

Liberty

March 2007

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A Way Out of Iraq

The French Occupation of America

by David G. Danielson

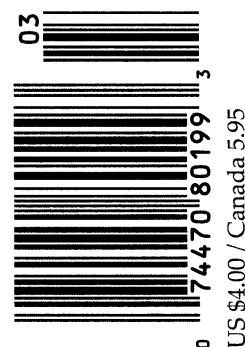
A Case for Ineffective Government

by Bruce Ramsey

Zimbabwe: The Empty Breadbasket

by Doug Casey

Also: Jo Ann Skousen picks the best flicks of 2006, Mark Skousen chills with a Chinese philosopher, David Beito and Gary Jason give two thumbs up to an unlikely Hollywood production . . . plus other articles, reviews & humor.



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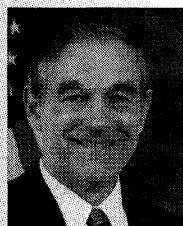
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Letters

Literal Vittles

I was intrigued to read in February's *Terra Incognita* that overindustrious British nanny statists have forced the relabeling of Welsh Dragon sausage because it "did not contain any dragon meat."

One shudders to consider the import of this ruling on traditional favorites such as toad in the hole and spotted dick.

C.D. Tavares
Morristown, Ariz.

Glamour Science

In "Think globally, spray locally" (January, *Reflections*) Gary Jason saves the children with DDT after "enviros push their agenda . . . using junk science." But the glamorization of DDT is "junk science."

I found over 200 scientific papers between 1947 and 1960 (mostly in *Mosquito News*) documenting the evolution of resistance to DDT in one mosquito population after another. There's probably another 200 papers, or more, between the end of my study and the DDT ban more than a decade later.

DDT isn't worthless. If malaria can be wiped out in the human population before the mosquitoes come back (two years), then there's no malaria for the DDT-resistant mosquitoes to spread. But usually someone with malaria was missed or came from outside; then the "cure" was lost. DDT is some help but it's not the panacea conservatives would have it be.

Enviros aren't the only ones pushing agendas using junk science. We should be very careful taking science from conservatives too.

Tom Porter
Reseda, Calif.

Jason replies: I thank Mr. Porter for his feedback. For the record, I don't want to "glamorize" DDT . . . I just think that

it was demonized by people in the "environmentalist" movement, and that demonizing cost many lives needlessly. And the organization that has recently urged the use of DDT in indoor spraying to control malaria (and which occasioned my reflection) is the World Health Organization, for Pete's sake, hardly a "conservative" organization.

As to mosquitoes developing resistance to DDT, what's the surprise there? Evolution has been an accepted biological fact for 150 years now. That doesn't mean that DDT isn't still a valuable tool. Penicillin has been used for decades, and has saved countless lives. Does the fact that there are now a number of strains of penicillin-resistant bacteria mean that penicillin is useless? Hardly. It only means that we have to keep looking for new antibiotics.

Can we then agree that we should resume the use of DDT with caution, while developing other pesticides? And keep the process free from junk science and politicization — from all sides?

Now Abideth Charity

Doug Casey's article "Charity? Humbug!" (November 2006) bears the subtitle: "If Warren Buffett really wanted to be charitable with his billions, he would have concentrated on making billions more." Is Casey suggesting that Buffett must work until the instant of his death at making money, that he isn't allowed to retire and rest? I doubt that is what Casey meant. But if we do allow Mr. Buffett the freedom to stop producing wealth, he is then left with the question of what to do with the wealth he has personally accumulated so far. And given that it's his money he is perfectly free to choose the route of private, voluntary charity, leaving less for the government's forced charity when he dies. Private charities and foundations actually have an interest in

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maintaining or increasing their wealth, and are strongly driven to make sure their disbursements are to worthy recipients. Do you find that concern for accountability in government charity?

Casey mentions the freedom the Chinese billionaire in Hong Kong has to avoid estate taxes that his American counterpart lacks. But that is obviously not a question of charity. It is a political difference, one that might not persist, and the situation with Hong Kong is unique. Lumping government largesse with taxpayer funds into the same moral and psychological pot as private voluntary charity only muddies the logical waters, seeming to make criticism of the government's bungling and corruption of a piece with criticism of private charities.

In his article, Casey specifically cites Dickens' famous character Ebenezer Scrooge: "From mankind's point of view, if not from Tiny Tim's, Scrooge was a more efficient benefactor before the ghostly visits than after." But Scrooge was decidedly unhappy

— miserable, in fact — and the transformation improved his level of personal well-being dramatically. Furthermore, Dickens makes it clear that the transformation didn't cost Scrooge his business or its profitability, that Scrooge's charity actually added to the net total of happiness in the world. Most people in the world actually like to see their generosity benefit other people. This does not make them busybodies, or psychologically flawed.

Dan Karlan
Waldwick, N.J.

Editors' note: The "subtitle" is an abstract of sorts, prepared by Liberty staff, that appears in front of most articles. It was not written by Doug Casey.

Step Three: Profit

In an enthusiastic Reflection ("Hydrogen Balm," December 2006), Ralph Reiland notes recent developments in hydrogen and other new motor fuel technologies and suggests that they may reduce our need for oil from the Middle East. I surely agree with Mr. Reiland that capitalism tends

to produce "the first with the best" in new technologies. However, I fear he has fallen for a common fallacy — that hydrogen is an alternative source of energy. It is not. It is a way to store energy. Hydrogen, whether burned to produce mechanical energy or used in fuel cells to produce electricity, takes a lot of energy to produce. The energy to produce hydrogen usually comes from hydrocarbons (oil, natural gas, coal).

Michael Christian
San Diego, Calif.

Whatever That Was

In "Word Watch" (Reflections, December 2006), Stephen Cox engages in the very same behavior that he condemns in that column. Early in the column, Cox sarcastically asks why news reporters should bother to look up the facts. Later, he writes about the news reporters who hype all of their stories to the point that each one "is really, truly the greatest story since the Resurrection" then adds the parenthetical comment "whatever that was."

Perhaps if Cox had taken his own advice and looked up the facts, he would know what "that" was. In this case, these facts are found in the Bible.

Lately I've been reading Macaulay's "History of England" — 2,500 pages of magnificent prose, and libertarian prose, besides. The other day I reached the place in Macaulay's book where he discusses education in the 17th century. Even the best teachers, he says, were bent on instilling conformity. They had "discovered the precise point to which intellectual culture can be carried without risk of intellectual emancipation."

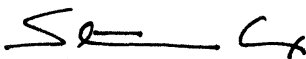
That point has also been discovered — in a stumbling, bumbling way — by the education systems of the modern world. It takes a lot of "intellectual culture," if you want to call it that, to run a modern society. To make it work, a lot of people have to know a lot about computers and CT scans and the procedures of the Human Resources Department. But I wonder whether America has ever had less "intellectual emancipation" than we see today.

Granted, people can think and even say pretty much what they want. Here in South Park, nobody really cares whether you get a tattoo, join a bondage club, practice devil worship, or even vote Republican. But don't ask whether anybody is able to make an independent assessment of life in this world. You get credit for boldness simply by becoming a credulous advocate of some party line.

That's the situation that Liberty is meant to fix. Our readers have more formal education than . . . well, than the readers of almost any other journal of opinion. But somehow, their education wasn't just an education in conformity. Somehow, they've taught themselves something about real life. They welcome the joys — and the risks — of intellectual emancipation. They know that nothing is worth publishing unless somebody gets angry about it, and for good reason, too. They want real debate, not just a pretense at it.

That's what our readers have demanded, these past 20 years. And that's what Liberty has delivered. It's in this issue, too.

For Liberty,



Stephen Cox
Editor

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The story of the Resurrection is told toward the end of each of the four Gospels, with slight variations owing to the different perspectives of the writers. To summarize, Jesus of Nazareth was put to death by crucifixion, buried, then rose from the dead a few days later. This is an event that millions of people the world over, including many readers of *Liberty*, believe happened exactly as it is told in the Bible. Now, hopefully Cox knows what "that" was.

Paul L. Booth
Boonsboro, Md.

Cox responds: Mr. Booth neglects the possibility that my sarcasm might have been consistently directed at ignorant people, including people who are unclear about what the Resurrection was. For further information on that subject, Mr. Booth is welcome to read my book, "The New Testament and Literature" (Open Court, 2006, 406 pages).

Rights and Liberties

In "Benjamin Franklin and His Critics" (December 2006), Mark Skousen says that Franklin appeared to believe in natural rights, because Franklin stated, "I am a mortal enemy to arbitrary government and unlimited power. I am naturally very zealous for the rights and liberties of my country, and the least encroachment of those invaluable privileges is apt to make my blood boil." This quotation reveals nothing about natural rights. Any libertarian who does not believe in natural rights could agree with these sentiments. In fact, any supporter of democracy would agree with these sentiments, regardless of his political ideology.

David Hoscheidt
Bloomington, Ill.

Volcanic Disruption

Thomas Oakeson, the reviewer of Al Gore's movie, is out of his depth in claiming that "the eruption of Mount

St. Helens in 1980 was . . . worse for the atmosphere, in one day, than the manmade damage done to our atmosphere during Earth's entire existence" ("Inconvenient, Indeed," October).

The mountain actually emitted 1.5 million tons of sulphur dioxide in one day, an eventual total of 2 megatons, compared to the human emitted SO₂ of up to 90 million tons per year estimated in 1990. The carbon dioxide emitted was barely noticed in the "Annual Mean Growth Rate Global Average" at NOAA's "Trends in Atmospheric Carbon Dioxide" (<http://www.cmdl.noaa.gov/ccgg/trends>).

Bob Maginnis
Portland, Ore.

Cui Bono?

In "The End in Iraq" (December 2006), Jon Harrison repeats the familiar fiction that the 2003 American invasion of Iraq was meant to "preserve and protect the state of Israel." Though we've heard this before and will probably hear it again, it isn't true and would have been foolish even if true, for a very simple reason. Hugely outnumbered by its Arab neighbors, Israel benefits from their disunity. Fight each other Arabs have always done; even the charismatic Lawrence of Arabia failed to unite them.

What Israelis rightly fear is any superpower move that would overcome the Arab predisposition to internecine conflict, such as occupation by an outside force, which nearly all Arab countries could agree to oppose. (Israel is likewise prone to fissure, but, as Amos Elon pointed out long ago, the threat of Arab takeover keeps fractious Israel from splintering apart. Conversely, the absence of any Israeli designs on Damascus or Cairo keeps the Arab countries splintered. To Arabs other than Palestinians, Israelis occupying, say, Bethlehem, doesn't count.)

Second, the suggestion that Republicans might be courting American Jewish voters is utter fantasy, nothing more, as even Karl Rove knows that over 80% of American Jews vote Democratic. As James Baker once allegedly declared, "Fuck the Jews — they don't vote for us anyway."

Third, given the option of America's invading one "I" country or the other

continued on page 26

Letters to the editor

Liberty invites readers to comment on articles that have appeared in our pages. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. All letters are assumed to be intended for publication unless otherwise stated. Succinct letters are preferred. Please include your address and phone number so that we can verify your identity. Mail to: Liberty Letters, P.O. Box 1181, Port Townsend, WA 98368. Or send email to:

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Reflections

Booboisie watch — The New Jersey legislature moved to amend their constitution, removing historic language forbidding idiots from voting. (Although the history of New Jersey politics suggests the ban wasn't being enforced too strictly.) Meanwhile, Barack Hussein Obama, at present the Democratic frontrunner for 2008, was displaying his most notable qualification for the presidency: looking good for the camera while his shirt is off.

Perhaps the framers of the New Jersey constitution were wise far beyond modern understanding. — Tim Slagle

Easy, easy, easy — Even as a lifelong registered Republican I have to admit that I like most of Speaker Nancy Pelosi's proposals for the new Congress . . . except for one:

I wish she would not ask representatives to work more. The Speaker wants the House to work five days per week (at present they only work three or four days). But since most of what Congress does is harmful, citizens are actually better off if congressmen work less.

If Congress would stick to its proper and very limited role of protecting our liberty, they would really only need to be in session for a few weeks each year. However, given Congress' tendency to do mostly harm, I would even be willing to raise their salary if they would take a few more vacations. — Roy Miller

Who waxes the watchmen? — As the crimes and constitutional abuses of the Clinton administration recede further into the memory, one event still stands out to me as being particularly odious: Clinton's ill-timed, ill-targeted bombing of a Somali "nerve-gas factory" that turned out to be a pharmaceutical plant. I'm not enough of a conspiracy theorist to believe that Clinton ordered the bombing solely, or even primarily, to distract attention from the Lewinsky affair. But it certainly seems as though he snatched at a chance to bomb whatever was next on the CIA's hit list, and thus made it more likely that our bombs would kill an old night watchman rather than bioterrorists.

But as with health care, domestic surveillance, and so many other areas, President Bush has topped Clinton's abuses yet again. I'm not enough of a conspiracy theorist to believe

that Bush ordered the bombing solely, or even primarily, to distract attention from his counterproductive "surge" into Iraq. But it certainly seems as though President Bush (at a time when the United States' role in the Ethiopian invasion of Somalia was already under question) snatched at a chance to make headlines by killing al Qaeda members, and thus made it more likely that our bombs would kill children rather than murderers.

— Andrew Ferguson

Minions of mirth — If you're a regular watcher of The McLaughlin Group, you're aware that at show's end, each panelist offers a political prediction. On the 2006 year-end edition, John McLaughlin predicted that authoritarianism is on its way out, and libertarian thinking is on its way in. John

translated this into a coming groundswell of support for moderates and liberals, who, as we know, can be just as apt to frustrate the advance of liberty as anyone else.

Perhaps needing to laugh at his own logic, McLaughlin strangely coupled this prediction with the coming of a "mirth revolution" and a call for "unadulterated exuberance." Maybe in John's case, rationality is out, and senility is in. — Carl Isackson

Becks' bucks —

British soccer star David Beckham has signed a five-year con-

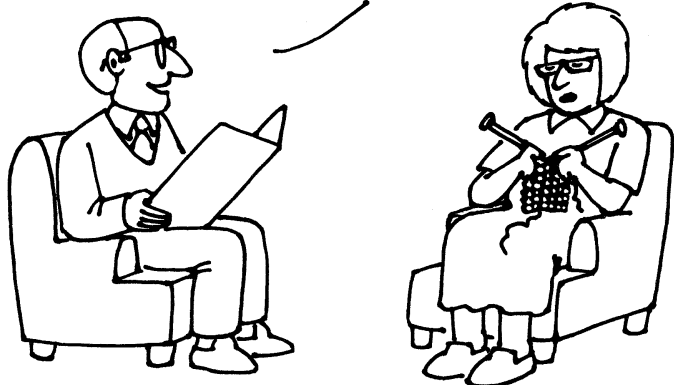
tract with the Los Angeles Galaxy for \$250 million. At first, it seems strange that the soccer world's biggest celebrity can make more money in America than anywhere else, considering most Americans regard soccer as a girly sport.

But it should be no surprise that this star of the "world's most popular sport" has ended up in a country that has no idea who he is. The United States is the world capital of pop culture, and if you really want to make the big bucks, it's where you have to go. While American-born celebrities like Sean Penn and Michael Moore wish this nation was more like Canada, Canadian artists want to come to America. Here, they get their shot at becoming one of the richest, most famous people on Earth. Remaining in Canada, they can only sink like Gordon Lightfoot into that big lake called "obscurity."

We love our Canadian superstars. Rich Little, Wayne

WALTER MAKES A MID-COURSE CORRECTION

HONEY? WHADDAYA SAY
WE JOIN UP WITH THE
EVIL-DOERS?



SNCHAMBERS

Gretzky, Peter Jennings, William Shatner, Jim Carrey, Mike Myers, and Alanis Morissette were all born in Canada, but made America their home. Their proper use of English, and the pale, effeminate good looks that Canadians are famous for, make them a natural fit in American show business. And since the IRS taxes far more gently than the Canada Revenue Agency, those stars can afford a more comfortable lifestyle. All this, and lower heating bills to boot!

In the same spirit, let's send a big Statue of Liberty welcome torch out to our newly arrived celebrity David Beckham. His rugged good looks, and marriage to a Spice Girl, should ensure that his magazine picture hangs in the locker of every soccer player in America, covered with bubblegum-flavored kisses. — Tim Slagle

Prophylactic shock — I was in line at my pharmacy when the guy in front of me began complaining to the cashier.

It seems the birth control pills he was picking up for his wife weren't free . . . that is, weren't covered by his health insurance policy. "I just don't get it," he said. "They won't pay for the birth control pills, but they'll pay for having a baby!" he snarled, clearly thinking he had found in his health insurance coverage a logical flaw the size of those in Bush's Iraq policy.

I could have explained the seeming discrepancy to him. His policy paid for childbirth because it is a political mandate. It did not pay for birth control because avoiding pregnancy while engaging in sex is not a disease that comes to us unbidden, but a choice we make or don't make, according to our preferences.

As a result of the political mandate, this man's policy will pay for childbirth, even if he and his wife choose, as it seems they have, not to have any more children. So does my policy, even though I'm a single male. So does the nun's policy. Of course, covered services are not free, even if not used. So his policy, my policy, and the nun's policy are all more expensive, since we pay for a service we'll not be taking advantage of, it not being an option we could choose to pass up.

Health insurance, back in the day, covered the costs of unexpected diseases, just as home insurance covers the costs of unexpected calamities such as fire and flood. Yet there is nothing *more* expected and predictable than the costs of taking a pill one knows one has to take daily. The idea that shifting costs from the cash register to the health insurance premium payment makes them disappear is both infantile and near universal. As is the insatiable human desire to get something for nothing.

I didn't want to be the one to break it to him, but I doubt his policy paid for condoms either. — Ross Levatter

Military-industrial messiah complex — "Weapons of Mass Destruction" was the centerpiece of the official argument for the Iraq war. But a new history of the causes of the Iraq invasion, Christian Afonsi's "Circle in the Sand" (Doubleday, 2006), asks readers not to forget that other justification for recent wars: the humanitarian motive.

We forget what a role it played in the first Gulf War. After Iraq had invaded Kuwait on Aug. 1, 1990, President George H.W. Bush demanded that Iraq withdraw. He began shipping tanks and troops to defend Saudi Arabia. The decision to attack came later. One event that hardened the American public's attitude, and Bush's, was congressional hearings on atrocities. Some of the stories were true, but the most lurid one was false. This was the story of Iraqis entering a hospital maternity ward, taking the incubators, and dumping the babies on the floor. The 15-year-old girl who told this story did not give her family name, supposedly for protection. But she was the daughter of the Kuwaiti ambassador, and a member of the royal family, the al-Sababs.

Her testimony had come, Alfonsi writes, because public relations research, which the Kuwait royal family had paid for, had shown that Americans were much more willing to go to war to stop atrocities than to restore the al-Sabah family's power. And so, it turned out, was George H.W. Bush. The stories hardened his attitude. The testimony had come on Oct.

On Oct. 20–22, gathered in Las Vegas

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Libertarianism and Religion • Jo Ann Skousen, Charles Murray, David Friedman, and Stephen Cox discuss the nuanced and sometimes tempestuous relationship between religion and the freedom movement.

CD A-102*

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Liberty in Film • In this installment of a beloved, traditional Liberty conference panel, Jo Ann Skousen, Jack Pugsley, Tim Slagle, and Gary Jason talk about why film is important to libertarians, and which films recommend themselves to libertarians.

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Ben Franklin (Warts and All) Takes On His Libertarian Critics • Franklin was one of America's greatest champions of liberty, says Mark Skousen, despite what many libertarians think.

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What's With the Cost of Gas? • Government conspiracy, market forces, or market failure: what really causes changes in consumer gas prices? Mark Skousen, Randal O'Toole, and Bob Beers look for an answer.

CD A-107

Cassette B-107

Word Watch

by Stephen Cox

The recent holiday season saw neither progress nor regress in our nation's long pilgrimage toward total illiteracy. Oh, there was some shuffling around, some hesitant steps this way and that, during the festal months now stretching from Hallowe'en-in-Prep in early October to the Superbowl in whatever month it's in, but nothing lifted us from our slough of literary despond, and nothing put us much further down the road to that inglorious state, so long foretold, where neither Roget nor Webster will be remembered, nor come into mind.

The only hint that we may not, someday, arrive at the New Philistia was the big retailers' decision to stop forcing their employees to mutter a politically correct "Happy holidays" in place of the quasi-Christian "Merry Christmas" that used to be considered obligatory around, oh, Christmas time. Good usage is always honest usage. To obscure the fact that the "holiday" in question is something called Christmas is about as dishonest as you can get. To force people, most of them Christians, to do such things is worse than dishonest. It's mean, and it's cowardly. (Mean people are usually cowards, aren't they?) In order to prevent themselves from being criticized by the Kwanzaa Krowd, the professional "humanists," and the lawyers for militant mosques, Wal-Mart and the other poor little rich boys got tough with their clerks and stockboys. An edifying spectacle.

Then came the great religious conversion. A Wal-Mart spokesman said, "We've learned our lesson. This year, we're not afraid to say 'Merry Christmas.'" Oh, the terror of receiving embittered letters from people who believe that hearing those four potent syllables will instantly deprive them of their inherent rights. Thank God for the courage of our corporate executives.

There is, however, another explanation for their conduct, and I find it more credible. The Chicago Tribune quotes Lynn Bartholome, a college professor who is into the analysis of "popular culture," as suggesting that the people at Wal-Mart "are going to do whatever they have to do to make money." Maybe Professor Bartholome wouldn't agree, but I think it's fine if they're trying to make a profit. I hold with Samuel Johnson: "There are few ways in which a man can be more innocently employed than in getting money." Trying to get money by allowing your employees to wish people a merry Christmas may not be very high on the scale of moral innocence, but it's higher than showing contempt for 90% of your customers so you can appear tolerant to the remaining 10%, the vast majority of whom couldn't care less about "Merry Christmas," one way or the other.

But speaking of money, one of the season's linguistic disappointments was a new and ugly name for the biggest sales day of the year, the day after Thanksgiving (I'm sorry: "Turkey Day"). Suddenly, on radio, TV, the internet, and, for all I know, the Arab street, that day was "Black Friday." No one knows what hole the phrase crept out of. There are confused

speculations that its origin had something to do with retailers' hopes of finding themselves "in the black" (i.e., making a profit), or with the black misery you feel when you're trapped in a crowd of frenzied shoppers dragging their loot to the checkout stand.

These explanations seem a little forced to me. I believe, though I cannot prove, that "Black Friday" is an illiterate reproduction of the language commonly applied to any day on which something really bad happens on the stock exchange. Some headline writer or internet jockey found the phrase lurking someplace in the vast dark vault of the sayings he had heard but never understood, picked it up, dusted it off, looked it in its beady eyes, and sent it scurrying out over the web. The rest, as he would say, is history.

So now that funny day after Thanksgiving has its very own title, just like the days of the week before Easter. (You know that the Thursday before Easter is "Maundy Thursday," and the Wednesday is "Spy Wednesday." No? Then you're not up on cultural obscurities.) But unfortunately, "Black Friday" isn't a quaint, attractive, or remotely descriptive label, and its instant ubiquity is frightening. By noon on Friday, November 24, I had received about 30 calls and messages from bewildered readers, all over the world, each of them wondering what this new phrase meant, where it came from, and how we could get rid of it. "Black Friday" was like the boll weevil in the old song:

First time I saw him,
He was sittin' on the square.
Next time I saw him,
He was sittin' everywhere.

And no pesticide has ever completely eradicated the boll weevil.

American holidays are full of linguistic pests. Every December has at least one heartwarming new Christmas movie; and if it's a movie about modern life, the most common word in the script will be "Santa," followed closely by "gosh!" If the film is supposed to be biblical, no one will be able to identify the most common word, because the actors will all be speaking in that thick though unidentifiable foreign accent that is considered singularly appropriate to such occasions. I used to believe that this holiday custom would die out, that Hollywood would eventually decide that American audiences no longer needed to be informed that Mary and Joseph weren't really from Ohio. But I was wrong. In this year's Bible opus, "The Nativity Story," the characters were still saying things like "Zis BAYbee vill zerve ooMAHNeetay."

One of the worst Christmas pests is the obsession with "peace." Yes, yes, I know . . . but surely one should be able to find a Christmas card that conveys something more than a jejune "Peace," "Peace to You," "Peace to You This Year," "May You Have Peace," "Holiday Peace," "Peace to You and Yours

Throughout This Holiday Season,” and similar suggestions that the recipient needs to take a pill, right now, and hit the sack till January 2. Can it be that modern Americans are so edgy, so anxious, so likely, even at Christmastide, to turn on their friends and slay them, that the only appropriate message is, “Hey, be cool, man! Peace out?”

This obsession with pacifying the populace has nothing to do with Iraq or even with the homogenizing effects of political correctness. It started a long time ago. I’m sure you’re familiar with that song, “Do You Hear What I Hear?”, which has unfortunately become part of the standard religious and commercial repertoire at Christmas. It was composed in 1962, reputedly in reaction to the Cuban Missile Crisis. In its last, preposterous stanza, “the mighty king” responds to the birth of Christ by urging “people everywhere” to “pray for peace.” This mighty king is, presumably, King Herod, whose connection with Jesus consisted of an attempt to kill him by slaughtering every child in Bethlehem of a similar age.

Well, we can’t all be Eleanor Roosevelt — but you would think that someone would protest the song’s bizarre historical revisionism. Naturally, nobody does. People actually like this babble, and even mistake it for religion. There is a mystery of origins here too, but part of the explanation may lie in the fact that “peace” has become a surrogate for belief in God. Again, this has been going on for quite a while. In the 1950s and early 1960s, “Pray for Peace” was one of the post office’s most common cancellation marks. Notice: don’t pray for freedom, prosperity, or any other kind of blessing — just pray for “peace,” the one thing that our national religion is sure about. Another explanation may be the current, sorry state of America’s literary expectations. Surely no people has ever expected less of its popular literature than Americans do now.

