *Fortune* magazine writer turned Trotskyite, critic of World War II turned Cold War anti-communist, and fellow traveler with the New Left, Dwight Macdonald seemed to earn Diana Trilling's characterization of political fad follower. A reading of his political résumé at least gives the impression of inconsistency, of a man abandoning his principles whenever the political temperature changes. The publication of his letters, however, settles this matter once and for all. The man was not inconsistent: He was a life-long libertarian.

But not one of the free-market variety. Macdonald belonged to the left-libertarian camp of George Orwell, Victor Serge, and Edmund Wilson; that group of intellectuals who trained their crosshairs on all draconian entities with an appetite for power — including, and especially, corporations. Thus, Macdonald's broadsides in these letters are directed at Henry Luce as well as Lillian Hellman.

Macdonald's list of targets in these letters is long and bipartisan: Stalin, FDR, *The Nation*, *The New Republic*, *National Review*, Joseph McCarthy, Owen Lattimore, William F. Buckley, and the Black Panthers, to name a few. Only a chronic curmudgeon or a writer of fixed principles impervious to left-wing or right-wing appeals could compile such a list. Macdonald was both.

One of the reasons Macdonald's writing from the Trotskyite period is readable while others' — such as the apocalyptic-minded James Burnham —

is not, is that Macdonald never turns off his critical apparatus even when writing on Trotsky himself, the darling of the Upper West Side. Macdonald saw undemocratic tendencies in Trotsky early on, criticizing him for Leninist views toward dissent.

Macdonald was truly against any grain. During the most popular war in U.S. history, he was an uncomfortable reminder of the war's undemocratic tendencies (the alliance with Stalin, the homicidal ranting of Patton, the relocation of the Japanese-Americans). During the Cold War, when the Buckleys and Hellmans were demanding that people stand and be counted, he attacked Joe McCarthy and Owen Lattimore — the former a sacred cow of the anti-communists, the latter of the anti-anti-communists. Even during the Vietnam War, when contemporaries such as Mary McCarthy championed the Viet Cong, Macdonald never lost his bearings, criticizing LBJ, Nixon, and the Viet Cong itself.

It was this quality of applying the same standards to all that made Macdonald incapable of being an organization man. No one in the groups he joined — the Trotskyites, the staff of *Partisan Review*, the Committee for Cultural Freedom, the New Left — could control him or make him tow a party line. He was a loose cannon. When *Partisan Review* supported America's entry into World War II, he was against it. Although he followed the basic thrust of the New Left, he criticized its heroes, Castro and Mao.

These groups and others saw him as unpredictable. But he was in fact the most predictable of writers. He was

against anyone who threatened individual freedom. Again and again, his letters sound like the dying echo of the last individualist on earth warning that the torch of liberty is about to go out. Reading his letters, one could telegraph his blows: defenders of totalitarianism (read: enemies of individual freedom) were attacked (Hellman, Dashell Hammett, Howard Fast); bursts of individual action, no matter how controversial, were defended (Dean Acheson's refusal to turn his back on Alger Hiss; the decision of the Bollinger Committee to give an award to Mussolini-sympathizer Ezra Pound).

But the letters show a man as contemptuous of his fellow citizens as H.L. Mencken. Culturally conservative, he saw American offerings as low-brow. Had he lived into our own era, he would have been horrified by the curriculum of history and American studies departments — courses in the history of chewing gum, toilets, and orgasms. He would have been a regular contributor to David Horowitz's *Crimes of the Politically Correct*.

The letters also satisfy my own concerns about what appeared to be Macdonald's selective anti-totalitarianism. Why did he oppose American entry into World War II and not the Cold War? In these letters, Macdonald offers a defensible, if not a completely convincing, argument. Hitler's doctrines were automatically offensive, of appeal to no one save crackpots and racists. Stalin, on the other hand, cloaked his doctrines in progressive rhetoric and thus had a surface appeal that had to be exposed.

