

Liberty

Live Earth:
Dead Show

September 2007

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Cartman Shrugged: "South Park" and Libertarianism

by Paul A. Cantor

New Deal, Old Myth

by Timothy Sandefur

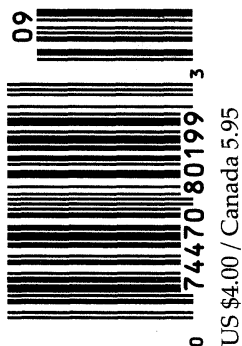
End the Draft!

by Bruce Ramsey

Living Without a Government

by Vince Vasquez

Also: *Patrick Quealy* tries Michael Moore's Cuba Cure, *Ted Roberts* proposes that reports of God's death are greatly exaggerated, *Murray Rothbard* vicariously scales the Eiger . . . plus other articles, reviews & humor.



"Liberty is the breath of life to nations." — George Bernard Shaw

"Big Debate" at *FREEDOMFEST* Attracts Over 1000 Attendees

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Nathaniel Branden

The theme of this year's FreedomFest was "seven" -- 7 themes, 77 speakers, and 777 attendees. The dates were unforgettable, July 4-7, 2007, culminating in the "big debate" on US foreign policy on 07-07-07 in Las Vegas.

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(Professor Clive Wynn, Professor of Psychology, University of Fla.)

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- **Animals vs. Man Debate**, with **John Mackey**, **Clive Wynn**, moderated by **Nick Gillespie** (editor, Reason magazine).
- **Immigration Debate:** **Ken Schoolland** and **Steve Moore**, versus **Lanny Ebenstein** and **Jerome Corsi**.
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Letters

Point of Sale

In the July *Liberty*, Gary Jason argues (Reflections) that the economic costs of implementing the graduated income tax might justify its replacement with a flat tax. May I provide him with an additional argument?

Taxes of all sorts are shifted from seller to buyer in an inelastic market. The progressive tax itself creates inelasticity by progressively shrinking the supply of targeted labor. But it does not do so without harm.

The supply of professionals in the economic landscape is set by net incomes, not by gross incomes. Demands on careers by progressive taxes (or by other legal insults) deter free men from pursuing the targeted profession. The supply of trained professionals per capita falls.

But the fall is self-arresting. As their supply decreases, their economic demand to supply ratio (D/S) increases. The increasing ratio raises income and restores tax losses. That is economics in a nutshell. The socialist tax reduces the presence of professionals in the economic landscape and increases the costs for their services.

Gas taxes, tobacco taxes, alcohol taxes, and progressive income taxes all target inelastic market demand and the little guy. In an inelastic market buyers generally pay the taxes and sellers collect them for the government.

The IRS inadvertently offers proof. Sixty-seven percent of income tax receipts arise from 10% of tax returns. Thirteen million people appear to carry two thirds of the load. Targeting their incomes has lowered their population and raised their market costs. And the fabled little guy will endure reduced medical care and increased medical costs among other hits.

A national sales tax on corporate products could tax all income (including a huge amount of underground income) at the point of sale and do so in an impersonal and equitable manner. Progressive taxes on income, like our socialist labor unions, only widen the natural wage gaps in a free society.

Gerald P. Trygstad
Bremerton, Wash.

Jason responds: Mr. Trygstad is undoubtedly correct that the current tax structure has unintended negative consequences for prices and the supply of skilled labor.

His suggestion that the best solution is to move to a "fair tax," i.e., to replace the current income tax with some kind of national sales tax, is something I am sympathetic to, for the very reason he points to: we need to be increasing, not decreasing, the number of taxpayers.

My main worry about the "fair tax" is this. The flat income tax has now been adopted by numerous countries, with no surprising unintended negative consequences. In all cases, the flat tax produces higher revenues with no cost to economic growth — indeed, the flat tax improves economic growth. And when Kennedy, Reagan, and Bush the Younger flattened and lowered the tax brackets, the U.S. similarly experienced increased growth and revenues.

But no country I know of has completely replaced the income tax by any kind of national sales tax. There might be unintended negative consequences of going to a full consumption-based tax. To take one concern, such a tax might prove to be a major drag on consumer spending, and so risk slower growth or even recession. For example, if consumers had to pay a 20% tax on any new car purchased, they might hold on to their cars longer, resulting

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in lower sales for automakers, hence fewer jobs in that industry.

Perhaps Trygstad or another reader can tell me whether the “fair tax” experiment has been tried elsewhere, where we might look at the actual consequences. I would hate to be the first to experiment with a system that has so many economic ramifications.

No Real Republican

The recent article about the pack of candidates for the nomination of the Republican Party classified as all those other than Ron Paul as “RINOs” — Republicans In Name Only. The clear implication is that only Ron Paul is the True Republican. And the implication of that is that the Republican Party is libertarian at its core.

I challenge that implication. From its founding, the Republican Party was Whig, with all the planks of that party with the sole exception of the slavery position. On economic matters, the Republicans have been for Big Government from the beginning, and have never wavered.