Contrast the expectations of the 19th century. In 1849, when Edmund Sears wrote “It Came Upon the Midnight Clear,” people wanted, and got, a good deal more than a cold salad of “peace.” The word “peace” appears in that Christmas song, but it isn’t expected to carry the thing on its own. “Peace” is introduced by a glorious fanfare of Old Testament vision and classical myth, and it’s made to look like a celebration, not a call to take out your blanket and settle down for a nice long nap. Sears makes no attempt to engage the lowest common denominator. He’s after the intelligent people in the audience, or at least the people who have read a book. And if you’re not intelligent, you should pretend to be. Now stop your sniveling and sing along:

For lo! the days are hastening on
By prophet bards foretold,
When with the ever-circling years
Comes round the age of gold;
When peace shall over all the earth
Its ancient splendors fling,
And the whole world give back the song
Which now the angels sing.

That’s not the “peace” that greets you like a limp handshake in the “holiday” cards. Sears’ version of peace rides the years, flings its splendors, shouts back at the angels. I pray for *that* kind of peace.

10, 1990; by October 15 he had begun comparing Saddam Hussein to Hitler.

The humanitarian motive was also crucial to the U.S. involvement in Bosnia. Bush was insistent on America’s standing aside as Yugoslavia fissioned, and America did stand aside for a while. But on July 3, 1992, the New York Times reported the Serb militia’s campaign of “ethnic cleansing,” and the public reaction changed the policy. It was also a humanitarian motive that got the U.S. military into Mogadishu — and might have done the same in Rwanda, except that time the memories of Mogadishu were too fresh.

Looking at what our government does, people tend to explain actions with reasons of power politics or money or oil. Sometimes it’s not mainly those things. Ninety years ago, apocryphal atrocity stories about the Germans in Belgium, and righteous anger about the sinking of the *Lusitania*, had much to do with America’s enlistment in World War I. Not all of it, but a lot. War is a political act, and politics is about sentiment. Stopping atrocities, or punishing the perpetrators, is an idea that moves people. It is also a motive that is easily manipulated, and one we may see in the next presidential administration, which is likely to be Democratic.

— Bruce Ramsey

Fighting Big Oil — Now that smokers in many parts of the U.S. are forbidden from smoking in public buildings, the sight of smokers congregating around doorways, shivering, sucking down their cancer sticks before going back inside with the civilized people has the health Nazis rubbing their hands with glee. But they’re not resting on their laurels: their new craze is a ban on “trans fats.” It started in Chicago, but it won’t stop until McDonald’s motto is “Food, Folks, and Frisée.”

However, the trans-fat warriors may not have given any thought to what will replace hydrogenated oils, which are responsible for most trans fats consumed in restaurants. To remove trans fats from some of its food, Kentucky Fried Chicken is switching to oil made from a soybean produced by Monsanto — the multinational corporate producer of genetically modified seeds. And as any health Nazi knows, genetically modified crops cause people to sprout a third eye and emit a pale green glow.

Maybe they’ll ban soybeans next — but then, there goes tofu! Protecting public health is a complicated business.

— Patrick Quealey

Spotty logic — Some recent developments in ornithology made The Wall Street Journal. Yes, ornithology can be interesting politically, at least when it concerns the famous spotted owl.

The owl achieved notoriety when it was used as a tool to crush the logging industry in the American Northwest. Under the egregious 1973 Endangered Species Act, the government was given the power to close down businesses it deemed to be hurting “endangered” species. Now, something like 98% of all species that have ever evolved on this planet went extinct before mankind ever arose, but this asinine law pretty much assumes that any species that is going extinct must be doing so because of man’s deleterious actions.

The feds decided that a particular rodent predator, the spotted owl, was being killed off by logging, so (under President Clinton) they cut logging by 80% in the Northwest, killing off more than 130,000 jobs, with the predictable result that small towns died, families broke up, alcoholism shot up, and some ex-loggers committed suicide.

Now it turns out that the science used to justify this war on a whole industry was likely bogus. It appears that what has caused the decline of the spotted owl was not evil hominids or vile technology, but *another freakin' rodent eater*. Yes, it seems that another owl — the larger and meaner barred owl (so named, I suppose, because it has bars instead of spots) — has been killing and otherwise displacing the wimpy spotted owls.

Biologists are apparently surprised to learn that the fittest survive. The role of the barred owl was suspected in the early 1990s, even as the Clinton enviro-axe fell upon the hapless loggers' heads, but many scientists swept doubts aside, claiming that "the best science" put the fault on logging. Now that we know they were wrong, will these green activists admit their error and apologize to the hundreds of thousands of victims of their misguided policy? No, they don't give a hoot. This is the same old story: when big business screws up, Congress holds hearings and the country witnesses the sad and daily testimony of the victims of heartless capitalism. Corporate chiefs go to jail. But when government screws up, *nothing is said, and nobody gets punished*.

At a bare minimum, we need to demand that the scientists who testify that a given industry is the cause of a given environmental problem be required to assume, in writing, *personal responsibility* for their reports. Then, if innocent people are harmed by governmental actions based on junk science, those victims have some ability to recover damages.

— Gary Jason

With enemies like these — On the first episode of his Sunday night Fox News show, Sean Hannity followed the example of the declining Roman Empire and announced that each week he would declare someone to be an "Enemy of the State."

Two questions: 1) Whatever happened to the days when conservatives would have worn such a label with pride? 2) If you're going to use that label, which in imperial times meant that Caesar had placed a bounty on the recipient's head, couldn't you find someone a bit more imposing than Sean Penn?

— Andrew Ferguson

Pension envy — Recently, both the New York Times and the Los Angeles Times — the garrisons of leftist lunacy — ran articles about the rapidly building crisis in pensions for public employees.

The N.Y. Times bemoaned the fact that state and local governments, responding to taxpayer pressure and fiscal reality, are beginning to challenge public employee pensions, once considered politically and legally sacrosanct. For example, voters recently rebelled in Houston, after learning that some city employees were able to retire in their 40s, and others were getting lump-sum payouts of a million bucks or more *in addition* to their regular pensions. A few years back, citizens in Milwaukee County booted out seven county supervisors who

had inflated public employee pensions, conveniently including their own. But of course, the public employee unions are furiously fighting these moves.

The L.A. Times came up with a novel explanation for taxpayers' outrage at the sight of bloated public employee pensions: neurosis! Yes, according to the ever fatuous Times writer Molly Hennessy-Fiske, what lies behind taxpayer anger is a mental syndrome she calls "pension envy," which I suppose is like penis envy, but men are susceptible to it as well. You see, because only 20% of workers for the evil private sector have pensions, they suffer from a gnawing envy of state and local government workers, 90% of whom have pensions. (It should be noted that Hennessy-Fiske is referring to traditional pensions, which are defined benefit plans, and omitting 401(k)s and other defined contribution plans, which are actuarially sounder and are becoming the norm in private industry.)

Anyway, I'm no shrink, but I think there are a few more obvious explanations for the increasing anger. First, private sector employees understand that they're the ones who have to pay for puffed-up public pensions. If I am retired and living on a fixed 401(k) income, and the state increases my taxes to pay for public employee pensions, this in effect takes my retirement income and gives it to them. They live well at my expense. That is obviously unjust.

Second, taxpayers are aware of just how enormous the amounts involved are getting. Articles are beginning to appear with alarming frequency about public employee pension and health care costs, and their effect on budget deficits. For example, just recently the L.A. Times published an article about Governor Schwarzenegger's new commission to study the problem of underfunding of public employee retirement costs. The article mentions that the state has pension and health care obligations that are now, by some estimates, upward of one hundred *billion* dollars more than anticipated revenues.

Finally, taxpayers are becoming more aware of the degree to which they have been screwed by public employee unions, who have gamed the system to get generous benefits for themselves. These unions have donated mega-millions in political campaign contributions almost exclusively to elect statists at all levels of government. Teachers' unions run their own slates of school board candidates, and fund them obscenely well. This all ensures that when such unions sit down to "collective bargaining," the people sitting on the other side of the desk will be on their side after all. It guarantees that taxpayers will get the shaft, and they are beginning to realize it.

— Gary Jason

Neutering the N-word — The time has come to defuse the N-word once and for all, as only white people can. Recently we had two stand-up comics, Michael Richards of "Seinfeld" fame and Andy Dick of "News Radio" fame, issuing press releases within days of each other apologizing for using the N-word in the course of their professional duties.

Whether accusations (or even desperate confessions) of racism are really merited here is beside the point. And it does no good to complain of hypocrisy, either. The reason the same audience applauds Chris Rock using the N-word and boos Richards is that, as much as Americans love to laugh, tragedy trumps comedy (at least in public).

Because the N-word is so explosive, whites have a historical responsibility (if such a thing exists) to defuse it. After all, whites created this weapon of mass distraction. I modestly propose that henceforth, whites start calling each other (and only each other) "nigger." Oh no I didn't? Oh yes I did. Just like we've co-opted "dude," "bro," "bitch," and who knows what else in the last decade. Let's render the N-word as obsolete as all the other slang white folks have stolen from black folks over the years. It would be "outta sight." And soon it would be out of mind.

— Tom Isenberg

The new intelligence — As the Democrats resume their traditional control of Washington, we get to see anew the partisan tilt of the mainstream media. Consider new Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi's recent selection of one Silvestre Reyes, a Texas Democrat, to lead the House Intelligence Committee. When he was interviewed by a reporter for Congressional Quarterly soon after his selection, Reyes couldn't answer even the simplest questions on intelligence issues. For example, when asked whether al Qaeda is predominantly a Shiite or a Sunni organization, Reyes guessed (wrongly) that it is Shiite. This, five years after 9/11.

Of course, it could have been worse. Pelosi's first choice for chair of the committee was Alcee Hastings — a glorious man who was once a federal judge, until he was impeached (by a Democrat-controlled Congress!) for soliciting bribes. Just the fellow to head a sensitive and confidential committee. Incidentally, Pelosi voted for the impeachment.

Now, when Dubya was a presidential candidate back in 2000, a sly reporter asked him to name the heads of state for a

number of countries, which Dubya couldn't do (I think he got perhaps two out of six or seven questions right). For weeks this was trumpeted as clear evidence of abysmal ignorance and stupidity. But the same media that were so eager to discredit Bush have passed over in silence Reyes' much more dangerous ignorance of security matters.

— Gary Jason

Act locally — On Dec. 19, syndicated columnist Bruce Bartlett attacked the Libertarian Party as a drain of activist libertarians away from the major parties, and from other political actions, toward vote-getting that is forever frustrated. He wrote:

My conclusion is that for libertarian ideas to advance, the Libertarian Party must go completely out of business. It must cease to exist, period. No more candidates, no more wasted votes and no more disillusioned libertarian activists.

In place of the party, there should arise a new libertarian interest group organized like the National Rifle Association or the various pro- and anti-abortion groups. This new group, whatever it is called, would hire lobbyists, run advertisements and make political contributions to candidates supporting libertarian ideas. It will work with both major parties. It can magnify its influence by creating temporary coalitions on particular issues and being willing to work with elected officials who may hold libertarian positions on only one or a handful of issues. They need not hold libertarian views on every single issue, as the Libertarian Party now demands of those it supports.

I believe that this new organization would be vastly more influential than the party and give libertarian ideas far more potency than they now have.

News You May Have Missed

Cheney Sustained by Deeply Held Faith

WASHINGTON — Keith Ellison, a Democrat from Minnesota, was sworn in as the nation's first Muslim member of Congress in early January, but he is not the highest-ranking Muslim official in the United States. That honor belongs to Vice President Dick Cheney, who during one of his many trips to Saudi Arabia in the 1990s on behalf of Halliburton secretly converted to Wahhabi Islam, a rigorous fundamentalist version of the faith. In 1997, according to sources in Riyadh, Cheney visited the dusty provincial town of Bakh-Asward, a Wahhabi stronghold, where he realized he had found exactly what he was looking for, a religion that was grim, rancorous, authoritarian, and violent, and yet, on the other hand, insane.

Since that time, Cheney has been working tirelessly to restore the medieval Islamic empire, or caliphate, in the Middle East and has actually

been toying with the idea of naming himself caliph, or at least running the show behind the scenes as vice caliph. The centerpiece of this secret strategy has been the carefully planned and executed war in Iraq, which has done so much to raise the prestige and power of jihadists in that country and elsewhere. That's why Jihadtime, a weekly published in a cave somewhere between the lawless Pakistani border region of Waziristan and the lawless Afghan border region of Wazooistan, sent Cheney a copy of its year-end issue with a mirror on the cover, which proclaimed that "Our annual 'Person of the Year' is you — yes, you, plus all the other Bush administration drooling wingnuts out there."

Cheney has kept his faith a private matter, choosing not to reveal it to President Bush, a sincere Christian who has vowed to read the entire Bible someday, just as soon as he finishes

"My Pet Goat." But it has led to considerable tension in the Cheney household, where the devout veep unrolls a prayer rug and prays five times a day facing toward an oil well just outside Mecca. In particular, his conversion to Wahhabi Islam has led to bitter arguments with his daughter Mary, who converted to a different sect, Wasabi Islam, while having dinner at a fusion sushi and shish-kebab restaurant in Georgetown last month with her partner Heather Poe. The heated exchanges between father and daughter have been further complicated by the fact that Cheney's wife, Lynne, is a devotee of the ancient Egyptian snake goddess Edna.

Cheney's strict adherence to militant Islam has also caused problems with his fellow neoconservatives, most of whom belong to a similarly fanatical, but rival religion, militant Bedlam.

— Eric Kenning

Resisting the enemies of freedom —

It is late November, and my parents and I find ourselves in the picturesque surroundings of the Liberty Club in Whitehall, London. It is the weekend of the Libertarian Alliance (LA) and Libertarian International Conference, hosted by Tim Evans and Sean Gabb. The weekend begins with a tribute to Chris Tame, founder and president of the LA, who passed away four months after Liberty's R.W. Bradford.

Saturday's first event is "The Nation State, the EU and Globalization: Libertarian Perspectives," chaired by Boudwijn Boukert (Nova Civitas, Belgium), Syed Kamall (Member of the European Parliament), and Wolfgang Muller (IUF, Germany).

Boukert explains that libertarianism is weak in politics proper; indeed, it represents the paradox of small-governmentalists vying for state power, so as to reduce it. Boukert goes on to detail the various types of power. We have moved (evolved?) from tribal societies to theocratic polities; city republics to city leagues; city leagues to empire states and territorial nation-states.

Boukert cites John Locke, who accepted the territorial nation-state of Britain as a platform for institutionalized liberty. Britain, Locke believed, could rely on "proto-liberal" traditions: feudal reciprocity, local autonomy, and common law. Meanwhile, in continental Europe, states were carved out of empires: so, what territorial borders existed? Emphasis was therefore placed on the *volk* — and liberal nationalism moved to nationalism as such. Boukert warns that nationalism, as evil as it often was, could now be replaced by creeping superstatehood.

Muller emphasizes national cooperation, taking his cue from Ludwig von Mises: the division of labor creates dependencies among our fellow men, and economic cooperation is dependent on liberty and security. No one is in a position to live independently. Whenever governments have drawn imaginary lines, people have crossed them. In Europe, Catholics and Protestants put differences aside to profit from each other. Indeed, as Voltaire said, "go to the London Stock Exchange," where people of different creeds and colors cooperate for the benefit of mankind.

Kamall asks whether the European Union is liberal, in the classical sense of being good for liberty. He maintains an optimistic view: sound political policies will win out. However, for the time being, the EU is more often than not a contradiction: it wants to open its internal markets — such as markets in energy — but it also wants to harmonize nations as one.

Next, Eamonn Butler of the Adam Smith Institute discusses tax simplification and reduction. Estonian Prime Minister Mart Laar, the father of Eastern Europe's flat tax movement, took power in 1992, when inflation was running at 1,000%, the economy was shrinking, and the nation was dependent on Russia for 90% of its foreign trade. Laar (who would serve until 1994, then from 1999 to 2002) started by abol-

ishing tariffs on imports, and then put his flat tax in place, ensuring that no Estonian would lose more than 26% of his income. The neighbors took note. Lithuania now has a flat tax of 33%; Latvia of 25%; Slovakia of 19%. These nations have since lowered taxes because of external competition — Russia's flat tax of 13%. And guess what: all these countries' tax revenues *rose*.

Brian Micklethwait of the Centre for a New Europe, Samizdata.net, and the Globalization Institute discusses free speech in an age of political correctness. He explains that political correctness had its origin in the idea that once all power was placed in the hands of central planners, people would automatically begin to behave well. But to ensure the smooth transformation from a capitalistic society to a socialist one, something gently non-revolutionary was needed. Enter political correctness. The cruelty and intolerance of the 19th-century capitalist economies could not be allowed to hamper progress, so people had to be taught how to think in a way conducive to the new manner of life.

This was all interesting. But for me, the highlight of the conference was Claire Fox's talk, "Culture War: Radical Islam, Ideological Struggle and Lessons from the Cold War." Fox, a left-libertarian and director of the Institute of Ideas, explained that the West is disoriented. While most of us knew where to stand in the communism-freedom debate in previous decades, we are now backing down from the fight — the fight for civilization, for ideas, and for the promotion of our way of life.

The advancements made by Western science frighten many people. Environmentalism has become the new religion, and collective, artificial "human rights" are substituted for genuine ones. When Western planners see growth — such as in India and China — they try to hang the stone of "sustained development" around the necks of the people who are starting to prosper. There is disorientation within the ruling elite, who lack a mission and genuine, principled policies.

Moral relativism is rife, and nowhere do we see it better than in our response to Islamic terrorism. The events of 9/11 might have allowed the West to define its ideas. The opposite occurred. In this age of the politics of fear, the political class itself is fearful — largely because of its own intellectual uncertainty; its own lack of a *raison d'être*. Meanwhile, the West's culture of "rights," its grievance-mongering, and its desperate desire to be offended on behalf of all minorities have strengthened the resolve of Islamic extremists. Hatred of the West and its values of capitalism, freedom of speech, commercialism, and tolerance started from within, long before enemies outside our borders caught on. Every concession of principle that a culture makes to its internal critics gives these external forces another avenue of attack.

On that uplifting note, I am looking forward to the Libertarian International conference in Poland in May.

— John Lalor

Bartlett is a libertarian conservative who once worked for Rep. Ron Paul, the 1988 presidential candidate of the Libertarian Party, and for Ronald Reagan, and who was fired by the National Center for Policy Analysis in 2005 for criticizing President George W. Bush. He is a friend of libertarians — and on this issue he is right.

The LP people I've met are all well-meaning, but they are going in circles. They are pretending that if they keep running candidates for office, they will eventually win. In reality, they will eventually give up. Then fresh libertarians will take their place, and they will follow in the same circle. This has been going on for 35 years, and it is nuts.

If you want to campaign, do it for a ballot issue. Do it for a major-party candidate whose views are close enough to your own. Or help start the organization that Bartlett imagines. Anything but this.

— Bruce Ramsey

What price Saddam? — By an odd coincidence, the 3,000th U.S. soldier to die in Iraq met his end within hours of the hanging of Saddam Hussein. Almost four years, 3,000 U.S. deaths, and \$350 billion spent to polish off a degenerate dictator — was it worth the price?

Pretty hard to answer that question in the affirmative, is it not? Saddam, our erstwhile friend (in U.S. good graces until he invaded Kuwait in 1990), possessed no weapons of mass destruction, had no definite links to terrorists, and was being well contained by the sanctions and other measures in force since the end of Gulf War I. But George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, and the neocons knew better.

Not that I'm not glad Saddam is dead. Although I have my doubts about the death penalty in general (innocent men and women have been executed by the state), in some cases it is so richly deserved (Saddam, Timothy McVeigh) that my doubts are overcome. But it would have been much easier, after Saddam's capture in December 2003, just to hand the bastard over to the Kurds for summary execution. Then we could have declared victory and gone home, and thousands of young Americans could have gone on to live their lives in full.

The death of Hitler may have been worth all the sacrifices we made in the Second World War, but 3,000 young men and women killed in a hellhole like Iraq, and \$350 billion in taxpayer money spent to get this guy? Please. What were the Bushites thinking? What are they still thinking now, as we head toward 4,000 deaths and beyond?

— Jon Harrison

Cosmological constant — Cosmological philosophers and theoretical physicists usually accept as a truism that in a hypothetical universe of infinite duration, anything that is even remotely possible must happen sometime and happen infinitely often. In other words, given an infinite amount of time — the truism goes — anything that can happen will happen. But is this alleged "truism" true?

Let's assume, as a thought experiment, the following three premises: (1) the universe will endure forever; (2) George W. Bush is immortal; (3) Bush possesses free will and, therefore, could someday admit that the military occupation of Iraq was a monumentally stupid thing to do.

If you would, philosophers and physicists, please explain how it follows from these premises that he necessarily will make that admission sometime, and make it infinitely often.

It seems to me that there's no contradiction in simultaneously holding these two hypothetical propositions: (a) we have

an infinite amount of time with which to work; (b) some things that could happen, never do. Bush's telling the truth about Iraq is one example. While it's something that could happen, I don't think it ever will, no matter how much time we are talking about.

— David G. Danielson

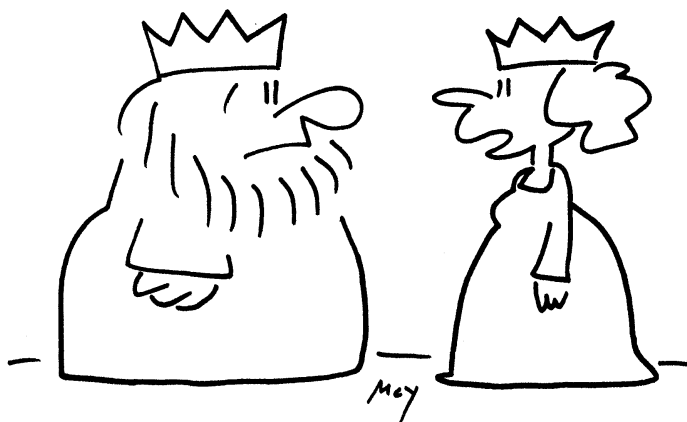
Dynamite kids — As if things weren't crazy enough already in the Middle East, here's the officially sanctioned message in Palestinian textbooks for 11- and 12-year-old kids: "The noble soul has two goals: death and the desire for it."

The goal isn't to build magnificent skyscrapers or write brilliant novels or work on cures for the world's most lethal diseases. The noble goal for the noble soul is as simple as strapping on a dynamite belt and blowing oneself into a million pieces in an Israeli pizza shop.

This "death and the desire for it" line is from a poem by Abd al-Rahim Mahmoud. Along with other writings that glorify child martyrs, the quotation is included in "Our Beautiful Language," a standard text for sixth-graders after the Palestinian Liberation Organization took control over education in the Palestinian territories.

As officially stated, the underlying ethos of the Palestinian curriculum is "built on the principle of breeding the individual on the basis of serving society as a whole." Translated, that means breeding kids who believe that suicide and murder are noble, who believe it's noble to create a society where the individual reaches his highest stage of development by extinguishing his own individualism, his own existence. It's Jonestown, writ large, a cult of suicide for the collective, for Palestine.

A 16-year-old suicide bomber, Amar al-Far, outfitted for self-destruction by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, killed three people in an open-air food market in Tel Aviv. Said the boy's mother: "Why did they choose my son? He was just a child. It's immoral to send someone so young. They should have sent an adult who understands the meaning of his deeds." The boy's father told of his last encounter with his



"If you want Most Favored Nation status, you'd better do something about that beard."

son: "I was asleep when Amar woke me up. He kissed me and asked for two shekels, 45 cents. He left the house and I went back to sleep."

An article in Rolling Stone, "The Unending Torture of Omar Khadr," tells the story of a 15-year-old captured by U.S. troops in Afghanistan after he killed an American Special Forces soldier with a grenade. "Born into a fundamentalist Muslim family in Toronto," Omar Khadr "had been prepared for jihad since he was a small boy," reports Jeff Tietz. "His parents, who were Egyptian and Palestinian, had raised him to believe that religious martyrdom was the highest achievement he could aspire to. In the Khadr family, suicide bombers were spoken of with great respect."

Before he turned 12, Omar had formal military training in bombmaking, assault-rifle marksmanship, combat strategy, and sniper tactics. "Omar and his father and brothers had fought with the Taliban against American and Northern Alliance forces in Afghanistan," writes Tietz. "Before that, they had been living in Jalalabad with Osama bin Laden. Omar spent much of his adolescence in al-Qaida compounds." When Omar and his brothers were very young, their father told them, "If you love me, pray that I will get martyred." To bring honor to the family, the father, rather than blowing himself to smithereens, asked Omar's older brother Abduraham to be a suicide bomber. After Abduraham refused, his father, suspecting a weakening of faith, told him, "If you ever betray Islam, I will be the one to kill you."

In "For the New Intellectual," Ayn Rand warns against "death-worshipping mystics" who control and humiliate through the use of guilt and fear, preaching that a man's pursuit of happiness here on earth is evidence of depravity. "There is no way to make a human being accept the role of a sacrificial animal," she writes, "except by destroying his self-esteem."

— Ralph R. Reiland

Few men are an island — Prince Roy of Sealand is 85 years old. He's getting too old to govern and intends to abdicate sovereignty over his island principality. Prince Regent Michael, Roy's son and Sealand's head of state, is accepting monetary offers from prospective successor regimes.

The asking price is high. Michael hopes to fetch eight or nine figures in pounds sterling for the micronation, a man-made structure sunk into a sandbar about six miles off the coast of England. Its land area is 1% that of the Vatican. While Sealand is nowhere recognized as a bona fide state, it has resisted challenges to its autonomy for four decades, some in

courts and some involving exchanges of gunfire.