Macdonald had a very readable prose style and that rare literary ability to write well and logically at the same time. Correspondence is not usually the most studied effort of writers, but Macdonald's are as penetrating and interesting as his celebrated essays. His life fit Christopher Hitchens' description of Orwell the essayist: "He was not afraid to follow a question to its logical conclusion, even if it contradicted his views." In an age when pundits still excuse away the crimes of the Clintons, when academics selectively employ free speech only for people of color, he stands as a corrective and a figure to be emulated. □

## Seattle

A crack in the thin blue line separating civilization from chaos. From the *Seattle Times*:

Darlene Madenwald thought it was a bit odd that a uniformed Seattle policeman came to the door of her houseboat last week, warned her about a rash of thefts, then asked to use her bathroom. But he seemed nice enough.

But then Madenwald got to chatting with her neighbors on east Lake Union. The same officer had been to their homes and asked to use their bathroom, too. . . .

"And he only went in the homes of women that he thought were alone," Madenwald said. "It makes you feel very vulnerable. . . ."

The police union says that there's probably a logical explanation and that the neighbors may just be unused to proactive policing.

## Sarasota, Fla.

Putting safety first in the Sunshine State, from the *Herald Tribune*:

Trevor Harvey, assistant coach of the "Little Apaches," a football team composed of 7-year-olds, punched referee Tony Kormansek in the face during a football game, and was arrested on a battery charge. Harvey is a mentor in Sarasota County schools and president of MAD DADS, a group that steers young people away from crime.

## Texas

Advance in consumer protection in the Lone Star State, from "Update on Opinions from the Office of the Attorney General," by the Texas State Board of Medical Examiners:

The acupuncture technique called Tui Na involves some manipulation of the spine and is considered a form of energy flow exercise. The statutory definition of acupuncture provides that a licensed acupuncturist may "recommend" energy flow exercise. However, the statutory language does not authorize the "administration" of such energy flow exercise.

## Washington, D.C.

Sen. Charles Schumer takes a stand against ethnic discrimination:

"It would be un-American and un-New York to castigate all Americans because of their ethnicity."

## U.S.A.

A slight setback in the War Against Terror, as reported in the Molokai (Hawaii) *Advertiser-News*:

The Postal Service has bought 4.8 million spore-proof masks to protect its workers from anthrax but they have mostly gone unused because OSHA rules require that workers wearing masks undergo several hours of training in how to use them and pass a "fit test." The masks are made of paper and are similar to those worn by construction workers installing drywall.

Special thanks to Russell Garrard, Ivan Santana, William D. Young Jr., Tom Isenberg, and Ross Levatter for contributions to *Terra Incognita*. (Readers are invited to forward news clippings or other items for publication in *Terra Incognita*, or email to [terraincognita@libertysoft.com](mailto:terraincognita@libertysoft.com).)

## Seattle

Geopolitical observation of particular interest to people who think that unshared borders divide countries or that borders unite countries, from a headline in the *Seattle Times*:

"Shared Border Has Long Divided Countries."

## Peoria, Ill.

Sad evidence of government interference with contract-enforcement, from U.S.A. Today:

A woman who testified that she sat on a man during an argument but didn't mean to suffocate him was found guilty of involuntary manslaughter. Rachael Thompson, who weighs 190 pounds, said she became angry with 115-pound Shiraz Jamsa, 49, when he refused to pay her for prostitution. Thompson, 20, sat on Jamsa's chest while trying to get his wallet.

## Helsinki

Finland shows that it's getting serious about speeding, from a report in *The Wall Street Journal*:

A Nokia executive is challenging the \$103,000 fine he was given for going 15 mph over the speed limit near Helsinki in October.

## Washington, D.C.

Yet another reason to say no to drugs, reported in the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*:

President Bush said yesterday that drug users aid terrorists who get their money from global trafficking in narcotics. "If you quit drugs, you join the fight against terrorism," he said.