It is an attractive location for would-be online gambling concerns and illegal file-swapping services. A Swedish group called The Pirate Bay has expressed interest in "buying" Sealand and hosting The Pirate Bay's internet filesharing service there, apparently undeterred by the lackluster performance of HavenCo, a company that similarly tried several years ago to create a Sealand "data haven" but met with limited success due to differences with the "royal family."

If you've got an insatiable thirst for pirated music and £100 million burning a hole in your pocket, here's your chance to do something about it.

—Patrick Quealy

The great heist — Federal Reserve chairmen are the closest things that modern America has to prophets, so we

attend to their words devoutly. And they tend to have their own oracular styles. Alan Greenspan was inscrutable; current Fed head Ben Bernanke is sententious. He said recently that "reform of our unsustainable entitlement programs" is urgent, because "the fiscal consequences of these trends are large and unavoidable." Gee, ya think?

But the point he is getting at is perfectly sound. The United States is facing the perfect demographic storm, a tsunami

of retirees that will simultaneously push private pensions ("guaranteed" by the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation), public employee pensions and medical plans ("guaranteed" by city and state taxes), Social Security ("guaranteed" by the bogus Social Security trust fund), and Medicare and Medicaid (both "guaranteed" by payroll taxes) to the wall, and through it.

The amount of unfunded liability is breathtaking. The PBGC, supposedly reformed of late, has up to \$450 billion in liabilities not covered by assets, and is currently running a \$27 billion deficit. The Wall Street Journal recently put the unfunded liability of public employee pensions and medical programs at over \$2 trillion (and the data are only now coming in). Of course, Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid underfunding is astronomical — some estimates range up to \$70 trillion or more.

Meanwhile, the United States is looking at a wave of 79 million Boomers — 28% of the entire population — whose aging will result in the ratio of people in the 25–60 group to those they have to assist, the over-65 group, dropping from the current 5 to 1 down to about 2.5 to 1 by 2050.

To keep paying out the promised level of benefits for just

"WHAT IF THIS? WHAT IF THAT?"
YOU PHILOSOPHERS CRACK ME UP!



SHCHAMBERS

Social Security and Medicare alone will drive spending on these programs from the current 7% of total GDP to 15% by 2050. If you add in likely federal bailouts of private pensions (thanks to the foolishly designed PBGC), and the state bailouts of bankrupt city and county pensions and health care plans, God alone knows where this will drive taxes. With a third of the population in retirement, the remaining workers will be looking at confiscatory taxation for sure, or slashing all other government spending (including defense spending) down to next to nothing. But confiscatory taxes wind up deterring people from working, so are ultimately self-defeating, and the world of 2050 is apt to be just as hostile to the U.S. as is the present world, if not more so.

I have argued elsewhere that state assets should systematically be sold to pay for Social Security obligations, but I know that chances are slim that the feds will be that responsible. No, in reality, I think that the likely consequence of these out-of-control programs will be means-testing. I suspect that within ten years, the federal government will hysterically announce that it cannot sustain these programs, and it will proclaim that anyone who has a certain level of wealth — probably in the upper tenth of the population — will simply lose his Social Security and Medicare benefits. Indeed, this has already started — in January, richer Medicare recipients will start paying higher premiums.

Of course, this move will be accompanied by a lot of class warfare rhetoric: “Look at those rich, greedy geezers! These millionaires should be ashamed of accepting benefits designed to help the little guy!” You already hear some liberal Democrats saying this, conveniently overlooking the fact that they themselves pitched the programs as annuities: people supposedly pay in to them during their working years, then withdraw the principle and interest during their retirement years.

Of course, these programs are anything but annuities: they are classic Ponzi schemes, in which present investors make handsome payoffs to earlier investors, in hopes that they, too, will be taken care of. The schemes collapse when the number of new investors cannot support the load of the older ones. Then people get burned. The victims of a Ponzi scheme are never the initial investors, who are paid well and become great boosters of the con. It's the later ones who suffer.

Means-testing will be the greatest financial crime of all time. Millions of people who contributed to the system for decades, believing the government's claim that it was saving the money for their retirement, will be brazenly told that, no, it was just a welfare scheme all along — a scheme, in fact, to advance other people's welfare. And in truth, it was also a vote-buying scheme, all along.

The number of victims of the government's imminent Great Means-Test Robbery will dwarf into insignificance the victims of all the business frauds ever perpetuated — up to and including Enron, WorldCom, and the other headline-making scams. Of course, when a business rips people off we call it fraud; when the government does it, we call it social justice.

— Gary Jason

Greener Mountain State — While Vermont is by no means consistently libertarian in outlook (in terms of economics, for example, it's sometimes only a little to the right

of Castro's Cuba), the Green Mountain State can be very forward-looking when it comes to certain individual freedoms. Witness its first-in-the-nation recognition of civil unions back in the year 2000.

Now some members of the state's officialdom have come out and proposed an end to the senseless war on illegal drugs. As first reported by the Rutland Herald on Nov. 30, 2006, Windsor County State's Attorney Robert Sands has broken ranks with his fellow prosecutors and called for legalization. “I don't want criminals controlling the distribution of dangerous substances. I'd rather have a regulated marketplace,” the Dec. 4 Herald quotes Sands as saying.

Cold Mountains — As I write this, the search has been given up for the Mount Hood climbers. One has been found dead and the other two are presumed dead. Three confident, virile young men, convinced they could dash to the top of Mt. Hood in the middle of December, all dead.

The sadness, the folly and pointlessness reminds me of Iraq. There too, men with more testosterone than sense felt that 10,000 years of history could be ignored and they could dash a conquering army into Mesopotamia, set up a puppet government, and pump out the oil, all to the applause of the world community. Like the Mt. Hood climbers, they found that the dash to the top was the easy part. Getting back was harder.

I have friends who have said that the climbers got what they deserved and that no one should be risking his life to look for them. There are others who share that view about President Bush and his cabal. The incompetence of both the Mt. Hood expedition and the Iraq war has been staggering. Bad strategy, bad tactics, bad worldview. I call this fractal incompetence. Like fractal math, it scales from the smallest detail to the biggest idea.

As a consultant I have seen many similar examples of deeply flawed judgments. They are a common problem with over-educated managers who think they know how the world works when they really have no idea whatsoever. They live in a self-congratulatory Platonic netherworld where the earth is a merely phenomenal place. They live in the land of forms, where just desperately wishing for something to be true gets them 80% there. After they con themselves and then the people around them, their Platonic truth becomes immutable. This is very handy since nothing that happens after that can be blamed on them. It is just “shoddy execution of the vision,” as they might say.

There is one important distinction between the two events. The “idea men” behind the Iraq war will not die a horrible death in the cold. They will not die a horrible death in the sweltering desert either. They will go on to cushy sinecures at major think-tanks, military contracting outfits, or high-toned law firms. Unlike the Mt. Hood climbers, they will die no wiser.

— Paul Rako

Sands' counterpart for Windham County, Dan Davis, offered a milder proposal. According to the Herald, Davis favors making the possession of small amounts of marijuana (currently a misdemeanor) a civil offense. Compared to Sands' call for complete legalization, this would be no more than a baby step, but it still looks good when compared to the knee-jerk reactions that law enforcement typically has to the idea of legalization.

Speaking of knee-jerk reactions, Sands' call for legalization prompted one from Vermont's public safety commissioner, Kerry Sleeper. "We're forgetting about protecting the people," said Sleeper. Of course, any official whose paycheck depends on "protecting" the public will first protect his or her own turf, and damn the consequences. (Said consequences in this case being unnecessary and unjust restrictions on individual freedom, increased violence and property crime, and lives ruined by the stigma of a drug conviction.) It should come as no surprise that just as he was deprecating Sands' bold stand, Sleeper was accepting a \$1.75 million federal grant to fund Vermont's Drug Task Force.

According to the Herald, Sleeper went on to predict that legalization would lead to a tenfold increase in the number of addicts. Unfortunately, the Herald neglected to ask Sleeper what evidence he had to back up his prediction. As is well known, the number of addicts has soared *since criminalization took effect*, far outpacing the rate of increase of the population as a whole. Current levels of drug use are so high that it is difficult to imagine just who might be out there waiting for legalization before choosing to indulge. Sleeper's warning of a tenfold increase in addicts is simply without any basis in fact.

On the other hand, some veterans of the drug war, speaking from long experience, have endorsed Sands' proposal. James Dean, for 21 years a federal probation officer at the U.S. District Court in Burlington, Vt., commended Sands for his "intellectual integrity and political courage." And in a commentary written for the Rutland Herald on Dec. 6, Peter Christ, a retired police captain from Tonawanda, N.Y., wholeheartedly endorsed Sands' view, calling for "an end to this madness, America's longest war."

Retired captain Christ is a founder of LEAP — Law Enforcement Against Prohibition — an organization that stands for the repeal of federal and state drug laws. LEAP has 6,500 members, including police and judges as well as average citizens. Only five years old, LEAP may be the vanguard of a movement that will sweep away the awful legal tyranny that is America's War on Drugs. We can but hope. — Jon Harrison

Privatizing antiterrorism — The only sure way to defeat terrorism is to limit the terrorists, mostly by imposing obstacles upon what they can do (initially through infiltration and surveillance) and then by eliminating them.

My assumption is that since al Qaeda and its allies are crazies who are going to die early anyway, the smartest opposing strategy would channel their efforts so that they would do the least possible damage. Need only libertarians suggest that such efforts are best privatized? And that invasions of whole countries, purportedly in pursuit of terrorists, is a counterproductive waste of money and, yes, young American lives?

— Richard Kostelanetz

Their geriatric majesties request — The Rolling Stones concert on Nov. 17 in Atlantic City was three weeks late, a replacement for a sold out Oct. 27 concert that was canceled four hours before show time. The show's rescheduling, according to the publicist for the band, was prompted by a doctor's advice that Mick Jagger should rest a sore throat.

Rosalie Druyan, wife of attorney Martin Druyan and a ticket holder from Brooklyn, the same litigious place where some girls sued McDonald's because they gained too much weight after downing an abundance of Quarter Pounders, promptly filed a \$51 million class-action lawsuit, accusing Jagger and the Stones of fraud and of acting in bad faith because the concert wasn't canceled early enough for fans to cancel flights and hotel reservations.

Fans from Europe, some just disembarking from 14-hour flights, were carrying on that they had just spent a small fortune on flights, nonrefundable rooms, and things like kennel fees. There was a lot of swearing at the front desk of the Borgata, the casino hotel where many of the fans were staying.

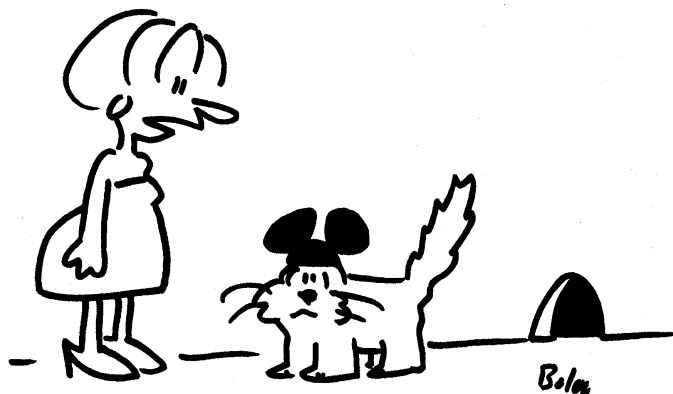
"I won't even repeat what they were saying," a reservationist at the Borgata told me. Just leave out the swear words, I suggested, looking for some quotes for this Reflection. "I can't," she said. "Everything was a swear word."

"Gert Kuiyer and Willem Nootenboom left Amsterdam in the Netherlands at 6 a.m. Friday with hopes of seeing their 51st Stones show," reported The Press of Atlantic City. "After a grueling day of travel by plane and rental car, they arrived at a fan club party at Atlantic Bar & Grill on Pacific Avenue only to discover the show had been canceled."

Similarly with Ingeborg Bannier, flying in from Berlin to see the show." Bannier, a 52-year-old German psychotherapist, grew up in East Berlin, where as a teen she secretly recorded Rolling Stones songs that aired on West Berlin radio stations," reported The Press. "She's seen 43 Rolling Stones concerts throughout the world."

Quipped Mrs. Druyan's husband, Martin, who is representing his wife in the case, "Talk about no satisfaction."

But one wonders what would have happened to Judy



"You dozed off again, didn't you?"

Garland if the Druyans had been around in the '50s and '60s. Would her fans have gone for the jackpot each time Ms. Garland appeared to be less than fully sober during a performance, or sued each time she canceled with insufficient lead time?

Unlike the litigious Mr. and Mrs. Druyan, a more philosophical Stones fan, probably in her late 60s, gave me a more relaxed reaction to the show's cancellation. "It's okay," she said. "He's only human. The rest of us get to retire at 65. When you're an old-timer like me, you've seen it all."

And seeing it all, I think, has much to do with what's so engaging to so many people about a Stones concert, engaging enough to get people to fly from Europe to see Mick give a live performance of "Paint It Black" for the 51st time.

For a crowd that's old enough to have dodged a few bullets of its own, there's an admiration for the longevity of the Stones, an appreciation of their spirit and energy after 44 years on the road.

Keith, as always, started his solos by telling the crowd, "It's good to be here. It's good to be anywhere." In April, he'd fallen out of a coconut tree in Fiji. Neurosurgeons drilled small holes in his skull to relieve pressure and remove blood clots, a procedure known as a craniotomy. Mick's father had died the Saturday before the concert. Ron Woods was mourning the recent death of his brother. And Charlie Watts was there at the drums, a survivor of a 2004 bout with throat cancer.

As the Boston Globe commented, reviewing a Stones concert earlier in the tour, "The Stones' vitality remains undimmed, their signature chemistry and DNA a rock life force undiluted."

— Ralph R. Reiland

At second glance — In the January 2007 *Liberty*, this reflector opined ("Whither America") that the Republican loss of the House and Senate might not be so significant because the party in the presidency usually loses seats in the sixth year of a presidency, and because the Republicans might reclaim the House and Senate in 2008. Now that I've had a few more weeks to reflect on the 2006 election, this analysis no longer seems as accurate as it did then.

First, given that modern districts are drawn with computer-aided precision, and that incumbents of both parties have had extremely high re-election rates in recent years, the fact that six incumbent Republican senators and 22 incumbent Republican House members went down to defeat is nothing short of political slaughter. (Republicans also lost 20 of the 36 governorships being decided.)

Second, it is an open question whether most of the lost Republican House seats will ever come back. To be sure, a few of them, particularly the several lost by Republican representatives plagued with ethical problems, are likely to be regained. But this is, at most, about five seats. Even if the Republicans regain five "easy pickings" House seats in 2008, that would leave them with only 207 seats, eleven short of a majority.

Moreover, these eleven seats will be hard to pick up in future years. Republican House losses were disproportionately concentrated in the Northeast and Midwest. Now, in these centrist districts, Democrats will be running as incumbents and Republican primary voters will be likely to nominate conservatives (formerly, many of the lost Republican House seats in the Midwest and Northeast were held by moderates). It will be hard for Republicans to take back the House,

and any margin of majority there would likely be small.

While prospects are better in the Senate, the loss of six incumbent Republican senators running for reelection — Santorum (Pennsylvania), DeWine (Ohio), Chafee (Rhode Island), Talent (Missouri), Burns (Montana), and Allen (Virginia) — was a blowout. The Republican Party is in danger of being relegated electorally to southern, plains, and Rocky Mountain states. This is, indeed, almost the situation in which the party now finds itself.

The year 2008 is a long way off. It is uncertain who each party's presidential nominee will be. Some terrorist or international event could change the domestic political situation. The economy seems strong. If Iraq yet turns out satisfactorily, America may continue to have a two-party system in which Republicans are the majority party much of the time.

— Lanny Ebenstein

Overdue for change — With the new year comes new hope. As one of those saps compelled to contribute union dues that are then used to fund political causes I despise, my eyes turn hopefully to the Supremes for liberation. In January the U.S. Supreme Court took on appeal a ruling by the Supreme Court of the State of Washington in a case that will be crucial in determining whether *Beck* worker rights will be implemented.

The case arose from a 1992 initiative passed by the voters of Washington. The initiative was a paycheck protection act, passed overwhelmingly in that generally blue state, to stop unions from using a worker's compulsory dues for political purposes without written authorization from that worker. This initiative was meant to start enforcement of the U.S. Supreme Court's 1988 *Beck* ruling, which meant essentially the same thing, but was and is widely disregarded by unions. Naturally, the Washington Education Association (the state's biggest teachers' union) sued to block the initiative from taking effect and convinced the state's highest court that the law was unconstitutional, because it would be too hard and costly for the unions to comply with, and thus would interfere with the unions' free speech rights.

The way unions have used their members' dues is nothing short of dictatorial. Unions spend 60% and more of member dues on lobbying, political donations, and other political activities. And 90% of the political donations they make go to Democrats, even though up to 40% of union members vote Republican in any given election. Indeed, when Colorado and Utah passed paycheck protection laws, union dues collections dropped 70–90%.

In most states, workers can be forced to join a union as a condition of employment. Let's hope the Supreme Court does the right thing and reverses the Washington decision — or even better, finally mandates that all unions put into effect the rights granted their members by *Beck*.

— Gary Jason

Congo's counterfeits — Milton Friedman secured his place in history when he established the fact that inflation is a monetary phenomenon. When a government prints too much money, the value of the currency is diluted.

It's a lesson that the president of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Joseph Kabila, seemed to understand, especially after the rampant inflation of the Mobutu years. Kabila, who

was just re-elected, won international plaudits for imposing macroeconomic stability on a country that is more an outline on a map than a reality.

But the recent elections have strained the public purse and, as *The Economist* reports, "Strapped for cash, the government seems, once again, to be cranking up the currency presses: diplomats allege that in the past five months the central bank has counterfeited its own money, by duplicating fresh bills."

Perhaps Congo's central bank reasons that fake currency produces only fake inflation?
— Robert H. Miller

Arts counsel — One common theme implicit in conservative and libertarian dismissals of the National Endowment

for the Arts is a reluctance, if not failure, to understand arts patronage. Because much of the best art has not survived (and still does not survive) in the marketplace, moneyed patrons have thought support of arts, composers, and sometimes writers worth their while. To no surprise, sophisticated patrons compete with each other to capture the best.

One of Tom Wolfe's best insights in his book "The Painted Word" is that once rich people no longer earned social and psychological credit for supporting the poor, who had become wards of the state, some of the wealthy turned to collecting eccentric visual art, a few amassing impressive holdings entirely with their own funds. Their collections could then appear in magazines publishing photographs, individual

The History of Money

by Aaron Anderson

A long time ago, when the world was young, people didn't have money. They bartered for things they needed. If you had a billy goat you wanted to get rid of because he kept sneaking into the house at night, you could swap him off with a neighbor for, let's say, a sack of figs. No money changed hands. No bill of sale. No credit checks. No monthly statements. No nothing. If it turned out that the figs were largely rotten, you marched right over to your neighbor and knocked his teeth out. Things were simple then.

Major inventions, such as the wheel and, later, the claw hammer, allowed civilization to advance. Bartering became much too cumbersome. If you wanted a pyramid of your very own, for instance, and all you had to swap for it was a bunch of chickens, you'd be up to your armpits in leghorns before the transaction was complete. Something had to be done to simplify things. It was then that money was invented to facilitate the flow of goods, and the world has not been the same since.

At first people only used coins. They were generally made of copper, silver, or gold, representing various values, and became known as cash after their inventor, Joshua Ezekiel Cash, a distant relative of Johnny. Coins went over extremely well, particularly with a man named Charley Gamble, who at the time was working on a new game he called pinball.

The Indians of North America developed the best monetary system. They used clamshells as a medium of exchange. There was only one thing wrong with this system: during the high tides of winter, many Indians went broke and had to go on welfare.

The flow of commerce increased, and it wasn't long before coins were no longer adequate to handle it. They were just too heavy. People started getting stoop-shouldered carrying all those coins in their pockets. It was a sad sight to see, whole towns full of people going around all bent over and unable to shake hands with each other.

To correct this serious situation, paper money was

invented. People straightened up right away, but paper money had its drawbacks. There was just so much of it floating around that people became confused. People then invented banks, and the world has not been the same since.

History is a little vague as to who started the first banks. It is believed to have been an energetic gentleman by the name of Pierpont Morgan. He started it all by agreeing to keep cash for a friend who was gone for a few days in search of more concubines for his harem. Morgan put the cash in a cigar box for safekeeping. Word of the arrangement got around, and other people availed themselves of Morgan's generosity. Soon his little home was full of cigar boxes with money in them.

One day Morgan said to himself, "Morgan, you fool! Here you are keeping all that money for your friends, and you're not getting a thin dime for yourself!" (Actually, dimes were not so thin in those days; it was just an expression people used.) From then on Morgan charged his friends a small amount for keeping their money in a safe place.

Not long after that, Morgan had another idea: "Morgan, you fool!" he said to himself again, "here you got all this money lying around cluttering your place and you're not doing anything with it! Why not use it for some investments? Why, you could buy up all those shacks poor people live in down by the river and convert them into condominiums!"

Just to make sure that he would have no problems with his depositors, Morgan agreed to pay them a few pennies for the use of their money. When everyone heartily agreed, Morgan knew he was on to something. That was the beginning of interest payments, and the world has not been the same since.

Morgan made sure that the amount of money paid to him by his depositors for keeping their money was considerably higher than the amount he paid them for his use of same. As a result of this clever move, Morgan was able to expand his business, opening several branch

objects could be lent for exhibitions crediting the collectors' names, and whole collections could be shown. In my hometown some of these pioneering collectors in turn used their own money to found the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Guggenheim Museum, and the Museum of Modern Art, each beginning with a mandate setting it apart from the others.

Other patrons support libertarian activities, not only with their earned income but also with the unearned income that comes from savings on tax deductions. Since Ludwig von Mises' salary was paid not by New York University but by an individual fan, he too had a patron repairing a default in the free market. I sense that too many critics of government cultural patronage don't at all understand any kind of patronage.

Why have states supported art? Not only to benefit the public but to earn favorable credit with their publics. That's why not just the Medicis but even worse despots have patronized artists. This last truth became most apparent to me in West Berlin, whose DAAD Künstlerprogramm invited me in the 1980s to spend a year in residence there, along with other prominent avant-garde figures. With comparatively little West German money, the Berliners were supporting our work to sustain the pre-WWII myth of their city as an artistic hothouse. Nearly the entire budget of the West Berlin opera came from public funds, simply because Germans regard the quality of its opera as one sure measure of a great city.

As the West German government wanted research facilities

offices along the river. They became known as the Banks of the Nile.

It wasn't long before Morgan became quite prosperous. As a matter of fact, he became filthy rich. People came to him for advice, something they had never done when he was poor. Morgan built an elegant home on a hill where he could overlook the rest of the people. He bought a gold chain to string across his vest and a sundial watch so he knew when happy hour began down at the club. In no time Morgan began to look like a typical banker, although no one knew then what a typical banker was supposed to look like.

Morgan's banks were not without problems, though. For one thing, people began withdrawing their money early, before Morgan had a chance to fiddle with it. Morgan woke up one morning from his sleep with the answer: "I'll slap a penalty on those guys if they withdraw their money before a designated time." He went back to sleep with a satisfied smile on his face. The next day people began noticing huge signs strung high across the street and tacked up against buildings. The signs bore the bank's logo and proclaimed, "SUBSTANTIAL PENALTY FOR EARLY WITHDRAWAL."

The reaction was immediate. People became terribly frightened. They huddled in small groups excitedly discussing the edict. There were rumors that early withdrawal of savings could lead to dire consequences — a broken leg, a smashed skull. . . . Morgan was no dummy. He realized he might have gone too far. He called the people together in the town square and told them the penalty for early withdrawal would not be as severe as they imagined. But the damage had already been done. Before the penalty went into effect, many of the depositors withdrew their money and put it in cigar boxes at home. Something had to be done.

That's when Morgan came up with his best idea yet. He told his depositors that if they left their money in the bank or opened new accounts, he would give them something. He had a lot of slightly cracked dishes in the back room, and he decided he would start with those. The giveaway went over well. However, Morgan wasn't through yet. When he ran out of dishes to give away, Morgan came up with an even better deal. He gave away plates made of reflective metal. Customers

were instructed to place a piece of bread on the metal and then put the metal in the direct rays of the sun. The intense heat made the bread leap right up into the air. Although Morgan didn't realize it at the time, his giveaway promotions represented the birth of public relations. The world has not been the same since.

Morgan continued to innovate. He removed the iron bars from around the tellers' cages (thought incorrectly by some to have been named after Anthony J. Teller of Damascus, who had become the darling of the financial world for having worked 27 years without a raise in pay). For the first time, too, tellers were smiling. They also sang out "Have a nice day!" to customers who deposited over one hundred dollars. Morgan even left little dishes around filled with dinner mints (the cost of which was deducted from the assistant manager's pay).

Morgan was aging, but he never let that get in the way of his passion for money and banking. One morning, after awakening from a deep sleep, Morgan conceived what he thought would surely be his greatest contribution to banking. He envisioned something like tiny insects, which he would name "digits." These little bugs would be able to move themselves up and down the river at lightning quick speeds. By turning dollars into data, Morgan would no longer have to struggle with finding places to put all the cigar boxes. He even saw the potential for opening data banks and charging his customers additional fees for storing their own data in his data banks.

Alas, Morgan met his end still pondering the problem of how his customers could access their data conveniently from his data banks anywhere on the river. It wasn't until years later that plastic was invented, and a man named Alavar Credit invented the credit card. And the world has not been the same since.

Yes, money has had a colorful career. Today, of course, it is much more versatile. Banks today often loan poor countries millions of dollars to straighten out their economies. When the countries cannot pay back the loans, the banks loan them more money. That's versatility.

There are going to be big changes in the future, too, what with computers and all. There's even talk now that some banks may remove those little chains connected to ballpoint pens. Surely the world will never be the same.

and companies with educated employees to locate in Berlin, at that time an island isolated in the middle of East Germany, it was smart public policy to support such incentives as a first-rank opera, a world-class symphony, and, oh yes, some artists and writers imported from abroad. Some of us made works that wouldn't otherwise have happened, works that

are still remembered there — in my case several films about the Great Jewish Cemetery of Berlin as a representation of pre-WWII Berlin and a '60s audio composition about the sound of the language of prayer in Berlin. The famed Berlin

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Gerald Ford, R.I.P.

Gerald Ford was not a great president. He had been a congressman, a leader of the Republicans in a chamber dominated by Democrats. He never had the ambition to be president, and if he had, he would never have been nominated from his seat in the House of Representatives. Richard Nixon elevated him to vice-president to replace Spiro Agnew, who had been exposed as a crook. Nixon chose Ford because he was clean and had enough Democratic friends to get ratified. Everyone liked Jerry Ford. And when Nixon flew away to California, there was Gerald R. Ford, President of the United States.

Ford looked like a football player, which he was — corn-fed, with a dumb grin. The man was not as calculating as Nixon, nor as devi-

ous, and the press made fun of him for stumbling. National Lampoon put him on its cover, shoving an ice cream cone into his forehead. But Ford was not stupid, and he was physically and emotionally healthy. He was *normal*. His wife was normal, too. People liked Betty Ford. When she revealed her struggle with the bottle, they liked her more — and felt safer with him.

Ford pardoned Nixon, which was a big thing at the time. He kept Henry Kissinger in the administration and signed the Helsinki accords with the Russians. He had an economic program called "Whip Inflation Now" — WIN — which didn't. He failed to convince Congress to continue aid to South Vietnam, and he watched it go down. He sent the military to rescue the crew of the freighter *Mayaguez*,

held captive by communists, and he got them back.

More important is what he didn't do. He didn't worm America into a war, as Johnson had, or prolong one, as Nixon had, or play nuclear roulette, as Kennedy had. He fought no war at all, and — for the first time since Herbert Hoover — there was no military draft during any part of his term. Facing a serious recession, he started no new social programs or economic controls. He vetoed 56 pieces of legislation passed by the Democratic Congress and made 44 of his vetoes stick.

Ford was no Ronald Reagan, promising to shrink government. But he was no George W. Bush, either. At this point in history, I'm inclined to remember our accidental president very fondly.

— Bruce Ramsey

My favorite president died on Dec. 26. During his short tenure, from August 1974 to January 1977, Gerald Ford was viewed as a do-nothing president. In fact, he did what presidents should do: he attempted to restrict the growth of government rather than abet it.

Ford vetoed more bills than any other president since Dwight D. Eisenhower, many of them big spending bills pushed by the Democratic majority in Congress. His anti-inflation program, Whip Inflation Now, with its memorable "WIN" buttons, was harmless, unlike most government programs. And although he was a congressman for 25 years, he never wrote a major bill.

Ford lost the 1976 election because he pardoned Richard Nixon, a courageous act that today even Ted Kennedy and the New

York Times acknowledge as good policy.

The media didn't "get" Gerald Ford, so they ridiculed him for being clumsy and intellectually weak. (It was said about him that he couldn't walk and chew gum at the same time.) Yet Ford was physically adroit and intelligent. He had been a star football player at the University of Michigan (with contract offers from the Green Bay Packers and the Detroit Lions upon graduation), and he went to Yale Law School. There, he not only graduated in the top third of his class but served as assistant coach for the football team and head coach for the boxing team.

When Ford assumed office upon Richard Nixon's resignation, he told Americans that "our long national nightmare is over." He was referring to the Watergate scandal, but for many Americans, the nightmare

was the Vietnam War, and it ended on his watch. Posthumously, he has been praised for bringing decency back to the office of the president and normalcy to the country. The media are right about that.

The last year of his term, 1976, was the bicentennial of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Many people remember the celebration, which featured tall ships elegantly sailing through New York harbor. My memory is more prosaic.

At a leafy green public park in Chicago, I attended my first "old-fashioned Fourth of July picnic," complete with orator. The sun shone, the birds chirped, families unpacked their picnic baskets on the grounds, children ran about and shouted, and the speaker praised liberty. For the first time in a decade I was proud to be an American. Thank you, President Ford.

— Jane S. Shaw

Engage Iran: A Way Out of Iraq

by Jon Harrison

The U.S. should anticipate events rather than await them.

American policy in the Middle East is at an impasse. The Iraq Study Group, also known as the Baker-Hamilton commission, has labored — and brought forth a mouse. Its amorphous recommendations, amounting to more of the same with a bit of self-projected light at the end of the tunnel, seem designed to dodge the issues rather than resolve them. Since there is so much blame for Iraq to go around, and no one — not a single politician or soldier — is willing to take any of it, this is perhaps understandable. Victory has a thousand fathers . . .

Few Americans realize how dangerous the U.S. global strategic position is today. The troops and equipment of the Army and Marine Corps are being ground down by repeated deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq. The situation on the ground in both these countries is deteriorating. The frontier provinces of Pakistan, which feed the revitalized Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan, may be on the brink of an explosion.¹ In East Asia, we are just one mad impulse of Kim Jong Il away from disaster on the Korean peninsula.²

In Iraq the supply routes for our forces, not to mention the avenues of exit when we finally do leave, are within range of Iranian guns. Admittedly, it would be suicidal for Iran to fire those guns. But less direct means exist for the Iranians to wreak havoc on American forces in Iraq.

Stretching from just south of Baghdad to the Persian Gulf is the Shiite portion of Iraq. This area is swarming with militias capable of unleashing guerrilla warfare against our troops and supply columns moving between Iraq and Kuwait. The militias are very much under the influence of Shiite Iran.³ Imagine our forces attempting to withdraw in the face of opposition from thousands of urban guerrillas in Najaf, Amara, Naseriya, Basra — each a potential Mogadishu. That our troops could

eventually cut their way through is certain. That casualties would be very heavy is equally certain.

It seems a long time ago that the Bush administration and the media were seriously contemplating a campaign against Iran. Yet it was only late last summer that the drumbeat for war against Iran reached its crescendo, at least in the media. At the same time the Bush administration, no doubt taking into account how bad the situation in Iraq had become, was actually moving *away* from a confrontation with Iran. The administration had already issued a visa for former Iranian president Seyyed Muhammad Khatami to travel to the United States. Then in early October, comments by former Secretary of State James Baker, head of the commission seeking to pull Bush's chestnuts out of the fire in Iraq, left the impression that a war against Iran was no longer in the cards. This impression became a certainty once the November election results were tallied.

The Baker-Hamilton commission's major positive recommendation is that the U.S. should talk to Iran — which is indeed the key to getting the United States out of Iraq relatively quickly and cleanly. Additionally, it can be the route

for maintaining a predominant U.S. influence in the Middle East, in the face of competition from Russia, China, and the European Union.⁴

So long as the U.S. economy is dependent on fossil fuels, the Middle East and its oil and gas fields will remain important to us. No amount of drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge or anywhere else will make America independent of

The simple fact is that the United States is not going to leave the Middle East.

foreign oil. The petroleum resources available outside the Middle East are not sufficient to allow us to ignore the world's greatest repository of oil. Becoming more dependent on non-Middle Eastern suppliers such as Venezuela, Mexico, and Nigeria, with their hostile or unstable governments, would not be a sound policy. Finally, it should be recognized that in the absence of a major U.S. role in the Middle East, Russia and China will seek to fill the vacuum. A Russian or Chinese stranglehold on the Western world's primary source of energy is not a situation we could live with.

I know that many readers of Liberty would prefer that the U.S. simply withdraw from the Middle East. I sympathize with their views, and I truly wish I could be an advocate for those views here. But the simple fact is that the United States is not going to leave the Middle East. Bearing that in mind, I am trying to point the way toward the best possible policy for the United States to follow — not my ideal policy, and perhaps not yours, but the most effective and least costly one that might actually be implemented.

If we accept the idea that a predominant U.S. influence in the Middle East is necessary, the question then becomes: why is engagement with Iran important? American policy in the Middle East rests on three pillars: Israel, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia (there is a fourth — the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan — that provides support for the U.S. presence in the Middle East, but it is of relatively little importance). All three are long-term liabilities for the United States.

The special relationship with Israel unquestionably complicates our relations with the Islamic world, threatening the uninterrupted flow of Middle Eastern oil to American industry and consumers. This U.S.-Israeli special relationship will, however, continue. The one forward step the United States could take would be to put considerably more pressure on Israel to reach a settlement with the Palestinians. It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss the Israeli problem in greater detail.

In the Arab world the U.S. has placed its bets on Saudi Arabia and Egypt, with good returns up to now. But both these states represent wasting assets. Egypt and Saudi Arabia are in effect the personal fiefdoms of the Mubarak and Saud families, respectively. As such, their existence is based on bribery and repression, rather than popular support. In time, it is likely that these ruling families will come to grief at the hands

of their own people, replaying the end of the Shah of Iran.

As a concomitant to our support for these dictatorships, the U.S. has become deeply unpopular among the Egyptian and Saudi masses. Recall where almost all of the 9/11 hijackers, not to mention thousands of other al Qaeda recruits, came from. And it is estimated that two-thirds of the suicide bombers in Iraq were Saudis. Our Egyptian and Saudi friends constitute a small minority floating uneasily on a sea of anti-Americanism. If a political tsunami were to sweep them away, the American position in the Arab world would be lost as well.

The United States should anticipate events rather than await them. That means engaging Iran. Iran, much more than any Arab state, is a true nation. While the Arabs will almost certainly sink back into obscurity once their oil fields run dry, the Iranians are a people to be reckoned with. There is substance to Iran that one does not find in any Arab state, not even Egypt.⁵ Iran has an ethnic and cultural continuity that Egypt lacks; it has also absorbed Western ideas and techniques far more readily, and to better advantage, than any of the Arab states.⁶ With a long and storied history, a population of nearly 70 million able and energetic souls, and the world's second-largest proven oil and gas reserves, Iran represents the biggest prize in the Middle East, and is recognized as such by American rivals Russia and China.

As an emerging regional power, and the country to which Shiite Islam looks for leadership, Iran is clearly the rising nation in the Middle East, and one with which the United States *must* engage. Many advantages would accrue to the U.S. from a rapprochement with Iran, beginning with a resolution to the Iraq problem.

Given a U.S.-Iranian understanding, that problem simply disappears. The U.S. could acknowledge the fact that Iraq has devolved into three separate entities, the most important one of which is Shiite-dominated and looks to Iran for guidance. We could then withdraw our forces, leaving the Shiite-dominated Iraqi state, with Iranian assistance, to crush the Sunni insurgents (Baathists and al Qaeda) in Baghdad and al-Anbar province. If the Iraqis and Iranians are successful in this, it would eliminate the possibility of an al Qaeda terrorist state emerging on Iraqi soil. Even if the Iraqis and Iranians

In Iraq the supply routes for our forces, not to mention the avenues of exit when we finally do leave, are within range of Iranian guns.

failed to suppress the insurgency completely (a result not necessarily unfavorable to our long-term interests⁷), the terrorists would be far too busy fighting for survival to mount operations against us.

Immediately after the November elections the Saudi king, Abdullah, summoned Vice President Cheney to Riyadh. It is said that Cheney was told the Saudis would intervene in Iraq to support the Sunnis, were the U.S. to side with the Shiites or

withdraw. Given both the internal situation in Saudi Arabia and the fighting ability of the Saudi armed forces, this must be seen as a bluff. The Saudis have no chance of standing up to Iran. They could send money into Iraq, and volunteers willing to blow themselves up, but these could not bring about a fundamental shift in the Sunnis' fortunes. The Saudis could threaten to cut us off from their oil, but if the U.S. had forged a relationship with both Iraq and Iran, that threat would be hollow.

We should *not* withdraw from Kurdish territory in Iraq. The Kurds have established an autonomous republic within Iraq, and are champing at the bit to declare complete independence. They are friendly to the United States and would welcome a U.S. presence in their country.

An American presence in Kurdistan⁸ could only add weight to our influence in the region. The U.S. would be well-placed to restrain Kurdish irredentism and the regional disruption it could cause. (Turkey, Syria, and Iran all have Kurdish minority populations.) Kurdistan could also serve as a *point d'appui* for U.S. forces if al Qaeda got out of hand in al-Anbar. Turkish anti-Americanism, already on the increase, would admittedly receive further impetus from any U.S. backing for the Kurds. But Turkish parliamentarians voted in 2003 to prevent the use of their territory for operations against Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Standing by the Kurds is the least we can do to repay our erstwhile Turkish friends for their perfidy.

Engaging Iran has been advocated by thinkers as diverse as Thomas P.M. Barnett and Jim Lobe.⁹ Barnett has made the point that the United States, having disposed of Iran's two most troublesome neighbors (that is, the Taliban in Afghanistan and Saddam Hussein in Iraq), has chips to call in.¹⁰ But these chips are useless if the U.S. refuses to play the game. It should be remembered that no less a strategic thinker than Richard Nixon selected Iran (albeit under the Shah) as the stand-in for British power in the Gulf, once Britain had decided to abandon its position east of Suez.

Can Iran be engaged? This certainly would have been easier between 1997 and 2005, when the moderate cleric Muhammad Khatami held the Iranian presidency. Democrats and Republicans alike have much to answer for in failing to take advantage of the possibilities on offer during Khatami's time in office.¹¹

In May 2003, in the wake of the entry of U.S. troops into Baghdad, Iran offered to settle its outstanding differences with the U.S. on very favorable terms. The Bush administration, apparently triumphant in Iraq, did not deign to reply to this overture. Now Iranian officials feel confident enough to trumpet their preconditions for any U.S.-Iranian talks, including a definite timetable for the withdrawal of American forces from Iraq. We will simply have to ignore both the preconditions and the insolence behind their enunciation as we try to engage the Iranians. The strategic advantages to be gained from engagement are too important for us to stand too much on our dignity. Diplomatic finesse will be required to bring the Iranians to both their senses and the table. Whether the national security team of Bush, Cheney, Rice, Hadley, and Gates (second-stringers all) is capable of accomplishing this is by no means certain. Nor do we yet know if they will even try.

One of our Iranian interlocutors would be President

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a man who manages to give the impression of being a pipsqueak and a villain at the same time. Ahmadinejad's doubts about the Holocaust and his call to relocate Israel to Europe do not bode well for any fruitful engagement. Indeed, watching this man greet David Duke at

Iran can be an American stalking-horse in the essential task the U.S. must set for itself over the next generation — the diminution, or perhaps dissolution, of the Chinese empire.

a recent gathering of Holocaust-deniers in Tehran was enough to turn one's stomach. But there is more to present-day Iran than Ahmadinejad and his ilk. For example, in local elections held in December, reformers and moderate conservatives outpolled supporters of Ahmadinejad.

Although anyone reading or listening to the American media would never know it, the Iranian revolution and the Islamic Republic it spawned have actually run out of steam.¹² The germ of a European-style democracy (admittedly with a religious component) is there, if the Western nations will but help it to flower. This opportunity exists *now*. It is in both the short and long term interest of the U.S. to seize it.

As a first step, the United States should approach Iran concerning mutual apologies and reconciliation over the events of 1953 (when the U.S. overthrew the democratically elected Iranian government of Muhammad Mossadeq)¹³ and 1979 (when the Iranians seized the U.S. Embassy and hostages). Once a blank slate has been established, cultural exchanges, economic ties, and political and security talks should follow. In short order it would be seen that U.S. and Iranian interests, rather than being in opposition, in fact dovetail.

What does Iran stand to gain from a rapprochement with the U.S.? First, it no longer faces the danger of a U.S. attack. Second, it wins recognition of its regional status and influence from the world's greatest power. Third, it obtains economic and technical assistance (particularly in the energy field) that no country other than America, not even Russia or China, can provide.

What does the U.S. stand to gain? As already discussed, rapprochement with Iran would provide a way out of the Iraq mess. It would also relieve pressure on Israel's northern frontier (Hezbollah in Lebanon). And it would give the U.S. leverage on the nuclear issue. The problem of Iran's nuclear program will be solved, if ever, only by U.S.-Iranian engagement. It will not be solved while the two countries remain in opposition.¹⁴

Going even beyond this, a relationship with Iran opens up the prospect of far-reaching advantages for the United States. Iran can serve as a fulcrum for U.S. world power, presenting us with opportunities hitherto undreamed of. A U.S.-Iranian condominium over the "Black Crescent,"¹⁵ especially in light of growing instability in Saudi Arabia, would guarantee U.S.

energy supplies far into the future. Iran also presents a perfect pivot-point for the extension and consolidation of U.S. influence in the former Soviet republics of Central Asia, with their important mineral and natural gas resources. Last but by no means least, Iran, operating under the flag of pan-Islamism, can be an American stalking-horse in the essential task the U.S. must set for itself over the next generation — the diminution, or perhaps dissolution, of the Chinese empire.¹⁶

The possible fruits of a U.S.-Iranian rapprochement, as outlined above, go far beyond the puerile initiatives of the Bush administration in the Middle East — its pettifogging ideas about democratizing the Arab world, and its foolish little war in Iraq. Admittedly, even a friendly Iran would not

necessarily be amenable to some U.S. policy objectives, and would be capable of playing a double game against us. Be that as it may, engagement should be tried. The U.S. will always retain the *ultima ratio* of war, should engagement fail. It would be irresponsible to choose war without giving engagement a chance.

There are people who abhor the thought of talking to Iran, period. There are others, like George W. Bush, who would do so only if the Iranians agree to onerous preconditions set by the United States. Beyond the fact that the U.S. is currently in no position to set terms, I would remind these people of Lord Palmerston's dictum: "England has no friends, only interests." The same holds true for 21st-century America. □

Notes

1. See "In Pakistan, Recent Attacks Shred Hopes for Regional Peace Model," Washington Post, Nov. 11, 2006.

2. The North Koreans are reported to have 10,000 artillery pieces aimed at Seoul. Should war break out in Korea, we have insufficient ground forces available to defeat the North Koreans, and would have to employ massive airpower, possibly even tactical nuclear weapons. Unbeknownst to most Americans, we may be closer today to pulling the nuclear trigger than at any time since the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. Those who doubt this must have great confidence in the rationality of the North Korean dictator.

3. Muqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army, the most capable indigenous fighting force in Iraq, relies on Iran for weapons and, to some extent, guidance, as does the Badr Brigade, which was created and trained by Iranian Revolutionary Guards. For Iran's standing among the Iraqi Shiites, see Vali Nasr, "The Shia Revival" (Norton, 2006), pp. 185–210, and especially 199–200.

4. See for example Flynt Leverett, "The Race for Iran," New York Times (June 20, 2006).

5. No fewer than four important books about Iran have been published in just the last few months. See Ray Takeyh, "Hidden Iran" (Henry Holt, 2006), Jason Elliot, "Mirrors of the Unseen" (St. Martin's, 2006), Vali Nasr and Ali Gheissari, "Democracy in Iran" (Oxford University Press, 2006), and Ali M. Ansari, "Confronting Iran" (Basic Books, 2006). On Egypt see Mary Anne Weaver, "A Portrait of Egypt" (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999).

6. On this see Nasr, "The Shia Revival," pp. 211–26.

7. It is imperative that we avoid a united Islamic front (Shiite-Sunni) forming against the West. This was Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's vision in the 1980s (see Nasr, "The Shia Revival," pp. 137–138). The realization of such an alliance would spell the collapse of U.S. influence in the Middle East, with dire implications both regionally and globally. The question of Israel's survival would at that point undoubtedly take center stage.

8. This would be a force of brigade strength, with enough equipment pre-positioned so that two divisions could be rapidly deployed there once the troops were flown in. The idea of stationing a small U.S. force in Kurdistan was first put forward by Peter W. Galbraith. See his "Our Corner of Iraq," New York Times (July 25, 2006). The risk in leaving U.S. troops in a landlocked country in a volatile region is by no means negligible. They could, however, be evacuated by air in an emergency.

9. Barnett, a former student of Samuel Huntington's at Harvard and the author of "The Pentagon's New Map" (Penguin, 2004), is familiar to many from his appearances on C-SPAN. Though an advocate of a level of U.S. interventionism around the world that is unsustainable both fiscally and in terms of public support, he clearly understands the motivations and power relationships of the actors in the Middle East. Lobe, the astute Washington bureau chief for Inter Press Service, is an authority on the neoconservatives, and has lectured on them to audiences as far away as China. Although a Zionist, he is opposed to Israeli expansionism beyond the pre-1967 borders, and has offered trenchant critiques of Israeli and American policies in the region.

10. Former Iranian president Khatami, during his recent visit to the U.S., made a point of mentioning shared U.S.-Iranian interests in Iraq and Afghanistan. See "U.S., Iran share interests in Iraq, Khatami says," USA Today (Sept. 4, 2006). In fighting the Sunni insurgents in Iraq, we are doing Iran's work for her. That American soldiers are dying on behalf of a state that President Bush has labeled a pariah is ironic, to say the least.

11. Khatami, in a Sept. 3, 2006 interview with the Financial Times, indicated a willingness to support a two-state solution in Palestine.

12. See for example Nasr, "The Shia Revival," p. 212 et seq.

13. For an accessible account of this CIA-directed coup ("Operation Ajax") see Stephen Kinzer, "All the Shah's Men" (John Wiley & Sons, 2003). During the Clinton administration Secretary of State Madeleine Albright expressed regret for the CIA's action.

14. For an interesting discussion see Noah Feldman, "Islam, Terror and the Second Nuclear Age," New York Times Magazine (Oct. 29, 2006).

15. This coinage refers to the oil-rich swath of land that wraps around the Persian Gulf from the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia through southern Iraq to the Iranian side of the Strait of Hormuz. From the point of view of energy supplies it represents the most valuable real estate on the planet. The population throughout (including the Saudi Eastern Province) is majority Shiite.

16. This is a subject for another essay, but suffice it to say that the fixed policy of the English-speaking nations since Elizabethan times, namely, that no single power should be allowed to wax too great, remains as valid today as it was 400 years ago.

Letters, from page 6

"I" country, Israelis would have preferred Iran, which was and still is more of a threat to Israel than Iraq.

Fourth, just because some strategists behind the Iraq invasion are Jewish does not mean they're working to benefit Israel. Not at all. Many American Jews have opposed Israel from its founding to the present day. (Indeed, American

Jews are no more unanimously pro-Israel than Catholics are pro-Vatican.)

Fifth, the principal mission of the so-called Israel lobby, AIPAC, is ensuring that Congress approves generous foreign aid for Israel. Its operatives know as well as everyone else that American foreign policy in the Middle East most of all appeases countries producing oil, especially Saudi Arabia, which rightly fears Islamic fundamentalism even

more than Israel. (Indeed, the great Israeli economic tragedy has been the failure so far to invent a successful energy substitute for oil. May we hope that Jewish geniuses are still working on it.) Got it? Israel needed an American invasion of Iraq like a *loch en kopf*, which is Yiddish for a hole in the head.

Indeed, may I suggest a thought

continued on page 42

“We Must Stay the Course”

by David G. Danielson

“The Americans are far too divided to govern themselves right now. They need our help. If we were to cut and run, there would be civil war!”

PHILADELPHIA, October 14, 1785 — The Comte de Rochambeau, commander of French forces in North America, graciously consented to be interviewed on the third anniversary of the French military occupation of the fledgling United States.

François Louvet, a correspondent for the twice-weekly *Le Courier* and a man known for his aggressive investigative reporting, perched on the edge of his chair and hurled the first of his questions. “General, four years ago, this very month, the British general Cornwallis surrendered to you at Yorktown, Virginia. You had six thousand French soldiers under your command on that occasion. Today, you have *eighteen* thousand. The people of France want to know: is an end in sight? When will our soldiers be able to come home?”

Rochambeau smiled benignly but

wagged a finger in the air. “First, Monsieur Louvet, I must correct you. The British did not surrender *to me* at Yorktown but to General Washington and the American forces. It was an American victory, not a French one.”

Louvet raised an eyebrow. “The people of France may see it differently, General. After six years of defeats, the American army was clearly on its last legs. Lord Cornwallis had captured the cities of Richmond and Charleston. The Americans were powerless against him. Then *you* landed with six thousand of our brave soldiers and marched against Cornwallis, trapping his forces in the port city of Yorktown. He and his troops would have escaped by sea, but our magnificent Admiral de Grasse arrived in the Chesapeake Bay with 32 warships — including his 120-gun flagship, *Ville de*

France, the largest warship in the world. Our admiral defeated the British fleet, preventing the evacuation of Cornwallis’ troops.”

Rochambeau, a man of the world, acknowledged the truth of this recitation with a slight bow. “It was a brilliant victory,” he said. “But I fail to see . . .”

Louvet interrupted him. “You were, of course, under orders from our government to let the American general, Washington, enter the city first. It was to be, *officially*, an ‘American victory’ — as you say. But Lord Cornwallis knew who had really defeated him. And the French people knew it, too. What the French people do *not* know, and what they are eager to learn, is *when* will the American army be capable of standing on its own? It’s been four years since the war ended! Surely you know there is a growing demand by the

French public to bring our troops home now. What do you say to that demand?"*

Rochambeau was not smiling now; his expression was stern. "What I say is that it would be insane to withdraw just yet. It would be the most inhumane thing we could possibly do! It would be the height of folly! The American army is becoming stronger. But it's not yet strong enough to deal with the many violent factions within America. There is, for example, a group adamantly opposed to the United States becoming one large nation. This faction calls itself 'the Republicans,' because it wants America to be a confederation of thirteen independent *republics*, rather than a single nation."