## Sidney, N.Y.

How ordinary citizens can help in the War Against Terror, from a letter to the Oneonta (N.Y.) *Daily Star*:

"Nov. 15, I received a suspicious looking letter, with my address, but with another name, and postmarked Bethlehem, Pa. It felt like construction paper folded over. I make out the return address as, 'Investors Center' along with the words 'Whitehouse' and 'Peace.'"

"I followed the suggestions given by the United States post office since the anthrax scare. I wrapped it in plastic and contacted the local police department. They said they do not handle these cases and to 'return to sender' or contact the postmaster."

"At the Sidney main post office, an extremely irate postmistress told me they do not handle these cases and to get that out of there before she had me arrested. . . ."

"Was the list of 'what to do with suspicious mail' sent out to every householder just to 'pacify' them and make them believe they are protected? Are we supposed to feel 'secure' when this country's 'blasé' attitude is what got us into this nightmare of terror in the first place? We soon get over feeling secure when those who are supposed to help us, instead, vilify us or ignore us."



**Santa Clara University**

# **The Civil Society Institute**

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## at Santa Clara University

**The Civil Society Institute** leads students at Santa Clara University in the study of liberty, responsibility, and limited government. College applicants interested in libertarian/conservative ideas should consider Santa Clara University.

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**Left to right: Daniel Klein, David Friedman, Laurence Iannaccone, Henry Demmert, and Fred Foldvary.**



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Santa Clara University Web site: **[www.scu.edu](http://www.scu.edu)**



# The 5 Biggest Obstacles to Voting Libertarian ... and How You Can Shatter Them!

## Why don't people vote Libertarian?

### 5 Obstacles

#### 1. The Wasted Vote Argument:

"I don't want to waste my vote. If I vote Libertarian, the worst of the other two candidates might get elected."

2. **The Spoiler Argument:** "The Libertarian cannot win, but he can cause the lesser of two evils to lose."

3. **The 'You Can't Win' Argument:** "If the Libertarian could win, I'd vote for her. But she can't win."

4. **The 'I'm a Democrat or Republican and I Vote the Party Line' Argument:** "My family has been Republican for 80 years. I always vote Republican. I never cross party lines." (A majority of registered Democrats and Republicans never cross party lines.)

5. **The Deal Breaker Argument:** "I disagree with the Libertarian candidate on one issue: abortion, immigration, the Drug War, foreign policy, or gun ownership - so I won't vote for him."

### The Solution

The Small Government Act: Our Libertarian Ballot Initiative to End the Income Tax in Massachusetts.

Why does this work?

1. **The Wasted Vote Argument only applies to 3-way political races.** Every Ballot Initiative is a

2-way race. You vote for our Ballot Initiative to End the Income Tax in Massachusetts — or you vote against it. Every vote counts. Every vote matters.

2. **The Spoiler Argument only applies to 3-way races.** Ballot Initiatives offer voters 2 choices: yes or no. It cannot be spoiled.

3. **Tax-Cut and Tax-Limitation Initiatives can and do win.** In California. Colorado. Michigan. Even in Massachusetts.

4. **Ballot Initiatives are Non-Partisan.** There is no party line to vote. There is no party line to cross.

5. **There is no Deal Breaker on Ballot Initiatives.** One issue. One vote. If a voter doesn't like the Libertarian position on abortion, gun ownership, immigration, foreign policy, or the Drug War...she can happily vote 'Yes' on our Ballot Initiative to End the Income Tax.

lets people vote for the Libertarian proposal they like most.

Ballot Initiatives get talked about.

Ballot Initiatives give voters direct control.

Ballot Initiatives shape the political debate.

Libertarian candidates can be ignored.

Libertarian Ballot Initiatives cannot.

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**Without YOUR active support, this will NOT happen.**

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### Benefits

Our Libertarian Ballot Initiative

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