"Certainly," Louvet said. "These are well known facts. My question, however—"

But there was no interrupting

*IN REAL LIFE, Cornwallis had, indeed, captured Richmond and Charleston, and unbiased historians are likely to agree with our fictional journalist Louvet that the French military was more responsible than the Americans for the successful siege of Yorktown. Certainly General Cornwallis saw it that way. He declined to participate in the surrender ceremony, ordering General O'Hara to take his place. O'Hara tried to present Cornwallis' sword to Rochambeau, in recognition that it was really the French who had beaten Cornwallis. But the French general refused the sword and directed that it be presented to General Washington. Annoyed that Cornwallis himself was not participating, Washington declined to accept Cornwallis' sword. So the British officer gave it to Washington's subordinate, General Lincoln.



"Surrender of Lord Cornwallis" by John Trumbull

Rochambeau, once he had begun an instructive lecture. "The Republicans," he continued, "are the most violent of the antifederalist groups. Yet I am pleased to report that we are making headway against them. Last month, in Virginia, our forces — along with the American federal troops, of course — managed to corner and exterminate one of this group's most influential incendiaries. We surrounded insurgent leader Patrick Henry and several of his followers. In a fierce battle — in which, I might add, the American forces performed very professionally — the ruthless Henry was killed. As more of their leaders are found and either arrested or killed, the Republican insurgents will gradually lose the will to fight. There is more tough fighting ahead, but we must stay the course."

"Surely, you are aware that—"

Rochambeau waved him into silence. "Let me point out to your readers, Monsieur Louvet, that this Republican — this Henry — was a slaveholder! So was his predecessor, George . . . George Mason. As is another of the insurgency's leaders, the terrorist Thomas Jefferson. We are on *his* trail. We will find him, and when we do . . ."

"Ah, Jefferson! It's said that he's the Republicans' new leader. And isn't that precisely the problem, General? Killing George Mason accomplished nothing. Patrick Henry simply took his place. Killing Henry accomplished nothing. Jefferson has taken his place. Kill Jefferson and another will take *his* place. And surely you aren't trying to give our readers the impression that *all* antifederalists are slaveholders?"

"Most are, Monsieur, most are. Why only yesterday . . ."

"What of this rebel leader Adams, Samuel Adams? He's no slaveholder, nor one of the Republicans, yet he's not at all sympathetic to the idea of forming a central government. He prefers the idea of a confederation of independent states. As for those particular antifederalists who

call themselves 'the Republicans,' it's true that they have their own militias and do a lot of military drilling — but there are experts—"

"Experts, Monsieur! Experts can be engaged to say anything."

"There are experts who say that it's *our* presence here that keeps them from becoming part of the system. We are a divisive element. Had we left immediately, following Cornwallis' defeat, the Republicans might have joined the national dialogue and become a legitimate political party. We've made them into a terrorist group by our ongoing occupation of their country."†

Rochambeau waved his hands more fretfully now. "Well of course we can never know how things *would* have gone had France *not* occupied the United States following the British defeat! Perhaps, as you speculate, the Republicans might have become a legally recognized political party, although I think that's very improbable. And by no means am I suggesting that *all* of those impeding the formation of a central government are slaveholders. But the fact is that many of the insurgents *are* slaveholders and we must curtail their influence — otherwise the Americans are likely to create a nation in which slavery

†IN REAL LIFE, the 18th-century Republican Party did indeed have a military wing. Republican militias paraded in public and practiced military drills. Republicans were outraged over the policies of President Washington's successor, John Adams — whom the Republicans derided as "King Adams." One of their grievances was that President Adams had journalists arrested and imprisoned for the "crime" of criticizing the Adams administration. The Republican Party's candidate for president in the election of 1800, Thomas Jefferson, promised that if elected he would immediately pardon these journalists, effectively nullifying the Sedition Act of 1798. The military arm of the Republican Party made it clear that it was prepared to launch a second violent revolution, if King Adams, a member of the Federalist Party, succeeded in gaining a second term. As it turned out, Jefferson was elected, and he kept his promise to free the imprisoned journalists, so we shall never know whether the Republican militias would have kept their pledge to overthrow the central government if King Adams had remained in power.

would continue to be permitted. And it will be the fault of France! Because we left *too soon*! Surely we do not want such a thing on our conscience."

He looked at Louvet as one looks at someone without a conscience. But this did not seem to impress Louvet. So Rochambeau continued, in a more persuasive tone.

"I'm simply pointing out, Monsieur Louvet, how radically divided these Americans are. There are the federalists against the antifederalists. There are the northerners against the southerners. There are factions within factions. The Americans are far too divided to govern themselves right now. They *need* our help. If we were to cut and run, as some of our misguided countrymen would have us do, there would be chaos here. There would be civil war!"

"But, General, there are those who say a civil war will happen anyway. Whether French occupation forces withdraw immediately, or a year from now, or ten years from now, the divisions among the Americans will lead them eventually to a civil war. The *only* difference is that the longer we stay, the more the French treasury will be drained and the more French

soldiers will be killed. And let's be frank, General. We both know you face many more problems than just the northerners against the southerners, and the federalists against the antifederalists. You also have to contend with warlords in the tribal areas."

"Many of whom, Monsieur, are our allies."

"Yes, but you have the Delawares, the Shawnees, the Hurons, the Chippewas, the Iroquois alliance — to name a few. Here is what our people are saying. They say: 'Even if King Louis and General Rochambeau succeed in creating a puppet government for the Americans, that gov-

ernment will forever be at war. Internally, it will be at war with the Republicans. Externally, it will be at war with the Indian nations. We cannot *force* all these groups to get along with one another, *no matter how long we stay*.'"

There was the slightest of all pauses. Then the general replied: "I understand that view, Monsieur Louvet, but I do not agree with it. France has a moral obligation to continue its military assistance to the United States until it establishes a peaceful, stable society."*

The reporter frowned. "But General, that's another way of saying we shall *never* leave." □

*IN REAL LIFE, as the reader knows, the French didn't stick around and occupy the U.S. for four years, trying to "help" the Americans form a government. As an American, and therefore an inferior creature in the eyes of today's French media, it pains me to say it, but the French were wiser in regard to America than the United States has been in regard to Iraq. After helping the Americans get out from under the thumb of King George III, the French did the intelligent thing and left us to our own devices. Yes, slavery endured for a while. Yes, there were violent clashes

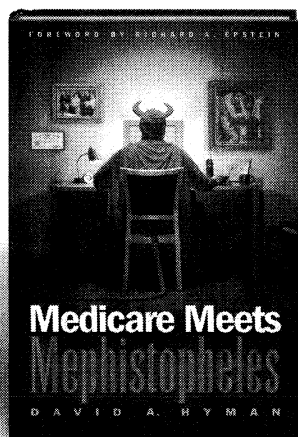
between the U.S. and the Indians. Yes, the divisions between U.S. citizens led ultimately to a civil war. But had the French remained and tried to prevent all of that by running our country for us, what a nightmare the French would have been bringing upon themselves. America's history, I believe, would have been no less bloody than it was in fact. We've done the Sunnis, the Shias, and the Kurds the same favor the French did us: we've dethroned a despot for them. Now it's time — indeed, it's way past time — to do the second thing the French did for us: go home.

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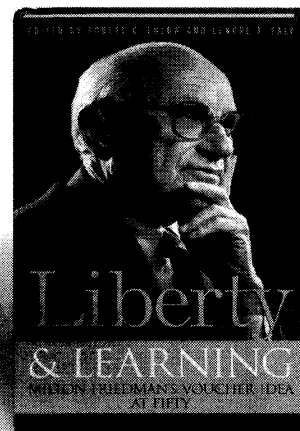


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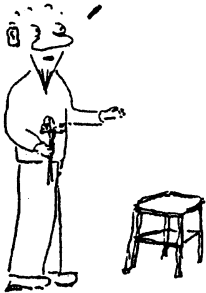


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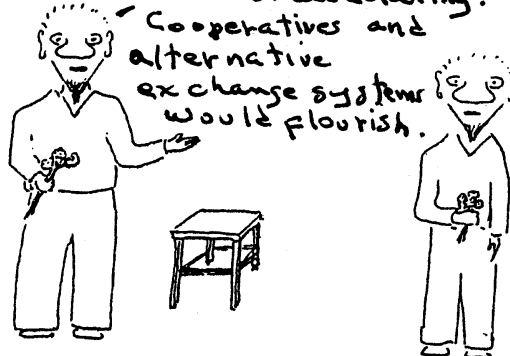
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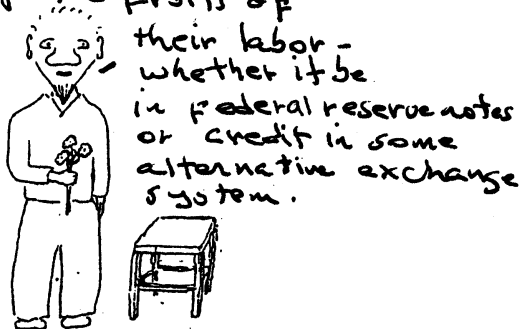
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And keeping the fruits of your labor is a right that has gone without respect for too long. If it doesn't happen above ground then it will happen underground. It's about survival.



Oh yeah - about the flowers - you never know when you might meet a babe in one of these strips.

After driving through Botswana . . .

I Continued On To Zimbabwe

by Doug Casey

I've been to Zimbabwe quite a few times since the mid-'70s. Earlier, of course, the war between the ruling white government and the ZANU-ZAPU rebels was going full tilt. When you flew into Salisbury at night on an old Air Rhodesia 707, the plane would be blacked out to reduce the risk from antiaircraft fire. If you flew during the day, the plane would come in very low, with a different approach each time, for the same reason. Bus rides in Zimbabwe were never eventful for me, but they always had the potential to prove most exciting.

I don't necessarily recommend visiting war zones, but it has its advantages. Absolutely everywhere I went — the Zimbabwe ruins, Lake Kariba, Victoria Falls — I was the only person there. In fact, the first time I saw Vic Falls, totally alone, it was only a week after a white woman had been killed by a sniper (who was apparently a hell of a shot) from across the Zambezi, in Zambia.

In the subsequent 30(!) years, I've seen lots of ups and downs for the former Rhodesia. In the '80s and early '90s, it looked quite good for a while, even as neighbor Zambia was still a backward people's republic treading an African road to socialism. Now the roles are completely reversed, with Zambia actually rather vibrant, but Zimbabwe hitting bottom. In Africa, the long trend is down; you do well to sell during periods of optimism and only think of buying when there's a resource boom and local conditions look as if they couldn't possibly get worse.

You've probably followed the current disaster, at least out of the corner of your eye. Things really started falling apart in 1998, when President Robert Mugabe decided to involve Zimbabwe's army in the Congo's civil war, for reasons which even then made no sense to anyone. By the time the army pulled out in 2002, the hundreds of millions of dollars that adventure cost effectively bankrupted Zimbabwe.

The Congo disaster may have been the catalyst for Mugabe's land redistribution plan in 2000, supposedly intended to compensate veterans. The plan's actual result was roving mobs of thugs attacking white-owned farms all over the country: destroying machinery, burning buildings, and stealing everything that wasn't nailed down. Many farms were simply handed to government ministers and other thugs loyal to Crazy Bob. In any event, redistribution prompted a final white exodus. During the Rhodesia days,

whites, most of them born in the country, numbered over 250,000. Current guesstimates are about 5,000. Commercial agriculture, which once made the country the breadbasket of Africa, is now in ruins. No capital, no management, no labor. Nothing.

Partly as a result of the disaster in farming, tens of thousands of blacks moved to Harare and Bulawayo, looking for work. Most were hostile to Mugabe, for obvious reasons. So in 2005 Mugabe initiated Operation Murambatsvina, which

When I bought gas, 50 gallons of diesel cost about \$100, which equated to a stack of Zimbabwean currency roughly two feet tall. We had to carry the bills in a small backpack.

translates as "Take out the trash." The army bulldozed the homes and businesses of an estimated 750,000 people in the hope of forcing them back to the bush, where they'd disperse and be unable to organize a resistance — although the official reason was "urban renewal and slum clearance."

That brings us up to the present, with the Zimbabwe dollar suffering runaway inflation. When I was there, before they knocked off three zeroes in a moronic and pointless effort to "fight inflation," the official exchange rate was about 100,000 Zimbabwe dollars to one U.S. dollar, although the street rate was near 600,000 to 1. When they exorcised the three zeroes on Aug. 1, they gave citizens 21 days to exchange their old money for new. Of course many of the really poor people living out in the bush either didn't hear about the change or couldn't afford to get to a city to make the swap. And the army set up roadblocks to confiscate any sums above the equivalent of about US\$400 (all they could steal of any amount, in fact) on suspicion of money laundering.

When I bought gas, 50 gallons of diesel cost about US\$100 at the conveniently and idiotically price-controlled level, which equated to a stack of bills roughly two feet tall. We had to carry them in a small backpack. Merchants inspected currency visually, then ran it through a mechanical counter; nobody could count that many bills manually in any reasonable amount of time for a transaction.

My South African friends were leery of going through Zimbabwe, feeling we might encounter serious problems. I won the day, however, arguing that most fear in today's world is media-engendered hysteria. Sure, there are places where you have to be careful, and for some places that's more true than others. But my thought was that if it were really dangerous, there wouldn't have been trucks lined up for several miles trying to get into the country, many just transiting Zimbabwe to South Africa. There are, in any event, few things as chaotic as an African border crossing in the dead of night. Interestingly, traveling by car, we were waved to the

front of the line. Then, customs again moved us, as the only whites, in front of the others. Did we have any trouble? None whatsoever. Customs tore apart the pitiful belongings of fellow Africans, looking for contraband and bribes; we were waved through.

The roads were in excellent repair, although cars were exceedingly rare. But I loathe going where all the tourists are going. What do they know? Nothing. A word to the wise: if you're looking for a vacation spot, don't ask your travel agent. Go to the U.S. State Department website and pick out a place with one of their hysteria-based "travel advisories." Be prepared for friendly people happy to see a foreigner, hotels eager for a visitor, low prices, and unusual experiences.

One lesson Zimbabwe teaches is that even during an economic catastrophe of the first magnitude, life somehow goes on. Restaurants are still open (notwithstanding food shortages), hotels provide service (despite almost no guests), merchants buy and sell (despite the fact that toilet paper is more prized than the currency), and people still go about their lives in an orderly way. Zimbabwe has a great climate, is mostly a very pretty country, and, now that there's a dearth of white people, the European will no longer be seen as a threat or oppressor. He'll be viewed as a source of capital and expertise, a resource to be cultivated.

That said, other than on a strictly individual basis, the white man is basically toast in Africa. Despite the good things that Europeans brought to Africa (actually, there are only two: capital and technology), the way they did it, colonialism, set the continent back massively. The capital and technology could have, and would have, arrived through trade. The wars of conquest, forced colonization, forced imposition of all manner of European beliefs and customs, and establishment of artificial borders blind to tribal realities are what caused the political disaster that Africa has become. And, I predict, will remain. No, it's likely to get worse.

That's because of one additional wild card: the Chinese. They're making a determined effort all over Africa to buy resources, and governments (read: ministers who will see very large sums deposited in their offshore accounts) are happy to sell. That certainly includes mining properties in Zimbabwe. There may be something like a recolonization of the continent over the next few generations by the Chinese,

I don't necessarily recommend visiting war zones, but it has its advantages.

an event that is likely to be just as problematic as the long visit by the Europeans. Could we one day see the Chinese sending large numbers of troops to Africa to defend their property and nationals? And the U.S. counterintervening to impose "democracy," or some such flavor-of-the-month nonsense? I wouldn't bet against it. □

Twenty Observations on Liberty and Society

by Jayant Bhandari

He who would have his country be free must first address the statism in the hearts of its people.

Who thought that getting rid of the Taliban in Afghanistan, or Saddam Hussein in Iraq, would put these societies on the path towards peace and prosperity?

Who thinks that when Bin Laden is finally captured or killed, the world will be a safer place?

Who thinks that without Mugabe, Zimbabwe will choose the right path? That tinkering with the state in Palestine and Saudi Arabia will set those peoples free? That Nepal will swiftly progress, now that “democracy” has subdued “monarchy”?

Those who did or do live in a fools’ paradise.

1. There is a Hindu parable in which Lord Shiva was asked to kill a devil who had been on a rampage. Shiva went and beheaded him. But to his surprise, Shiva found that each drop of the devil’s blood falling upon the earth gave birth to a devil clone. Shiva went around killing all the new devils; to his dismay, this only made his problem worse.

You cannot kill evil just by addressing its symptoms. In fact, removing the symptoms without addressing the underlying issues makes the problem worse, because symptoms provide an essential sensory feedback. Symptoms show what is wrong.

The state is usually just a symptom.

2. Our mental constructs create our personal environment. Our collective mental constructs create our heroes and leaders, our culture and religions and other institutions, including the state.

The state is certainly the single biggest evil, but it is merely an expression of the collective statism and barbarism in minds of the individuals in society.

3. In September 1991, I left India for the first time, to study in the UK. When I arrived, I had to take a train from the airport to Manchester. A line of people waited in front of the ticket counter at the train station. The ticket seller gave me sufficient time to explain my route. Those standing behind me were patient enough to let him finish his business with me. No one pushed me, spoke behind me, or hurried me. When the train arrived, people waited to let the passengers get off before they themselves went in.

This was all grossly alien to me.

The train was surprisingly comfortable and clean, or at least that is what I thought then. What I saw outside the train window disturbed me. My eyes had never seen with the clarity they had now — there was no pollution compared to what existed where I came from. My nose felt different.

I woke up very early the next day and walked out into Manchester. I had a big map of the city in my hands and I was

peering at it when a well-dressed person crossed the street, came up to me, and asked if he could help. When I went to the bank to open my account, not only was the process quick, but more importantly the people were patient and treated me

Cultures persist. You can install the best of the capitalist system, but if the people have a totalitarian culture, their polity will soon follow.

nicely. The university accommodation office was just as helpful. I had financial problems and had no difficulty meeting the director of the school. He was supportive, treated me as his equal, and did not expect me to grovel at his feet. He talked straight without creating complexities, without showing what a favor he was doing for me, and I was out of his office within a few minutes.

I achieved in a single morning what would have taken me weeks, or months, or even forever in India, and would have required dehumanizations, dramas, posturings, manipulations, and lies. And each time I was treated neither as an animal nor as a child. Not only this; I also saw that people treated animals and children respectfully.

I no longer take much notice of things like this. But that morning, as a young man of 24, I went to my room and cried. I had never experienced generosity and openness.

I lived in a poor area in Manchester. I used to work at the university until late at night. I could not afford a taxi, so I walked back home. On several occasions, the police followed me with their car lights switched off, as they probably suspected me; but because they had no evidence, they had no right to stop me for questioning. Not once in my years of visiting the UK was I asked for my ID card. I could check into and out of hotels without it. No one ever asked me for an ID card when I took internal flights or entered nightclubs. I treasured the feeling of personal liberty. The state kept its hands off me. The society mostly trusted me.

I have been to the UK scores of times, and usually found the immigration people acting courteously. Not that they always had pleasant thoughts about me, more that they had limited options to hassle me; the code of social conduct ensured that they showed respect toward me as an individual.

During the first few days after my arrival in Manchester, I started to feel depressed and lonely for the first time in my life. I was experiencing life without hassles or complexities. There were no assaults on my senses, or on my emotions. I did not know how to deal with such quietness. I did not know how to concentrate, since there was nothing to distract me. I was addicted to adrenaline, and I was hyperactive. I did not know what peace was, besides catharsis. That was what I experienced when I drank or smoked too much. The next two years were going to teach me to start living for the first time.

My body, my eyes had started to change. My mind could

think more clearly. I could start to understand what enjoyment and peace meant. Fifteen years later, I still very often meet people in the West whose honesty, morality, spirituality, and strength of character amaze me.

4. Society in India, as in a lot of the non-western world, instinctively likes to have perpetual problems, as if life would be lonely and time difficult to pass, were there no problems to occupy it.

Cultures persist. You can install the best of the capitalist system, but if the people have a totalitarian culture, their polity will soon follow. Even if they individually do not like the state, their collective conduct will be such that a powerful state will emerge. They want freedom for themselves, but they also want to enslave others. The constitution and laws will be reinterpreted to suit their convenience. Judges and politicians will happily wag their tails. As Hayek would say, you cannot force institutions on a society.

5. A distant relative of mine in India habitually bribes the traffic police, so that when he passes them on the road the police salute him. When I worked in India, one of my biggest customers kept his clients waiting outside his office for days before giving them a few minutes. He once told me that he enjoyed life only when his whiskey was of better quality than other people's.

I grew up in a characterless society. So deeply imbued with dishonesty is India that people are usually not even aware of it. During the more than ten years that I worked there, I met hundreds of very senior politicians and bureaucrats. I never met one honest, responsible, proud public servant. In this respect, the political culture differed little from the rest of society. In the society, I saw very little respect for life, children, women, or the poor. Lack of a civil sense was palpable. Chaos ruled.

6. My earliest memory as a child is not of playing with toys or with my friends, but of the tyranny and authoritarian behavior I faced from my teachers and society. Everyone told me what to do. I had to smile when authority wanted me to. I had to stop crying when I was instructed to. My teachers never encouraged questions. Playing and talking with other children was looked down upon. I was asked to be nice to everyone.

Not once in my years of visiting the UK was I asked for my ID card. I treasured the feeling of personal liberty. The state kept its hands off me. The society mostly trusted me.

I was supposed to look good to society. The welfare of the nation was to be my top priority. I grew up as a stiff man, unemotional and unexpressive, socially incompetent — and I was among the privileged. We could not work with others. We had problems with relationships.

This is how collectivist society indoctrinates from the very beginning. And this is where collectivism fails in its declared primary tenet of equality. Everyone thinks he knows how everyone else should live. Everyone abuses others and rationalizes it by saying he is doing good to them. From childhood, this mindset permeates every life. There is no equality; there are only hierarchies. And of course subconsciously we know what is happening, so no one trusts anyone else.

We lived by rules. When we got into a dilemma, we looked in the rulebook. We did not know how to connect with our consciences. I did not know what I wanted. Not that everyone in a free society knows that kind of thing, but our desires were buried deep in concrete. We were taught to disengage from our consciousness. If we enjoyed studying or helping others, our teachers and the other elements of society ensured that we did not continue to enjoy it. How could anything be worthwhile if we enjoyed it? And how could the society control me if it did not control my happiness?

As a teenager, while my counterparts in the West were dating and partying, I was listening to patriotic songs, and was deeply religious. I loved India and was ready to die for it, though silently I hated Indians. For me, and most others, India was the seat of civilization. After independence, it made long strides in material progress. We were proud to be one of the very few countries that had the capability to send rockets into space. In the mid-1980s, when India and Pakistan were close to war, I considered joining the army as a volunteer.

7. I went to a university in a Vancouver-sized city called Indore. Not very far from my place of residence was a police station. The policemen regularly tied the hands of the people they arrested to a strong branch of a tree, in such a way that the prisoners either had to keep standing on their toes or let the string painfully pull their wrists. Hundreds of cars, including those of judges and intellectuals, passed by every day; but no one complained. The educated among us told me that this is how criminals should be treated.

8. I received a five-year engineering degree. The first two years were about general engineering; after that, the university decided who did civil, who did mechanical, and who did electrical engineering. We were clay that the authorities could mold into any structure they wanted. Everyone had grown to accept this as normal.

In Indian universities, there is a tradition of "ragging," or abusing, new students. When you enter the university, you become the personal property of the senior students for the first year. They emotionally and sexually abuse you. The junior students are asked to masturbate in front of others, or to urinate on live electric wires. This is believed to create social cohesion and remove inhibitions. The junior students hate it. Some try suicide. Some lose their hearing from the beatings they get.

I thought that those who were abused would not perpetuate the custom. But that's not how it works. To accept such torture, you have to switch off your humanity. When the next year came, those who were the most abused the year before were exactly the people who abused the most.

9. During my last year at the university, some men I knew decided they wanted to pay a woman to entertain them. So

they negotiated a price with a prostitute and took her to a hotel. Unfortunately, in the "spiritual" country of India, prostitution is a crime. The police came and arrested everyone. The men paid a hefty bribe and went home. The girl stayed at the

Western libertarians think that the state is the root of all our problems. The state is indeed the icon of evil, but it is not its root.

police station for the night. My friends told me that the otherwise healthy girl could not walk straight the next morning. The judge conveniently ignored her state. Men and women of so-called decent background have no interest in such women. In their opinion, these women are loose and deserve what they get.

One year, I had to renew my passport, and as is the custom, an intelligence officer came to visit me. I refused to offer him a bribe, something considered very normal. So he did not process my application. I was adamant. I went to meet the top intelligence officer in that part of Delhi. In a quick minute, he told me that I was rude, that he was not going to process my application, and he pretty much threw me out of his office. I wrote to the top officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to report the matter. Nothing happened.

A relative had an accident and was taken to a government hospital. He had a bad leg injury. The doctor wanted a bribe to help him decide whether he would fix the leg or amputate it.

I worked for a British company for five years and for a Swiss company for about two years in India. When the company officials visited me there, it was a horrifying time. In various ways, I faced blatant racism from people my own color. Several times we held formal negotiations at the head office of a public-sector company. While we sat at the conference table, the servants would bring us tea. Of course, they could not see from our backs which of us were white or Indian. So they would lean forward to look at each person's face. If he was white, he would be offered tea in china cups; if not, in plastic cups. I can tell you many variations of this kind of racism.

Here is a recent story. On June 6, 2005, a married Muslim woman, Imrana, was allegedly raped by her father-in-law. The mindless Muslim clerics decided to separate her from her husband and insisted that she marry the rapist. Mulayam Prasad Yadav, the former defense minister of India, and now the chief minister of the state of Uttar Pradesh, where this incident took place, declared: "The decision taken by Muslim religious leaders in the Imrana case must have been taken after a lot of thought. . . . The leaders after all are very learned."

10. At one time, it was my hobby to spend plane flights thinking about why India was so pathetically poor, so miserable. I often wondered if we were an inherently inferior people, something that a lot of people from poor countries are convinced of.

I loved to travel and went to different parts of the world,

both for business and for time to contemplate this question. I saw repeatedly that many East Europeans, particularly Russians, behaved badly. Those from the Gulf countries and from most parts of Africa behaved much worse than Indians did.

I do not believe that the liberal activists of the West are warmhearted but misguided people. I see criminal and hypocritical minds behind the compassionate garb.

Again and again, I have seen only one thing that differentiates people. It is not where they come from, what their race is, or what their history is. What differentiates people is the level of coercion in their societies.

11. I presented a different version of these thoughts in October 2005 at the Fraser Institute in Vancouver, in March 2006 at the Mises Institute in Auburn, and in June 2006 at the Libertarian Party of British Columbia in Vancouver. I must confess that in my first paper, I called the state "the fountainhead of all ills." Having spent months thinking about it, I no longer think that is true. Our polity reinforces our culture and vice versa. When the state fails in a totalitarian society, we can rejoice that statism has come to an end. Such an "end" of statism, however, never lasts — just look around in Africa and Asia. A new and more corrupt state usually emerges. By the same token, you can make Saddam Hussein the prime minister of Canada, and be assured that he won't last an hour.

12. If your experience tells you that people from the collectivist countries, in general, lack conscience and integrity, do not think for themselves, are either rude or servile (depending on how they were collectivized), and are unhappy, you are right. They live a life burdened by moral and psychological debts — by karmas. These are the karmas that western youth are slowly building up.

Western libertarians think that the state is the root of all our problems. The state is indeed the icon of evil, but it is not its root. The totalitarians — better known as liberals in North America — know better what the roots are and have therefore done a marvelous job of achieving their ends.

Over the course of a century, using the nice-sounding projects of egalitarianism — social welfare, affirmative action, free education, free health care, and sustainable development — they have been tweaking the root, which is the culture.

Their work is insidious and is slowly taking the West where the totalitarian societies of the East have gone. Really, it is no wonder that the liberals find the East so spiritual, an affinity they discover over nonstop tokes of weed on the banks of the Ganges.

There are others who have discovered a different kind of enlightenment while sitting on the banks of the Ganges: the enlightenment of accepting responsibility for their lives and actions, of respecting other people's property, of not being big-

oted towards black or white or rich or poor, of not camouflaging ill deeds in the name of religion law. Such people are not necessarily perfect, but when they steal, they call themselves thieves. Such people are not to be found shouting slogans on the streets of New York.

In the West, on many occasions, I have been asked why poor people and women in India have to be told that they own their bodies. I tell them that this is not very alien. They should ask themselves why the wealth generators in the West have to be told that they own their own wealth.

13. Each new socially coercive situation sets the stage for the development of the next level of totalitarianism.

In the West, I have hardly met anyone who does not say that our environment is getting worse and worse. I ask the aged if they remember what London or Newcastle or Manchester or New York was like 50 years back, and to compare it with what they see now. The answer is invariably that the environment is worse. I have seen the old pictures and films and they tell me a completely different story.

14. Many westerners tell me how sorry they feel for those in Africa who live off less than a dollar a day, and that western countries should do something about it. I argue that they should start by reducing their own lifestyles to a dollar a day, and send the rest of their money to Africa. I quickly lose their attention.

I have seen the hypocrisy of U2's singer Bono, who wants Canada to give 0.7% of its GDP as international aid. I wonder why he and his supporters never consider reducing their household budgets to Canada's per capita GDP, thus freeing themselves from all that unnecessary wealth.

Although it looks benign, a foundation for dishonesty, lack of integrity, and hypocrisy has been laid in the West. And perceived karmic debts have a natural tendency to build up in the human mind.

People in the West generally believe that it is all right to tax the rich heavily. For them robbing the rich is no longer an ethical issue. And those earning six-figure salaries in big companies have no moral scruples about using their shareholders' money for all kinds of antishareholder activities, including financing antibusiness organizations.

I do not believe, as many western libertarians do, that the liberal activists of the West are warmhearted but misguided people. I see criminal and hypocritical minds behind the compassionate garb. Ask a conventional criminal why he does what he does; he too will likely give you a heartwarming story.

15. Common courtesies, those customs that have been the bedrock of western civilization, should have taught western society that what the modern liberals are doing is violent and wrong. Any human heart should cringe when they advocate violence, subtle or direct, to steal some people's money in order to steal the independence of other people, meanwhile giving themselves arbitrary power.

Sixteen years ago, when I started to travel, I was impressed with the confidence I saw in westerners. I saw officials showing respect to travelers. I saw free-minded westerners objecting to infringements of their rights. I saw audiences rewarding them with encouraging nods. That is history. Now people are

more than happy to strip off their clothes at the slightest raise of a finger from an uncivil staff member at an airport. If someone objects, his fellow travelers will likely see him as a trouble-maker. What the officers do is now culturally acceptable.

16. A young Indian tennis star, Sania Mirza, a Muslim girl, was recently issued a fatwa by some clerics, because she wears short skirts. Just a decade back, the Indian government was honoring such fatwas "to maintain law and order." Not too long ago, the police constantly harassed young couples. My parents' generation had to carry marriage certificates with them when they went out late at night. No law has changed since then, just an interpretation.

In the mid-1980s, the Indian public outside the big cities started to see TV for the first time. They watched what was happening in the West. People's expectations about their government and their lives started to change. Under pressure, the state of India started to interfere less in people's personal lives.

Barely a few months back, couples in a park in Meerut, a city near Delhi, were publicly beaten by the police for holding hands and being together. On this occasion, the state invited TV cameras to shame them. Several Hindu fundamentalist organizations and political parties across the spectrum supported the actions of the state — but when society in general condemned what had happened, the state and the fundamentalist organizations beat a hasty retreat.

Enlightened parents in big cities are insisting that their children no longer be beaten in school. Teachers can now go to jail. The economy has progressed, but more importantly, so has morality, now that there is less oppression. The generosities that I experienced for the first time in the UK are no longer unknown in India. People are asserting their humanity. They are more creative and open-minded.

When Indians interacted with the world, amazing things started to happen. Indians lived in and visited the West, and went back to India feeling that they were misfits in a coercive system. (After a couple of beers, quite a few Indians — and

Involuntary collectivism, in whatever form it may take, is not spiritual, either in ideals or in practice, but is evil in every way.

people of other nationalities — agree with this.) They realized that the West was not just about James Bond, his guns, and his promiscuity, but about a culture that respected the individual.

Snobbish and authoritarian behavior started to be seen as less cool. Compassion and respect started to become appropriate behavior. A small bit of globalization arrived, brought in by people from the West who did not honor the collectivism of India. They shook hands with servants as often as they did with political bosses. When the managing director of my UK company visited us in Delhi, he shook hands with our

office servant. It was a gesture the servant had never experienced. He perspired and was uncomfortable. During the next two years he worked for us, he gained confidence as a human being. For the first time, lower-caste people could enter restaurants (run by multinational companies) and expect a welcome, even if it was only superficial courtesy.

17. Let us not romanticize what is happening in India. My description of events exaggerates the changes that have taken place. In India, you are still harassed at every moment.

The bigoted, once openly racist, now humanitarian, still regard Africans as subhuman; they cannot believe that Africans can survive without western help.

But changing expectations from society have been a force for change in the conduct of the state. All this despite the fact that the general character of Indian politicians and bureaucrats is getting worse, not better.

Much the same might be said of the politicians of the West. But what about its culture?

18. During my education in the UK, I was constantly told that there were no good or bad cultures. What nonsense! The liberals of the West have an ideology that is making the West morally blind. The only way to stop it is to understand that involuntary collectivism, whatever form it may take, is not spiritual, either in ideals or in practice, but is evil in every way.

When I was a child, my spirit resisted when I was asked to control others; it rebelled when someone tried controlling me. The knowledge of freedom is *a priori*, and does not require any understanding of economics or public policy. The morality associated with this knowledge should destroy all forms of involuntary collectivism, and should never allow them to be restored — but that is what is now happening in the West.

19. People in the West increasingly think that they have rights over other people's property. Bigotry against wealth-creators is increasingly acceptable. Companies bribe communities to be allowed to operate, something that psychologically corrupts everyone. In the name of social security, beggars demand alms as their birthright. The bigoted, once openly racist, now humanitarian, still regard Africans as subhuman; they cannot believe that Africans can survive without western help. They want the benign intervention of the West in "trouble spots" around the world.

Most of the people who shouted on New York streets for America to intervene in Darfur would now have a problem recalling what and where it is. They have already migrated to trendier affairs. But while hypocrisy is always available to provide an emotional release, it adds another layer to cultural and political corruption. Honoring the social mood,

continued on page 53

The Art of Letting Go

by Mark Skousen

"How many a man has dated a new era in his life from the reading of a book."

— Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*

Would you do me a favor? Find an easy chair, or better yet, go outside to a secluded spot and read this essay at your leisure.

Ever since my family and I lived in the Bahamas for two years,¹ I've had an interest in leisure, the lure of breaking away from business and just relaxing, wandering, and letting my mind go. It seems like a very libertarian thing to do. Along with a photo of my family in the Bahamas, I have on my bookshelf a whole list of titles to remind me to walk away from work: "The Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow"; "Leisure: The Basis of Culture"; and Bertrand Russell's "In Praise of Idleness."

But before I go on, would you mind indulging me? As I write this, it's a beautiful sunny day here in New York, and my wife has just beckoned me to join her at the swimming pool along the Hudson River. I'll be back in a not so New York minute . . . (While you wait, go ahead and read the rest of this issue of *Liberty*, or just listen to the birds sing.) There's nothing like an opportunity to think, meditate, and relax with friends on a balmy summer day.

In my travels, I make a point of wandering aimlessly around the city or neighborhood I'm visiting, and usually end up at some used-book store. In the mid-'80s, I happened to be in Durango, Colo., a small college town, and came across a first edition of a book called "The Importance of Living" by Lin Yutang. I'd tried to read Chinese philosophers before, but never found them appealing until this book came along. What makes Lin Yutang so different from Confucius, Mencius, and Lao Tzu? He lived in both the East and the West, and consequently does an extraordinary job of contrasting the cultures. His book was so refreshing and shocking, so charming and witty, that I found myself underlining something on practi-

cally every page. And though Lin wrote in 1937, he sounds very modern.

Lin was a 20th-century Taoist known for his philosophy of leisure and "letting go." He was also a libertarian who despised all forms of government control, especially Marxism-Leninism and Maoism in Red China. Born in southeastern China in 1895 to Christian missionaries, he learned English at St. John's University in Shanghai and pursued a doctoral degree at Harvard University. He left Harvard early and went to France and then Germany, where he earned a Ph.D. at the University of Leipzig. After 1928, he lived most of his life in New York, where he translated Chinese texts and wrote prolifically. His objective was to bridge the gap between East and West, teaching Westerners about the old Chinese culture in such bestsellers as "My Country and My People" (1935) and "The Importance of Living" (1937). Refused permission to return to China by the Communists, Lin moved to Taipei, Taiwan, where he died in 1976.

The Age of Busy-ness

To understand Lin's Chinese philosophy, I begin by quoting his most famous line, a line that mystifies workaholic Americans: "Those who are wise won't be busy, and those

who are too busy can't be wise."

I made the mistake of writing this statement on the blackboard on my first day of class as a professor at Columbia Business School. A third of the students immediately left, and

In the new China, the roads are straight, the houses are perfect, and everything works. It's a paradise lost.

dropped the class. (Fortunately, the majority had an open mind about pursuing interests other than a 24/7 lifestyle, and later rated my class highly.)

Yet there is wisdom in Lin's statement. If you are too busy in your work, you don't have time to learn new ideas, to discover new truths, to enjoy life's little pleasures, or perhaps to pick a winning stock! Beating the market requires you to look down untrodden paths, and you need the free time to do it.

Lin Yutang criticizes most Americans for being too busy, and therefore slaves to the business culture and the old ways. They worry themselves to death. In another startling statement, Lin writes, "The three American *vices* seem to be efficiency, punctuality and the desire for achievement and success. They are the things that make the Americans so unhappy and so nervous."² Gee, I thought they were American virtues!

Life in the West, according to Lin, is "too complex, too serious, too somber, and too involved." He would agree with Henry David Thoreau: "Our life is frittered away by detail. Simplify, simplify." Following Taoist philosophy, Lin warned against "over doing, over achieving, over action . . . of being too prominent, too useful, and too serviceable." The "perfectly square" house, the "perfectly clean" room, and the "perfectly straight" road rankle in him. He goes on to say, "O wise humanity, terribly wise humanity! How inscrutable is the civilization where men toil and work and worry their hair gray to get a living and forget to play!"

The Art of Loafing

Lin says not to worry: "The Chinese philosoph[er] . . . is seldom disillusioned because he has no illusions, and seldom disappointed because he never had extravagant hopes. In this way his spirit is emancipated."

Culture, says Lin, is essentially a product of leisure. "The art of culture is therefore essentially the art of loafing. From the Chinese point of view, the man who is wisely idle is the most cultured man." He likes a messy room, a crooked road, and a leaky faucet!

Lin offers the secret to success for the businessman (busy man?) in this statement: "Actually, many business men who pride themselves on rushing about in the morning and afternoon and keeping three desk telephones busy all the time on their desk, never realize that they could make twice the amount of money, if they would give themselves one hour's solitude awake in bed, at one o'clock in the morning or even at seven. There, comfortably free, the real business head can think, he can ponder over his achievements and his mistakes

of yesterday and single out the important from the trivial in the day's program ahead of him."

But the West won the cultural war. Today, 70 years after Lin's critique of the three American vices, it is the Japanese, the Chinese, the Koreans, and the Indians who dress in Western business suits and spout the Western philosophy of efficiency, punctuality, and goal-setting, and who work 14-hour days and forget to play. In the new China, the roads are straight, the houses are perfect, and everything works. I suspect Lin Yutang would not like the new Asia, especially the regimented Singapore. It's a paradise lost.

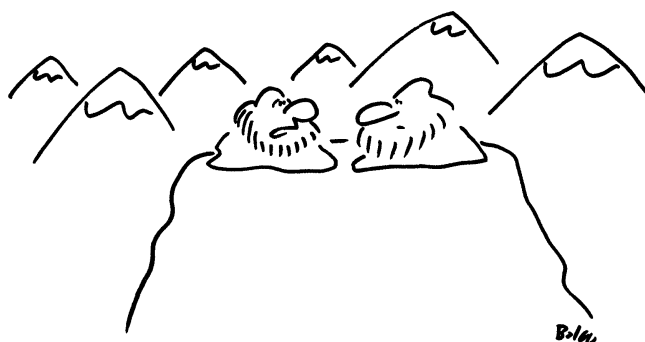
The Individual and the State

Lin Yutang is a champion of the individual and "its unreasonableness, its inveterate prejudices, and its waywardness and unpredictability." But in today's society, warns Lin, the individual free thinker is being replaced by the soldier as the ideal. "Instead of wayward, incalculable, unpredictable free individuals, we are going to have rationalized, disciplined, regimented and uniformed, patriotic coolies, so efficiently controlled and organized that a nation of fifty or sixty millions can believe in the same creed, think the same thoughts, and like the same food." Lin goes on to warn, "Clearly two opposite views of human dignity are possible: the one believing that a person who retains his freedom and individuality is the noblest type, and the other believing that a person who has completely lost independent judgment and surrendered all rights to private beliefs and opinions to the ruler or the state is the best and noblest being."

I daresay which of the two applies to Liberty readers! Lin dislikes the popular trend of sorting people into groups and classes. "We no longer think of a man as a man, but as a cog in a wheel, a member of a union or a class, a 'capitalist' to be denounced, or a 'worker' to be regarded as a comrade. . . . We are no longer individuals, no longer men, but only classes."

Lin Yutang experienced the brutality of Chinese communism and the heavy-handed bureaucracy of Washington during the New Deal era. Needless to say, he had a low opinion of government: "I hate censors and all agencies and forms of government that try to control our thoughts."

Favoring persuasion over force, Lin distrusts laws and law enforcement. Quoting Lao Tzu, Lin says government regula-



"Serenity, calmness, peace, nirvana, enlightenment . . . I just can't take the *pressure* any more!"

tion "represents a symptom of weakness." Lin adds, "the great art of government is to leave the people alone." Quoting Confucius, Lin suggests that if you regulate people by law, "people will try to keep out of jail, but will have no sense of honor." But if you regulate the people by moral teaching, "the people will have a sense of honor and will reach out toward the good." War is never ideal, even when your side is right. Again Lin quotes Lao Tzu: "Where armies are, thorns and brambles grow."

Lin opposed Mao and the Communists because they placed society above the individual. The Soviet model was "disastrous" and Maoism "the worst and most terroristic regime." Lin favored a "silent revolution, of social reform based on individual reform and on education, of self-cultivation."³

He also questioned the establishment economist and forecaster:

Perhaps I don't understand economics, but economics does not understand me, either. The sad thing about economics is that it is no science if it stops at commodities and does not go beyond human motives . . . It remains true that the stock exchange cannot, with the best assemblage of world economic data, scientifically predict the rise and fall of gold or silver or commodities, as the weather bureau can forecast the weather. The reason clearly lies in the fact that there is a human element in it, and when too many people are selling out, some will start buying in. . . . This is merely an illustration of the incalculableness and waywardness of human behavior, which is true not only in the hard and matter-of-fact dealings of business, but also in the shape of the course of history.

He was probably unfamiliar with the one school of economics that does take into account human behavior: the Austrian school of Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich Hayek. Undoubtedly Lin would like the title of Mises' magnum opus "Human Action."

Lin Yutang has many more things to say about our culture and how to live a happy and fulfilling life: about growing old gracefully ("The East and West take exactly opposite points of view. In China, the first question they ask is, 'What is your glorious age?'"); the need for women at dinner ("the soul of conversation"); the evils of Western wear ("inhuman"); the

Lin says, "The great art of government is to leave the people alone."

only way to travel ("buy a one-way ticket"); and his controversial views on smoking ("one of the greatest pleasures of mankind"). I've only scratched the surface of this brilliant Chinese philosopher.

On Buddhism and Christianity

For Lin, Buddhism's outlook ("life is suffering") was too pessimistic and its path to happiness ("suppress one's desires") too austere. In a chapter called "Why I am a Pagan" in "The Importance of Living," Lin renounced his parents'

Christianity, which in his age forbade enjoying sex, dancing, food, smoking, drinking, and the good life, in favor of an ascetic lifestyle that suppressed all sinful pleasures to obtain salvation.

Although Lin approved of the Christian emphasis on technology and education, and its banishment of foot binding and drug use in China, he rejected the austerity and social isolationism. "Chinese Christians virtually excommunicated

If you are too busy in your work, you don't have time to learn new ideas, to discover new truths, to enjoy life's little pleasures, or perhaps to pick a winning stock!

themselves from the Chinese community," he wrote. While at college, Lin discovered "the vast world of pagan wisdom." His personal philosophy: "If I had to make a choice between contemplating sin exclusively in some dark, cavernous corner of my soul, and eating bananas with a half-naked girl in Tahiti, entirely unconscious of sin, I would choose the latter."

Yet in the 1950s, he returned to his Christian roots, although it was a liberal, tolerant, forgiving Christianity. What reconverted him? Not the catechism, but Christian charity, the showing of love, kindness, and good works toward his fellow man as Jesus proclaimed in the Sermon on the Mount. "Once this original emphasis is restored and Christians 'bear fruit' in their lives, nothing can withstand the power of Christianity."⁴

But for now, it is Lin Yutang and his works that are bearing fruit. There is a growing hunger for leisure in a speedy world and for individualism in a conformist globalization. As if speaking today, Lin states, "I am quite sure that amidst the hustle and bustle of American life, there is a great deal of wistfulness, of the divine desire to lie in a plot of grass under tall beautiful trees of an idle afternoon and just do nothing."

While enjoying that idle afternoon, may I suggest you take along a copy of Lin Yutang's "The Importance of Living"? In the United States, a Little, Brown edition came out in 2003, although I'm disappointed that it is without Chinese art on the cover or running heads inside the book. Lin would not approve of such an austere edition! A Singapore edition by Cultured Lotus recaptures the beauty of the original and is far superior. Yet I personally prefer the 1937 edition by John Day Company, available by wandering through any dusty, dank, disorganized bookstore. □

Notes

1. See "Easy Living: My Two Years in the Bahamas" (Liberty, December 1987).

2. Lin Yutang, "The Importance of Living" (John Day and Company, 1937), p. 150.

3. Lin Yutang, "From Pagan to Christian" (World Publishing, 1959), p. 78.

4. "From Pagan to Christian," p. 236.

A NEW BOOK BY LIBERTARIAN WRITER

DAVE DUFFY

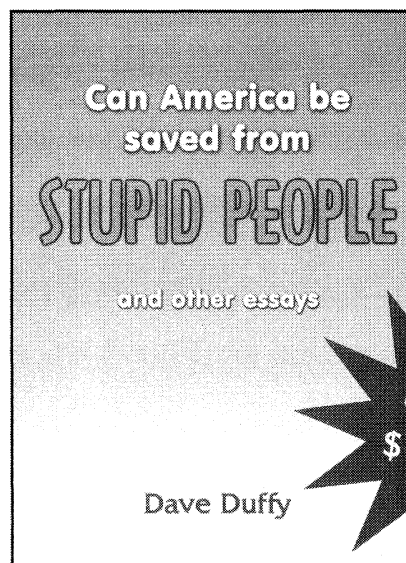
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"...but the topic of stupid people can no longer be ignored, because for the first time in history stupid people have more political power than anyone else, and the consequence of allowing them all that power now looms like the shadow of doom over America." — page 13

"...As it has always done, somehow Government, like some monster from the past, has again outwitted the freedom-loving masses and has convinced them that they don't need protection from Government, but from everything else. And so the age-old beast our founding fathers had tamed is once more banging at our door." — page 145

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



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Reflections, from page 22

Film Festival was initiated by the CIA, which may have also funded in its first stages (through the Ford Foundation) the program inviting me.

Given that the East Germans were subsidizing their cultural institutions on the other side of the notorious wall, West Berlin arts investment, don't we agree, had a beneficial political function in the Cold War (remember it?). Arts funding also stimulates tourism and other business. One politician who understands the economic benefits of supporting the arts is New York's "Republican" mayor Michael Bloomberg, who reportedly backed Christo and his wife Jeanne-Claude's long-dormant proposal to put magnificent Gates in Central Park. (And they were indeed magnificent.)

One trouble with our National Endowment for the Arts, which has never cost the public much, has been funding too much that "has no value in the open market," to quote one critic's felicitous phrase, and no value in anyone's market, ever. Awards from the NEA have suffered from a lack of not just artistic smarts but political moxie, a lack that wouldn't happen, say, in Germany or Canada, to mention two places where cultural funding is more intelligent. Subsidizing weak art, even on behalf of a social minority's claims, does no one any good, least of all weak artists who shouldn't be advised to quit their day jobs.

The failure of the companion National Endowment for the Humanities results from its ruling that only professors with doctorates are worth supporting, notwithstanding individual accomplishment in scholarship. Nearly all recipients of federal cultural money are academics or those who agree to pay academic advisers to lend their names to proposals. That's why they appear, invariably lighted solemnly, in all documentaries funded by the NEH. (Think most familiarly of those by Ken Burns.) I've compared our NEH to the cultural agencies of the former Eastern Bloc in that they rewarded primarily members of the Correct Party — in their case, the Communist Party; in our federal culture agency, the academic party. (To shoot footage in East Berlin some two decades ago, we had to hire "a translator," who was really a minder when she wasn't sleeping while we worked.)

The major continuing problem with our NEA as an arts patron has been a lack of intelligent leadership. Though the current chief, Dana Gioia, has been a smart poet and poetry critic (and a sometime libertarian), his NEA enthusiasms have

been at once classical (Shakespeare) and populist (cowboy poetry), in both respects defusing previous critics of the NEA but wasting public money, in my considered opinion. Private patrons who need to warehouse the art they buy can't afford to be so dumb. Nor could Germans, for whom arts patronage reflects social policy.

Don't forget that one common measure of the difference between a first-world country and one belonging to the second or third world is intelligent cultural support for new art. In the 21st century, the U.S. isn't that far away from the rest of the world.

— Richard Kostelanetz

State of war — President Bush has just announced that America's winning in Iraq requires a surge of additional troops. This will allegedly allow American forces to work with Iraqi forces to stop the escalating civil war.

Personally, I think the solution is simpler and requires no additional troops. Bush simply needs to follow the principles of federalism in which he once claimed to believe.

He should simply declare Iraq America's 51st state. Then the civil war becomes an entirely intrastate matter, one with virtually no risk of spreading to the other 50 states, and principles of federalism allow him to withdraw U.S. troops as a matter of adherence to *Posse Comitatus*.

But who would believe Bush was considering an action as a matter of adhering to principle?

— Ross Levatter

Chris Hayward, R.I.P. — Something should be said about the passing of television writer Chris Hayward, whose death on Nov. 20 has recently been announced. Hayward, who died of cancer at the age of 81, was partly responsible for two of my childhood heroes, Rocky and Bullwinkle. I never missed a show and was proud that the main characters lived in my home state, as residents of Frostbite Falls, Minnesota.

As I grew older, my affection for the duo grew even stronger when I came to understand the subversive nature of the show. I vaguely remember one episode that featured a visit by creatures from outer space. As the creatures made their rounds, the camera repeatedly cut away to a U.S. senator who declared to the press that their visit was "a Communist plot." After hearing this several times, Bullwinkle finally asked, "Why do you think that this is a Communist plot?" Without missing a beat, the senator responded, "I think that everything is a Communist plot."

— David T. Beito

Letters, from page 26

rarely heard — that nothing now should benefit Israel more than American failure in Iraq. The withdrawal of our troops would leave the Iraqi factions to quarrel with each other, rather than attacking us or our ally Israel, probably resulting in the division of a country that would then be less threatening not only to Israel but to Iran. (Need I say that this is a lesser reason for my favoring our troops returning home.)

The fear then is that Iran will again try to annex Iraq; may I predict that such an effort would either suffer the same guerrilla resistance that has stymied American troops, or divide Iraq, in both respects making both Iraq and Iran less problematic to any neighbors. So whenever you hear about Bush's purported subservience to the Israeli lobby, remember this truth: American military failure in Iraq would probably benefit

Israel more than American success.

If you want to posit a real conspiracy about insidious Jewish influence, consider that cunning people within the Dubya administration might have sabotaged American military efforts in order to benefit Israel; but that paranoid anti-Semitic hypothesis has crossed my mind but not yet my eyes.

Richard Kostelanetz
New York, N.Y.

Reviews

"The Enemy at Home: The Cultural Left and Its Responsibility for 9/11," by Dinesh D'Souza. Doubleday, 2007, 352 pages.

What Causes Terrorism?

Robert VerBruggen

Since Sept. 11, 2001, pundits left and right have been rushing to tie al Qaeda's anger to their favorite political causes. For religious conservatives such as Jerry Falwell, it was America's sins that got Osama seeing red. For neocons, it was Clinton's intervention-happy but weak-willed foreign policy. For pacifists and historical grievance-mongers, it was the history of Western domination of the Middle East — going back to the Crusades. For the "social justice" types it was "poverty." And so on.

Political scientists have put together data on terrorists, looking at their stated goals, economic status, and countries of origin. They've even found a few correlations that shed light on the "root causes" of terrorism.

It's too bad that Dinesh D'Souza didn't take any of this research to heart before writing "The Enemy at Home." He'd soon have realized that his central thesis, that cultural leftism is "responsible" for 9/11, doesn't stand up to scrutiny. It's doubly a shame because three-quarters of the book teems with important insights, analyses, and observations.

But first, to refute the thesis. D'Souza's view, as explained best in the third chapter's subtitle, is that "foreign policy is not the main problem." Rather, the problem is that American cultural decadence enrages traditional people. Those who get particularly mad become terrorists, and others often provide tacit support.

One might expect, then, that the Muslim societies that have imported the most Western culture — D'Souza mentions Malaysia and Turkey — would have exported the most terrorists. Whatever else sets these three countries apart, the supposed driving force of the phenomenon is most pronounced there. The traditionalists should be stark raving mad and disproportionately inclined to blow things up.

But in a different section of the book D'Souza summarizes an analysis of foreign insurgents caught in Iraq. Out of about 300, "78 were Egyptian, 66 Syrian, and 41 from the Sudan. Only 32 were Saudis [despite most of the 9/11 hijackers coming from Saudi Arabia]. The rest came from Jordan, Iran, Tunisia, Algeria, and the West Bank." If Western culture is the main temptation into terrorism, people from Malaysia and Turkey must be good at resisting it, because they are

able to live near discos without strapping bombs to their chests.

Scholarly analyses have reached conclusions that make more sense, even if they too can't provide a complete explanation. Researchers have found that terrorists come from countries where (a) they cannot participate in government and (b) anger at foreign involvement gives them an alternative outlet.

Alan B. Krueger and Jitka Maleckova have argued for the former principle. They find that, statistically, "apart from population — larger countries tend to have more terrorists — the only variable that was consistently associated with the number of terrorists was the Freedom House index of political rights and civil liberties."

From this they argue that terrorism is actually a form of political expression. When there is no legitimate way for angry citizens to make themselves heard, some of them seek other means. This is consistent with the fact that terrorists tend to be educated and well-off, because these are the kinds of people who care most about politics.

Alberto Abadie came to similar conclusions, adding the nuance that the relationship doesn't hold in cases

of extreme authoritarianism — some countries are so repressive they actually squelch terrorism.

One might say that if a lack of rights is the problem, America should spread rights, through force if necessary. But there are tradeoffs to this approach as well.

The Defense Science Board noticed a historical link between intervention and terrorism in 1997, and the Cato Institute followed with a detailed report the next year. More recently journalist Afshin Molavi pointed out that the more a regime caters to U.S. interference, the more anti-American the regime's country becomes. Iran has one of the most pro-America populations in the Middle East.

Statistical work by Robert Pape found the same trend. In "Dying to Win," he looked at 315 suicide attacks between 1980 and 2003. About 95% were linked to political objectives, and he argued that foreign occupation was terrorism's primary cause.

This shouldn't shock anyone. A terrorist does not choose the United States, halfway around the globe, by throwing darts at a map. American leaders know

(or should) that wedging themselves into a country's affairs is bound to create a backlash.

A plausible supporter of intervention will make the case that the benefits outweigh the costs, not that war has no costs and liberals are to blame for the problem. Democracies are less likely to breed terrorism, and it's arguably worth war to try to establish a democracy in the Middle East. Even National Review columnist Jonah Goldberg conceded the point about costs and benefits when a National Intelligence Estimate found that the Iraq invasion increased terrorism: "Confrontation tends to increase the chances of violence in the short term but decreases its likelihood in the long term. Any hunter will tell you that the most dangerous moment is when you've cornered an animal, and any cop will tell you that standing up to muggers puts you in danger."

Of course, no factor or even group of factors can explain 100% of terrorist activity. In "The Moral Logic and Growth of Suicide Terrorism," Robert Atlan criticized Pape's work by pointing out the role of Muslim fanaticism — including martyrdom's place in some interpretations of Islam — and the fact that some terrorist groups strike merely to compete with other terrorist groups for support. A Muslim-world Pew survey found a link between pro-terrorist beliefs and the notion that Islam is under threat.

So there's plenty of room for one more factor, and D'Souza does a good job of showing that the cultural Left did play some small role in 9/11, even if "responsibility" is too strong a word. He also demonstrates that popular foreign policies, both of the Left and of the Right, can hurt American interests.

D'Souza argues that left-wing values, when taken into the Muslim world against those societies' wishes, give terrorists a rallying cry. This runs contrary to D'Souza's idea that the cultural Left causes terrorism in and of itself (especially when he comes right out and says, "As they see it, if we in America want to wreck our families and ruin the lives of our children, that is our choice"), but it's convincing nonetheless.

Liberal activists have taken on an international crusade that many mainstream Americans, to say nothing of devout Muslims, object to. Planned Parenthood has handed out "contra-

ceptives to unmarried young girls in traditional cultures." Women's Link Worldwide opposes Muslim divorce and abortion laws in the interest of

D'Souza does show that the cultural Left did play some small role in 9/11, even if "responsibility" is too strong a word.

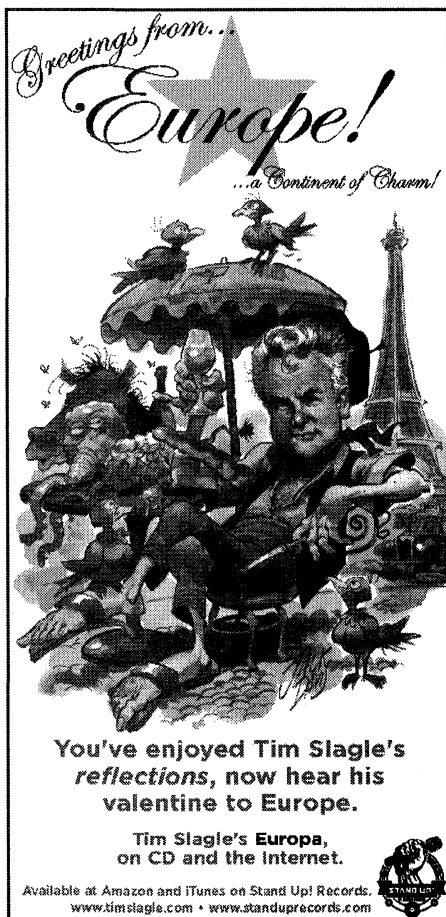
"human rights." These efforts may not directly cause terrorist attacks, but it's not unreasonable to point out that they've been great for recruiting.

Even Middle East objectives that most Americans applaud are problematic. Both the Left and the Right tend to support foreign leaders with Western values — the Left because of civil liberties and the like, and the Right because it thinks that having such leaders in the Middle East is in our best interest. Activists across the spectrum support invasions that stop human rights abuses.

Pro-American leaders can help fight the War on Terror by sending troops and policing terrorism (a program that D'Souza chooses not to explore), but with the tradeoff that radical Muslims in those countries will hate America more.

Musharraf in Pakistan, Mubarak in Egypt, and Abdullah in Jordan comprise D'Souza's trinity of "Little Satans." He says that "[t]hese dictators typically restrict or even eliminate Islamic laws and rules, replacing them with Western laws and institutions." Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini and bin Laden himself have publicly protested this phenomenon. Paradoxically, pro-America leaders have an anti-American effect.

And even if bashing Democrat-style foreign policy has been done to death, D'Souza impressively shows how poorly run, humanitarian-themed interventions can embolden terrorists. Jimmy Carter helped bring down the Shah of Iran because the foreign leader wasn't liberal enough, and he ended up with Khomeini instead. Bill Clinton invaded



Somalia in 1993 despite his unwillingness to deal with a backlash that killed 18 soldiers. Terrorists saw these events and found that hitting America brought no consequences.

Bin Laden himself noted on a recruiting tape that the “paper tigers” “fled [Somalia] in the dark as fast as they could.” D’Souza takes all this to mean we should invade and follow through, but he provides all the facts needed to argue we should stay out altogether.

After imparting this wisdom, though, D’Souza returns to his suggestions for solving the problem. His main points here are that (a) the War on Terror must go on, with assurances to traditional Muslims that we’re trying to become a more moral people, and (b) conservatives don’t link liberals to Osama bin Laden often enough.

The problem with the first assertion is not so much that it’s wrong on its face — though the evidence continues to mount that it is, at least in Iraq — but that it is insufficiently argued. D’Souza makes a half-hearted case that the war is going better than the media let on. It is true the United States has built schools, held elections, etc. It’s also true that civilian deaths might have been higher if Saddam were still in power, tossing dissidents into mass graves at will. What’s needed, though, is a cost-benefit analysis that pits the war’s accomplishments against its price in American soldiers’ lives, increased terrorism, money, and injured U.S. world standing. There is none.

The second recommendation is by far the book’s most shocking. D’Souza notes that both Osama bin Laden and the

The biggest problem is that D’Souza’s own recommendations are often consistent with bin Laden’s objectives.

American Left would like the U.S. out of the Middle East (here and throughout his book he ignores “Old Right”-style anti-interventionists). He argues that the Right should point this out at every

opportunity. But the biggest problem is that D’Souza’s own recommendations are often consistent with bin Laden’s objectives. For example, the pundit and the terrorist leader would both like to see a more wholesome America; indeed, the point of “The Enemy at Home” is to encourage such a cultural shift. D’Souza spends an inordinate amount of space arguing that “Will and Grace,” Eminem, and Howard Stern endorse despicable values, and that if these folks toned it down, traditional Muslims would be less inclined to quietly support terror.

So liberals are not alone in espousing a “give them what they want and they’ll

leave us alone” strategy. Those on the Left simply choose a different avenue of appeasement. Also, Americans have been known to see these kinds of attacks as cheap shots. See the comments of Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) comparing Guantanamo Bay to Nazi concentration camps and the Soviet gulag, and his apology for having done so.

Despite its often severe flaws, “The Enemy at Home” is a worthwhile read. Sandwiched between an empirically false thesis and questionable policy recommendations are some terrific facts and arguments about the Middle East and its culture. □

“Kingfish: The Reign of Huey P. Long,” by Richard D. White, Jr. Random House, 2006, 359 pages.

American Dictator

Bruce Ramsey

Those who grumble at the incoordination of government might consider this story. Huey Long (1893–1935) coordinated the government of Louisiana. A hollering, sweating, foul man who proclaimed “every man a king” rewired an American state government of ordinary powers and authorities into a bayou dictatorship.

The story has been told before, but Richard White, a professor of public administration, tells it for a new generation. He does not take Long’s leftist ideology seriously, and spends little time on it. That is the book’s most obvious lack. But this is a story that extracts a strong statement from the plain facts.

Long arose from rural Louisiana, and was always disliked in the cities. He was a rural populist whose first target was Standard Oil. He got elected gover-

nor in January 1928 on a program of free school textbooks and good roads — and he provided them. He also set about leveling rival centers of power.

An early sign of this was the Louisiana delegation to the 1928 Democratic National Convention. Usually, the party’s central committee made up the delegation. Long called a special meeting, stacked it with his supporters, and elected a slate that was entirely controlled by him. Next he took on the state legislature. Writes Smith: “Abandoning protocol and any separation of powers, he stomped through committee rooms and scattered committees with a nod of his head or a crooking of a finger.” When a senator cited the state constitution, and threw a copy at his head, Long replied, “I’m the constitution just now.”

Not too long after that Long was impeached and brought to trial in the

state senate for abuses of power. He bought off some senators and set about destroying the careers of those who had opposed him. From then on, the legis-

When a senator cited the state constitution, and threw a copy at his head, Long replied, "I'm the constitution just now."

lature was his — and so was the rest of state government, from the highway commission and the game department to the tax authorities and the cops. To a friend he said, "Give me the militia and they can have all the laws they want."

Long pumped up Louisiana State University (where the author teaches) and demanded its loyalty. When an English professor published a saucy book called "Cane Juice," Long had him fired. Later, when the student newspaper printed a letter attacking Long, he sent state police to the print shop to destroy 4,000 copies of the paper.

As for business interests, White writes, "His bureaucrats prescribed licenses, permits, property assessments and other commercial transactions not by necessity but often by political loyalty. They taxed misbehaving corporations into extinction and heaped contracts and largesse upon the businesses of

their friends. Bank examiners stifled credit from opponents' businesses, and state dock inspectors banned fruit, vegetables and other cargo belonging to anti-Long shippers from being stored on state-owned wharfs."

The Depression came, and Louisiana was hit hard. Long "hired extra game wardens, bridge tenders, [and] state policemen, and added thousands of jobs with his huge road building program." He expected every state employee to contribute to his political fund. Because the New Orleans newspapers opposed him, he started his own paper and ordered every state employee to subscribe to it.

He ordered the state to build a new governor's mansion and a new state capitol — a towering thing with a skyscraper instead of a dome. To pay for his excessive government, he increased taxes on business and sold Louisiana bonds until Wall Street refused to buy any more.

Early on, he began to have national ambitions. With the government of Louisiana in his pocket, he ran for U.S. Senate in 1930, and won. He could not be governor and senator at the same time, so he put off accepting his Senate seat while he arranged for a lackey with the initials "O.K." to become governor. In 1932 he went off to Washington to get a national audience by attacking the rich. In his first speech in the Senate he proposed a law to confiscate fortunes above \$100 million and divide up the money among the poor.

That year Long supported Franklin Roosevelt for president, and he began

the New Deal as an ardent supporter. But the two men did not get along. Roosevelt was not left-wing enough, nor populist enough, nor compliant enough for Huey Long. Long began setting up Share Our Wealth clubs across the United States. To run them he hired the anti-Semitic Rev. Gerald L.K. Smith, whom H.L. Mencken described as the "gustiest and goriest, the deadliest and damndest orator ever heard on this or other earth." Long was quite the orator himself.

By 1935, the New Deal was injured, its chief instruments declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. And yet in the land was a leftist belief that those remedies had not been strong enough. In California, Upton Sinclair had just run for governor as a socialist Democrat, and Dr. Francis Townsend and Father Charles Coughlin were filling the radio waves with socialistic nos-

When the LSU student newspaper printed a letter attacking Long, he sent state police to the print shop to destroy 4,000 copies of the paper.

trums. Into this cauldron bubbled Huey Long, a man who had led more fools more effectively than any of them.

He intended to challenge Roosevelt for the Democratic nomination of 1936. Probably he would have failed, because FDR had the wealth of the U.S. Treasury to hand out, and because Long's crudity hurt him in states of greater average education than Louisiana. But we will never know. In 1935, Huey Long was assassinated by a member of one of the many families he had wronged. The exact thinking of the assassin cannot be determined, because Long's bodyguards pumped his body full of bullets.

There is something to be said for assassins, at least some of the time. There is something, too, to be said for the normal incoordination of government. □

Calling All Economists!

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

That is the "new idea" with the gold coin for refuting it regularly offered here.

The coin is still here, and so is the idea. Rothbard couldn't refute it, Kirzner couldn't, the Friedmans couldn't, nor, apparently, any of the other economists in these pages, who would certainly have done so by now, had they been able to.

Stephen Cox described the speakers at the recent Liberty Editors Conference as "great, great in absolute terms," and libertarians as "living in the sunshine."

But so far none of his Sunshine Boys has faced this challenge out in the open.

For the sunlight they can't stand, the intellectual progress leaving them in its wake, the "new idea" that would demolish the Left, and their positions within the Right, see *Intellectually Incorrect* at intinc.org.

My Picks for '06

by Jo Ann Skousen

It's that time of year when every newspaper, magazine, and entertainment news show is making its list and checking it twice — not for Christmas gifts, but for Oscar picks. Below are my 2006 favorites in several categories. These are not my predictions for

Best Picture

My favorite films this year were not necessarily blockbusters, but movies with good stories performed by believable actors.

"United 93." The fifth anniversary of the attack on the World Trade Center seemed to mark the go-ahead signal for several films and documentaries to be made for television and the wide screen. "United 93," with its real-time story line, real traffic controllers, unknown actors, and script based on real cell phone calls, was the best. Moving, suspenseful, and cathartic.

"Déjà Vu." The always reliable Denzel Washington stars in a thriller that mixes multiverse time travel with high-tech government snooping and an old-fashioned love story. Not likely to win an Oscar nod, but a great night out at the movies.

"Little Miss Sunshine." One of the funniest movies I have seen in ages, its humor comes from the divine human comedy, not from schtick or slapstick. Marred (for me) by Grandpa's foul mouth, but a delight in every other way. Run! Jump in! Can't stop!

"The Prestige." Set in Victorian England, two rival magicians, once best friends, will stop at nothing to uncover

who will win the Oscars this year, but simply the films or performances that moved me in some way. Many of them have been reviewed in Liberty this year; others are mentioned only here. I hope you will add them to your Netflix list, if you haven't seen them already.

each other's secrets. The acting is first-rate, and the plot kept me guessing till the very end, unlike the more critically acclaimed "The Illusionist."

"Dreamgirls." I loved everything about it. See my review on page 50.

"The Pursuit of Happyness." Some people will think of this as a lightweight "chick flick for guys," hardly worthy of an Oscar, but it's a remarkable story. No whining, no groveling, no giving up, just a determined father who will stop at nothing to get the job done for himself and his son. That's a happy-ness worth pursuing. (See reviews on page 48.)

Best Actor

Johnny Depp, "Pirates of the Caribbean." The film itself didn't make my list because of its "stay tuned" ending (I think a film should stand on its own, even when it's part of a trilogy), but as an actor, Depp is in a class by himself. He could do a remake of "Lassie Come Home" and make it wonderfully innovative.

Will Smith, "The Pursuit of Happyness." I have a little list of "perfect movie moments." It contains such magical scenes as Emma Thompson's gasping, cathartic yelp of joy at the end of "Sense and Sensibility"; Chris Cooper's

arm reaching slowly and tentatively for his son's shoulder in a long-awaited embrace of approval in "October Sky"; and now, Will Smith's eyes almost, but not quite, brimming over as he rushes to find the one person whose hug will make his happy-ness complete — his son.

Best Actress

Emma Thompson, "Stranger Than Fiction." One of the most disappointing films of the year, but that's not her fault. As a writer on the verge of a nervous breakdown, Thompson is stunning. Watch what she does with her eyes, her mouth, her cigarettes. Amazing!

Helen Mirren, "The Queen." I first discovered Helen Mirren in "Calendar Girls" (2003) (a film I highly recommend for your Netflix list) and "Gosford Park" (2001). She's a wonderfully versatile actress who is unfortunately overshadowed by the "dame of England," Judi Dench. Portraying Queen Elizabeth during the week after Diana's death, Mirren brings life and insight to England's boring monarch. The usually beautiful Mirren is so perfectly dumpy, she even develops cankles. Watch for how she dismisses Tony Blair (Michael Sheen) with an eyebrow, a barely tightened lip, an almost limp wrist.

Best Supporting Actor

Eddie Murphy, "Dreamgirls." As James Thunder Early, a James Brownesque soul singer, Murphy is instructed to tone down his style to appeal more to white audiences. Murphy's restrained frustration off-stage and unrestrained soul onstage reminds us what the music world has lost by its insistence on keeping the pop scene light. His best character since Axel Foley.

Best Supporting Actress

Toni Collette, "Little Miss Sunshine." Like Johnny Depp, Toni Collette transforms herself for every role. She can be an unattractive, haggard, clinically depressed mother ("About a Boy"), a glamorous blonde ("The Hours"), or a plain Jane who becomes beautiful ("In Her Shoes"). In "Little Miss Sunshine" she is the only sane member of a delightfully screwy family.

The Importance of "Happyness"

Gary Jason

Hollywood hasn't produced many pictures celebrating the American dream and success in business (recently, at least). But occasionally a film sneaks through that reminds us that we can win if we work hard enough. "The Pursuit of Happyness" does that, and much more.

The story is true. It is based on the autobiography of Chris Gardner, a black man who became a successful investor. The film, which is set in the San Francisco of 1981, follows the period of Gardner's life when he struggled to make his way. The story begins with Gardner, portrayed superbly by Will Smith, trying to earn a living selling medical equipment, while his wife (played well by Thandie Newton) is working double shifts at a menial job, and both are trying to raise their son. In a brilliant piece of casting, the son is played by Jaden Smith, Will's son in real life. This gives a special depth to the scenes of father and son.

The film moves rapidly. Equipment sales are rough; Gardner can't pay his bills. Passing by a Dean Witter stock brokerage, he is struck by the smiles on the employees' faces and the Ferrari the manager drives, and he decides that he wants to intern there and move into that line of work. He impresses an executive in a cab (by solving a Rubik's Cube puzzle), is invited for an interview, and manages to talk his way into a slot as an intern — only to find

that he will earn no pay for the long training period, and only one of the trainees will eventually be hired as a broker. But he decides to take a shot.

The rest of the movie shows the effort he puts into it. His wife leaves, he goes broke (when the IRS seizes his bank account for trivial back taxes), and he and his son become homeless for a while. The scenes here are very affecting, as he tries to keep his son's spirits up against an incredible string of rough luck. One scene in particular — an episode in which he and his boy are forced to spend the night in a public restroom in a train station — is especially moving.

The humanity and reality of the characters are remarkable. The departing wife is shown as desperate, not bad. The businessmen are hard-driving

salesmen, not mean or racist. The only villains are the IRS and the hippies who kept stealing Gardner's medical equipment. The movie depicts a man who is deeply committed to looking after his child, while trying to make it in a tough world.

I will be surprised if Smith doesn't get an Academy Award nomination for his performance, if not the award itself. The portrayal of a black man fighting hard and fighting smart to raise his son and achieve his dreams in a society that allows people to succeed is a deeply satisfying formula. And while the story could easily have become melodramatic, especially given the politically charged problem of homelessness, the director keeps it quick, focused, honest, and leavened with humor. □

David T. Beito

"The Pursuit of Happyness" is a compelling, energetic, and unabashed celebration of free markets, individual responsibility, and old-fashioned pluck — and it's based on a true story, to boot. Will Smith plays Chris Gardner, a man who never lets up in pursuing his dream of becoming a stockbroker, despite his lack of a college education and the responsibilities of rearing a young son by himself. Against all odds, even homelessness, he manages to land an internship with Dean Witter, study for his SEC exams, and cultivate clients, while feeding

his son in soup kitchens and lining up for beds in a homeless shelter each night. As he contemplates the rights set forth by Jefferson's Declaration of Independence, Gardner realizes, "Some people don't get to achieve happiness. They only get to pursue it." Still, he never gives up in his pursuit.

While the critics have generally praised the film, it rubbed some of them the wrong way. Jeffrey M. Anderson sees a "disturbing . . . depression era attitude toward the class system. Here, the wealthy are mainly kind, generous folk and the poor are angry and vin-

dictive. Gardner's ambition is admirable, but the movie dimly believes that great wealth is the final answer to all his problems."

Another critic, Peter Sobczynski, cites the film's inattention to "racism, on institutional or individual levels" as an unforgivable lapse. And John

The film promotes the idea that the poor can succeed through their own efforts, and that the rich do not accumulate their wealth through exploitation.

Beifuss' summary of the film's message is misleading but equally illustrative of this mindset: "With Reagan hovering in the background as a sort of patron saint of economic self-determination and Captain America as the son's superhero of choice, the movie segregates its characters into two categories: Guitar-strumming hippie chicks, homeless nutcases, Chinese-speaking day care operators and non-Smith black folks — bad; rich white stock brokers with box seats at 49ers games — good."

Frankly, I found it refreshing that the filmmakers chose not to make this a film about racism, but a film about opportunity. True, there is a hint of racism in the fact that Gardner appears to be the only black man in the internship program, and the only intern who is ordered to fetch coffee and donuts for the internship director, Frank (Dan Castellana — dig the irony of the voice of Homer Simpson sending out for donuts). But if Gardner suspects he is singled out because of his skin color, he never mentions it. He never whines to his employers about being a single father, either. One of the great points of this story is that, when you are struggling to get ahead, you simply don't have time for whining. Just get the job done, and let someone else worry about saving the world.

A more significant juxtaposition is not between white employers and black employees, but between Gardner and his wife. Both seem to have the same goal: pay the rent, put food on the table, pick their son up from day care. But Linda's solution to their financial woes is to cut back and double up. After dinner she automatically pours their unfinished iced tea back into a shared pitcher before heading to her second shift washing linens in a hotel laundry. Eventually she cracks, unable to see any escape from this never ending cycle of double shifts and recycled tea, and she leaves.

By contrast, Chris knows he will never get out of poverty by working a salaried job for someone else. Gardner is reminiscent of another great black character, Walter Lee Younger of Lorraine Hansberry's "A Raisin in the Sun." Both men recognize that entrepreneurship is the true path out of the ghetto. Both men fail initially — Gardner spends his family's savings to buy medical equipment that he schlepps from office to office, and Younger risks his family's fortune on a liquor store scheme — but both have the right idea. Find something you feel passionate about, and pursue it relentlessly. Business ownership is the key to financial success, and whether critic Jeffrey Anderson likes it or not, wealth is the solution to poverty.

"The Pursuit of Happyness" is about ideas, and refreshingly subversive ones at that, given the do-gooder philosophy inherent in Hollywood. It promotes the value of individual responsibility and initiative, the idea that the poor can succeed through their own efforts, and that the rich do not accumulate their wealth through exploitation, destructive greed, and racism. It even identifies taxation and inflation as enemies of the common man.

Underlying this free-market philosophy, however, is a film that is unabashedly moving, demonstrating that true happiness does not lie in the accumulation of property alone, but in having someone to share the joy of good fortune. Without someone to tell, someone to care, good fortune is just a pile of paper. □

Jennifer Hudson, "Dreamgirls." Wow!

Best Ensemble

"Little Miss Sunshine." Greg Kinnear, Toni Collette, Alan Arkin, Steve Carell, Abigail Breslin, and Paul Dano. They're all in the van, and they all deserve equal accolades. The Academy really needs to create an "Ensemble" category.

Best Cinematography

Sophia Coppola, "Marie Antoinette." With Kirsten Dunst in the title role, this film had little chance of being more than a caricature of the doomed French queen. But Coppola has a fantastic eye for camera shots. Her backgrounds and lighting, especially in the outdoor scenes, are gorgeous.

Best Music

Philip Glass, "The Illusionist." From the opening note of the opening credits, Glass' soundtrack sets the mood for what should have been a richly atmospheric period piece. The story itself is transparent, the acting cold, and the film disappointing. But Glass' music created such a lush illusion that many critics put "The Illusionist" at the top of their lists, probably not even realizing that it was the music, not the story, that caught their emotions.

Gustavo Santaolalla, "Babel." The theme of this movie is communication without language, and music is one of the most powerful forms of communication in the movie. Santaolalla creates three different musical motifs to portray three different cultures: Middle Eastern, Mexican, and Japanese. The ending of the Japanese section simply would not have worked without his music. With it, the film becomes a masterpiece (almost).

Randy Newman, "Cars." Much of the soundtrack is made up of previously released songs appropriate to the race car theme: Rascal Flatts' "Life is a Highway," Chuck Berry's "Route 66," Sheryl Crow's "Real Gone," and Hank Williams' "My Heart Would Know" are among the most popular. But Newman's original score is great, and his plaintive ballad about the beauty of one's home town, "Our Town," sung by James Taylor, is sure to win a nomination, if not an Oscar. □

"Dreamgirls," directed by Bill Condon. Dreamworks, 2006, 125 minutes.

Topping the Charts

Jo Ann Skousen

What do Pete Best and Florence Ballard have in common? Both were founding members of singing groups that gave them the shaft and went on to superstardom without them. Pete Best, of course, was the original drummer for the Beatles; Flo Ballard was the original lead singer and one of the founders, along with her friends Diane Ross and Mary Wilson, of the Supremes. When Motown producer Berry Gordy decided that Ross' gentler soprano would be more pleasing to white audiences than Ballard's soulful contralto, Ballard was dumped, Diane's name was changed, and "Diana Ross and the Supremes" was born.

As a business maneuver, Gordy was probably right. The Supremes successfully made the crossover to pop music, releasing ten number-one hits between 1964 and 1967. Their bittersweet lyrics of unrequited love ("Where did our love go?", "Stop in the name of love", "My world is empty without you"), sung with doo-wop choreography and shiny costumes, appealed to young teens going through their first heartbreaks. I was in junior high at the time, and it seemed that every time a new romance broke up (about every two months!), there was Diana Ross, singing about my loss.

But as a personal maneuver, it was a dirty trick. Ballard had founded the group. She was a talented singer with a powerhouse voice (it is said that Ballard

stood 17 feet away from the microphone during recording sessions to balance the rest of the trio). No matter. Gordy felt Cindy Birdsong would provide better backup, and Ballard was out. While Diana, Mary, and Cindy went on to stardom, Flo fell into a depression. She attempted a solo career and tried to make a comeback, but lived most of her life in poverty.

Florence Ballard's story comes to life in a formidable performance by newcomer Jennifer Hudson in Bill Condon's "Dreamgirls," based on the 1981 Broadway show of the same name. The Broadway version only hints at the Supremes, but this version allows no doubts, matching hairstyles and costumes easily remembered from the Supremes' album covers and even bringing out a "Jackson Five" lookalike group for one of the concerts. Although the character's name is Effie White, this is Flo's story, and Hudson leaves no doubt that this is her movie.

I grew up watching film versions of Broadway musicals, but I haven't been a big fan of recent musical fiascos like "Phantom of the Opera" and "Rent." "Chicago" may have won the Oscar, but I was turned off by the quick edits and dance-like poses designed to camouflage the actresses' inability to dance, and the voiceover to cover Renee Zellweger's thin, reedy voice.

"Dreamgirls," by contrast, melds the characteristics of film and stage, highlighting the best of both forms. Director Bill Condon takes advantage of film's capacity for scene changes and flash-

backs in order to tell a complete story, while maintaining the integrity and feel of a Broadway show. In fact, the audience at the screening I attended erupted in spontaneous applause at the end of several showstopping numbers, even though there was no actress on stage to receive the accolades. You just can't help but clap at certain points in this show.

The singing is phenomenal, especially from Hudson, who in the past three years has grown from a gawky, awkward "American Idol" contestant with a dynamite voice and no stage presence to a credible actress, full of passion and pathos. It would have been easy for her simply to display over-the-top attitude in this role, but she maintains the vulnerability of her character even as she projects her raw anger. Say what you want about "American Idol," but even if five seasons of auditions have uncovered only this one talent, it will have been worth it. I hope the film leads to a revival of "Dreamgirls" on Broadway, with Hudson in the lead.

Beyonce Knowles, known for her beauty, her voice, and her often mediocre acting, is beautiful and believable as Deana Jones (aka Diana Ross). In fact, I simply forgot that she was Beyonce. Eddie Murphy, also struggling as an actor to overcome his reputation for B-grade movies after his initial success with "Beverly Hills Cop," puts in a restrained but powerful performance as Jimmy Thunder Early, a soul singer

Even if five seasons of "American Idol" have uncovered only this one talent, it will have been worth it.

frustrated by Curtis Taylor Jr.'s (Jamie Foxx, as a thinly disguised Berry Gordy) insistence that he "sing white." He tries, but he just can't quite succeed in leaving soul behind, to the betterment of the film.

"Dreamgirls" is possibly my favorite movie of 2006. Great music, great story, great dance numbers, great acting, great nostalgia. Don't miss it. □

Medianotes

Where there's smoke —

What would have happened at Waco if the Branch Davidians had not held their unpopular religious beliefs, but merely been peaceful pot smokers? What if they were nothing more than productively employed pillars of the community who happened to be cannabis activists? The cynical answer is that the feds wouldn't have done anything differently: they still would have leveled accusations of child abuse, trumped up some firearms law violations, and laid siege to the compound. And in Dean Kuipers' *"Burning Rainbow Farm"* (Bloomsbury, 2006, 304 pages), there's evidence that the cynical answer may be correct.

Kuipers writes from Los Angeles, but he grew up in Michigan, where the events in the book take place. Just like Waco, it began with people who wanted to be left alone; just like Waco, it ended with the torching of a community's gathering place and a fatal shoot-out with federal agents.

There are a lot of characters, but the big players are Tom Crosslin, the prosecutor who went after him, and the cops who eventually forced his hand. Tom and his lover Rollie Rohm founded Rainbow Farm, a campground in Vandalia, Mich., as a haven for cannabis activists and a cultural center for anyone willing to live and let live. The government wasn't about to let that stand.

Most people haven't heard about "the Michigan Waco" because it happened just days before 9/11. Obviously, news of what happened in Vandalia got preempted. But there's another reason. With a little imagination, anyone who has kids, owns property, and blew a couple of spliffs in college can put himself in these men's shoes. They were neighborly guys, not religious nuts with an apocalyptic vision. The locals knew them, and many liked them. Thinking too hard about Tom and Rollie's last

stand would be too much cognitive dissonance for the Boomers.

Kuipers' writing is nothing special; it would have profited from a bit more care in editing, but it is solid enough to move the story along. No one is made to be all good guy or bad guy: the author is sympathetic toward the people of Rainbow Farm, but he also quotes extensively from his conversations with the man who started the whole mess, prosecutor Scott Teter. He is not made out to be a monster — just a prosecutor in 21st-century America, which is no high praise.

Nor are Tom and Rollie's pasts whitewashed. Tom once assaulted a woman in a bar over a political disagreement, and he could be belligerent even with close friends. Rollie kept smoking pot even when he was being tested for it and custody of his son was on the line. It's not certain that the men ever actually fired a weapon at anyone, but early on they did have ties with the Michigan Militia. The Militia provided "security" for Rainbow Farm — armed with cameras, instead of guns, to document abuses by the police — demonstrating that Tom didn't mind being viewed as a troublemaker.

These things are not grudgingly admitted, but dutifully noted, which makes the book better than a one-sided apologia would be — in other words, better than the kind of book an ideologically libertarian journalist might have written. Libertarianism seems to be a new, obscure concept for Kuipers, and his fairness and clarity in summarizing

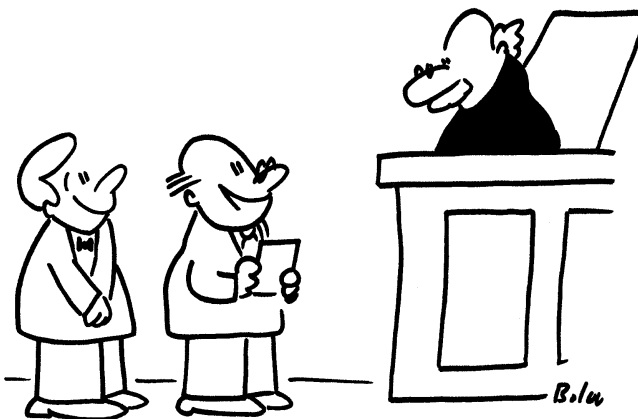
Crosslin's libertarian ideas are noteworthy in a time when it is difficult to get most journalists to distinguish between "libertarian" and "right-wing."

Tom and Rollie were pot-friendly. They had a lot of land and money. They were a sweet target; it was only a matter of time before the government tried to take Rainbow Farm by asset forfeiture. When Rollie's son Robert was taken from them and put into foster care, it proved too much. Tom and Rollie torched the community they had built, and the dreams it represented, rather than let the feds get their paws on the place. It was a Howard Roark moment, except that Roark didn't get gunned down by FBI agents. Tom and Rollie did. *"Burning Rainbow Farm"* is their story.

— Patrick Quealy

Cancer merchant — Jason Reitman's comedy *"Thank You for Smoking"* (Fox Searchlight, 2006, 91 minutes), based upon Christopher Buckley's 1994 novel of the same name, was only modestly successful at the box office in 2006. Which surprised me, given that it succeeds at the main goal of any comedy: it makes you laugh. Hard. Would that more so-called comedies did that.

In this send-up of Washington lobbyists and congressional investigations, protagonist Nick Naylor (played to great smirky effect by Aaron Eckhart) has the difficult task of lobbying on behalf of Big Tobacco. Naylor's main antagonist, a senator (played to great smarmy effect by William H. Macy), is holding hearings with the aim of pass-



"In his defense, Your Honor, my client would like to sing 'Why Can't We Be Friends?'"

ing a law to replace the standard health warning label on cigarette packs with a label bearing a skull and crossbones. Naylor's close associates are a gun-industry lobbyist and alcohol-industry lobbyist whom he routinely meets for lunch (calling themselves the MOD squad — for “merchants of death”).

The film has a tremendous supporting cast. As it progresses, we meet a Hollywood agent (played brilliantly

by Rob Lowe), a cowboy model for the cigarette industry who is dying of lung cancer (the always superb Sam Elliott), a tobacco kingpin (another fine actor, Robert Duvall), and a treacherous reporter (a sexy Katie Holmes). The boy who portrays Nick's young son (Cameron Bright) puts in an excellent performance as well. All these characters form a circle of cynics that does justice to the real charlatans who inhabit

much of government and industry, especially the entertainment and news business.

One indication of the brilliance of Reitman's directing can be seen in the “deleted scenes” feature on the DVD. All of them are funny, but they would have detracted from the film — as clearly explained by Reitman in a voiceover. In particular, I was struck by one scene that Reitman dropped for exactly the right reason. Nick and his son are standing on the steps outside Congress, and his son pulls out a pack of cigarettes and puts one to his mouth. Nick sees this, reaches over, and knocks it out of his son's lips. Reitman notes that the scene is tonally inconsistent with the movie's theme of personal responsibility.

Consistency of tone is a virtue that all too many films lack. I recall a “comedy” a few years ago in which the lead characters — who were supposed to amuse us — were hitmen. One of them mutilates a victim onscreen. The comedy flopped, despite a big-name cast, because of the complete tonal inconsistency: an audience doesn't readily laugh at someone presented as viciously evil.

Unfortunately, however, the theme of taking responsibility for personal choices, the moral theme that should make this movie especially enjoyable to readers of *Liberty*, may have made it distinctly less enjoyable to much of the American public, which has been infantilized by decades of rule by the Great Nanny State. Some of the material in “Thank You for Smoking” may be unsettling to young children, not to mention bleeding-heart adults. Otherwise, the film is not to be missed. — Gary Jason

Dangerous minds — David Horowitz's “The Professors” (Regnery, 2006, 450 pages) has a certain perverse charm that comes from bestowing a few pages of transient fame on “The 101 Most Dangerous Academics in America.” Most of its characterizations identify objectionable people, largely tenured, the vast majority of them unfamiliar to me before, because they are lightweights not only on the world stage but within their own universities. (Three exceptions in this last respect are the linguist Noam Chomsky, the literary whatever Frederic Jameson, and the historian Eric Foner.)

Otherwise, this book is limited. One repeated piety holds that objecting to

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the American invasion of Iraq earns a black mark. Horowitz customarily puts this exposé at the end of each portrait as a kind of additional bullet, so that, as soon as readers see it coming yet again, they know to skip to the next chapter. Doesn't Horowitz the neocon know that many traditional conservatives, most prominently Pat Buchanan, opposed the Iraq invasion from the beginning?

A second, more peculiar problem, reflecting sloppy publishing, is that the book lacks a list of the notorious profs. You can't find all the names in a single place. They're not on the dust-jacket or on pages behind the interior title. Perhaps the omission reflects the author's or publisher's embarrassing discovery that the 101 subjects' names are indeed largely unknown. Only by turning the book's pages from beginning to end can the reader discover who the 101 are, albeit in alphabetical order. The arrangement demonstrates laziness, especially in any critical collection, such as this or any anthology.

How embarrassing it is to find that an exposé of boneheadism should suffer from bonehead publishing.

— Richard Kostelanetz

Sputtering flame — Let's get right to the point about "Eragon" (20th Century Fox, 2006, 104 minutes): there is little magic in this wisp of dragon smoke, let alone in the book upon which it is based, except perhaps for 8- to 12-year-old boys who have never read any good fantasy novels before. The only fairytale event in this fantasy movie is the story of its author, young Christopher Paolini, who wrote the book when he was a teenager (it was published in 2002 by his parents and later in 2003 by Knopf).

That part is very inspiring, and fueled the marketing buildup to the movie's release. How the book then

sold millions of copies and was made into a \$100 million movie still baffles me, however, so much so that I think Paolini does indeed have magical powers. He managed to cast a spell so profound, upon so many people, that even Gandalf would have been impressed.

Somehow in 2003, the chemistry, timing, and market forces were just right for this manuscript to jump the line of the really great fantasy works it emulates and garner a massive big-screen budget. Perhaps the fantasy neophytes involved with "Eragon" dreamed of the same type of success that "The Lord of the Rings" achieved, but they made a qualitative mistake. They should have been trying to get the rights to real masterpieces like those written by Peter S. Beagle, Ursula K. Le Guin, Fritz Leiber, Lois McMaster Bujold, and one of my personal favorites, Darrell Schweitzer, all of which were far more deserving of their attention. Even average Tolkienesque epics from Terry Brooks, David Eddings, or Raymond E. Feist would have been far better.

To be totally fair, there is a touch of innocence in the book that does (barely) make it into the movie. Paolini is no writer, but the topic and character of his novel perfectly fit a young man's worldview; his book evokes the sense of adolescent wonder that a boy might feel when dreaming of becoming a heroic dragon rider and saving the world. But there the grace ends, and what lies beyond it is not worth the journey. I frowned at the inept dialogue and grimaced at the liberal misappropriation of story elements, making a mental list of dozens of other superior works of fantasy that merited being turned into big-budget blockbusters before this one.

Once you get over the "Gee whiz, a teenager wrote this" element and take the speck of childlike wonder out

of the equation, "Eragon" is revealed for what it really is: a steaming pile of dragon droppings. The story is a derivative, unoriginal tale: one part "Star Wars" and many parts other writers' better fantasy novels. Every cliché is there, including setups for the sequels. Some of the dragon sequences are fun to watch, thanks to the healthy computer graphics budget, but the film is incorrigibly marred by its poor adaptation of trite source material.

Edward Speleers acquits himself adequately as Eragon, but Jeremy Irons is, sadly, left to his own random outbursts, and a depressed John Malkovich is utterly wasted. Each time I saw Malkovich, his facial expressions seemed to ask, "Why am I here?" He must have signed on without reading the screenplay or book, or perhaps he was deluded into thinking that the sequels would provide some stability for his retirement years. A pleasant surprise, however, was Robert Carlyle as Durza, whom I enjoyed in several scenes.

Kudos to Paolini as a teenager following his dream and writing a book. And congratulations to his parents, managers, agents, and lawyers for shepherding the project to the big screen. But I think I'd rather they had made a movie about Paolini writing the book, rather than adapting the book itself. These filmmakers and their collaborators have unleashed a whole dragonfire blast of mediocrity on the fantasy world, damaging its reputation and likely setting back its progress at least a decade. One can only hope now that New Line Cinema and Peter Jackson can work out their differences so they can bring "The Hobbit" to life and show us again how fantasy should be brought to the screen. Meanwhile, let this "Eragon" herald an "era gone."

— James Durham

Twenty Observations, from page 37

American government, having performed some half-baked intervention, moves on, leaving things worse than they were at the start.

Once you give them the tools, politicians and bureaucrats will find more and more areas to control. But who should get the blame?

Environmentalism shows how clouded the thought processes of westerners have become. People are horrified if someone provides an alternative view; no rational discussion of the issue is possible. It provides a moral rationalization for

envy, pessimism, and an inability to participate productively in society. But again, who or what should get the blame — bureaucrats and elected officials, or the culture that promotes them?

Only a few decades back, this state of affairs would have made westerners cringe. The cringing has stopped.

20. Every little bit of totalitarianism in our minds, however benign it may appear, helps to produce a complexly corrupt and coercive society, endlessly mirroring itself in the workings of the state. People should learn to see this connection. Libertarians should learn to see it. They should learn that the seedbed of oppression is not the state but the culture. □

England

Defending against the threat of overefficient health care, in the *Telegraph*:

Hospitals across the country are imposing minimum waiting times — delaying the treatment of thousands of patients.

After years of government targets pushing them to cut waiting lists, staff are now being warned against “over-performing” by treating patients too quickly. Patricia Hewitt, the Secretary of State for Health, expressed concern that some hospitals were so productive “they actually got ahead of what the NHS could afford.”

Fayetteville, Ark.

Pedagogical note, from the *Northwest Arkansas Morning News*:

An educational program to teach kids how to spot building and property code violations — complete with colorful characters such as “Curbside Carla” and “Trashy Tina” — will be in the hands of local children soon, thanks to Fayetteville city officials.

The officials expect kids to take their cues from characters like “Willie Weeds,” a peace-sign-flashing, Birkenstock-wearing collector of crabgrass and other filthy foliage.

Hartford, Conn.

Piracy on the Blue Tide, in the *Stamford Advocate*:

The minor party U.S. Sen. Joseph Lieberman used as a vehicle to gain a fourth term has been successfully hijacked by an outspoken critic of the senator.

Connecticut Secretary of State Susan Bysiewicz has recognized Fairfield University professor John Orman’s takeover of the Connecticut for Lieberman Party, and recognized bylaws limiting membership to critics of the senator and anyone named Lieberman.

U.S.A.

Valuable guidance for the upcoming tax season, from MSN Money:

Illegal income. Illegal income, such as money from dealing illegal drugs, must be included in your income on Form 1040, line 21, or on Schedule C or Schedule C-EZ (Form 1040) if from your self-employment activity. . . .

Stolen property. If you steal property, you must report its fair market value in your income in the year you steal it unless, in the same year, you return it to its rightful owner.

Washington

Timely check against the coming canine obesity epidemic, according to the *Washington Post*:

The government approved the first drug for obese canines on Friday. Called Slentrol, the Pfizer drug is aimed at helping fat Fidos shed extra pounds.

“This is a welcome addition to animal therapies, because dog obesity appears to be increasing,” said Stephen Sundlof, director of the Center for Veterinary Medicine at the Food and Drug Administration.

Uppsala, Sweden

Bureaucratic object lesson, noted in *The Local* of Sweden:

At least nine people are thought to have suffered food poisoning from a buffet at a staff training day at the National Food Administration.

“We still don’t know what caused these nine people to fall ill,” said Peter Brådenmark, head of the Food Administration’s supervision department.

Hartford, Conn.

Proof that another one is born every minute, from the *UConn Advance*:

When researchers in the Neag School of Education asked 25 seventh-graders from middle schools across the state to review a website devoted to a fictitious endangered species, the Pacific Northwest Tree Octopus, the results troubled them.

All 25 students fell for the Internet hoax; all but one of the 25 rated the site as “very credible”; most struggled when asked to produce proof — or even clues — that the website was false, even after the UConn researchers told them it was; and some of the students still insisted vehemently that the Pacific Northwest Tree Octopus really exists.

Helsinki, Finland

Cultural note, from the BBC desk in Helsinki:

Dr. Jukka Ammond, an academic whose twin passions march in lock-step, is singing in the corner of the room. “The legend of Elvis Presley lives forever, and it’s of course very important to sing Elvis Presley’s songs in the Latin language, because Latin is the eternal language,” he says. His setlist:

Nunc aeternitatis — Surrender

Cor ligneum — Wooden Heart

Nunc hic aut numquam — It’s Now Or Never

Tenere me ama — Love Me Tender

Non adamare non possum — Can’t Help Falling In Love

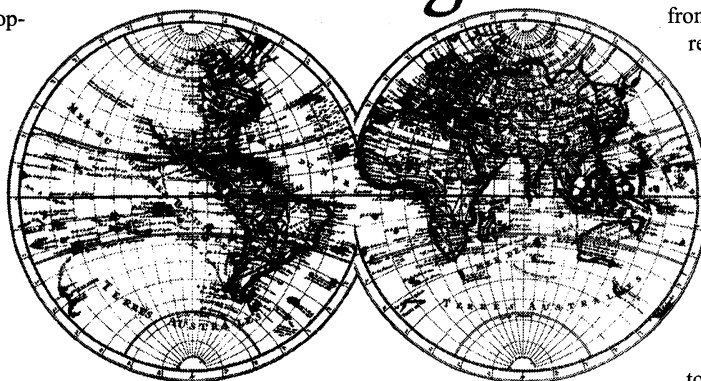
Orlando, Fla.

Being there with bells on, from the *Orlando Sentinel*:

Over the holidays, the Orange County Sheriff’s Office launched Operation ELF: Enforcing Limits and Fining speeders. Here’s how it works: a sheriff’s deputy dressed as an elf clocks cars using a radar gun then dispatches a motorcycle deputy to pull them over and issue the driver a ticket.

Some people said using a holiday icon to enforce the law didn’t seem right. “That’s specifically why we didn’t use Santa Claus,” Ken Wyne of the Orange County Sheriff’s Office said. “We didn’t choose a nativity scene. We chose an elf. An elf is known for their impish behavior. If you’re going to speed in Orange County, you never know who’s going to be on the street corner.”

Terra Incognita



Special thanks to Russell Garrard and William Walker for contributions to Terra Incognita.

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

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- **John Mackey**, Whole Foods Market: "My Personal Philosophy of Self-Actualization: How I Turned a Money Loser Into a \$9 Billion-Dollar Company."
- **Eamonn Butler**, Adam Smith Institute: "Why the House of Lords and the Monarchy are Libertarian."
- **Jack Pugsley**, The Sovereign Society: "The Case *Against* Free-Market Think Tanks."
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- **Michael Denton**, M. D., microbiologist, University of Otago: "Evolution, Yes; Darwin, No!"
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