The platform of the Republican Party has nearly always called for strong central government, massive public

works, high tariffs, and empire-building. Over more than a century, they have remained true to those positions. When the Democrat Grover Cleveland in his first term lowered tariffs, his successor, Republican Benjamin Harrison, raised them right back up. Reelected after Harrison, Cleveland lowered them again, only to see McKinley reverse his moves when he was elected. And McKinley actively prosecuted the empire-building Spanish-American War. It was Republican administrations that repeatedly threw money into various transcontinental railroads, watching each of them in turn waste the taxpayers’ money and go bust.

Right after the crash of the stock market in 1929, it was the Republican administration that promptly launched many public-works projects to appear to soften the blow of many being out of work.

But the kicker was the monstrously protectionist Hawley-Smoot Tariff, which transformed a simple stock market crash into a worldwide depression. This tariff was the product of a solidly Republican administration remaining true to their core position.

There have been some noises of

outliers in the Republican Party, such as Barry Goldwater and Ron Paul. But they do not constitute and have never represented the mainstream Republican Party positions. And now that there really is a Libertarian Party to serve as home for all those small-government Republicans who have felt appropriately out of place where they are, the Republican Party should be allowed its fate, and supporters of small, aggressively limited government should abandon that rotting house to join with those who will *really* shrink government — candidates of the Libertarian Party.

Dan Karlan
Waldwick, N.J.

The editors respond: Our headline, “9 RINOs and Ron Paul,” was a light-hearted way of pointing to part of the reality to which Mr. Karlan refers — that the modern Republican Party is not mainly a small-government party, though it often claims to be one. We refer to times in the past, when Ronald Reagan was elected on a mainly small-government platform, and when Barry Goldwater ran on one, and when the Republicans were the opponents of FDR’s prewar policy of intervention and of his New Deal. Karlan is correct in his history of the Republican Party and the tariff, and of its ancestry in the Whigs, but then, the Democrats’ genealogy goes back to Thomas Jefferson. Tom, we think, would disown them.

Clause and Effect

Thanks to Timothy Sandefur for his essay on judicial activism (“Borking Up the Wrong Tree,” June), and especially for his insights into the closeness of Bork’s and Breyer’s views of the supremacy of democratic majorities.

However, in his attempts to find precedent for the rule of law as “an important mainstay of American government,” Sandefur reaches too far. He cites the 1798 case of *Calder v. Bull*, where the issue was whether a state (Connecticut) had passed an “ex post facto Law” (which would seem to be prohibited by a literal reading of Article I, Section 10 of the U.S. Constitution) when it passed retroactive legislation that effectively voided a probate court decision, based on existing law, that vested property in Mr. Calder and his wife.

In our last issue, we started celebrating Liberty’s 20th anniversary. I want to emphasize the word “started.” This party is going to last all year.

One of our ways of celebrating ourselves is to republish some articles we like. (Thank you, thank you — no extra charge.) The first of them is an essay by the late Murray Rothbard, “Me and the Eiger.” It’s 19 years old, but it’s as good as the day it was born. You’ll find it in this issue.

I looked at Murray’s entry on Wikipedia the other day. It shows a picture of him when he was 30 or so — a little guy with a bow tie and wire-rimmed spectacles, dressed in a chairman-of-the-department suit, and obviously just about to let loose with some mordant bit of wisdom that would give any department chairman fits.

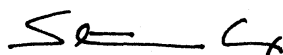
I disagreed with a lot of Murray’s ideas, but he always gave me a smile and a great line of talk. He was one of the most charming conversationalists I’ve ever met, and one of the best

letter writers. He would sit at his typewriter and pound out thousands of words a day — unrevised except for some x’s here and there — and his words were always pungent, precise, and pointed. (The same qualities appear in his great work of theory, “Man, Economy, and State.”) Even on serious themes, he was wonderfully funny.

Murray was a libertarian theorist, but he was happy to show, as he does in “Me and the Eiger,” that libertarianism always transcends itself. It insists that we are individuals before we are theorists; it shows us the joys of *us*.

And that’s a pretty good reason for throwing a party.

For Liberty,



Stephen Cox
Editor

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In his opinion, Justice Chase did argue that ex post facto legislation was "manifestly unjust and oppressive," but he then explained (created?) a distinction between ex post facto legislation and "retrospective" legislation: "Every ex post facto law must necessarily be retrospective; but every retrospective law is not an ex post facto law: the former only are prohibited." Chase then went on to limit the application of the prohibition of ex post facto legislation only to pieces of criminal legislation that "create or aggravate the crime; or increase the punishment, or change the rules of evidence, for the purpose of conviction." In his concurring opinion, Justice Paterson pointed out that because Article I, Section 10 states that "No State shall . . . pass any . . . ex post facto Law, or Law impairing the Obligation of Contracts," it was clear that the framers of the Constitution understood ex post facto legislation to refer "to crimes, pains and penalties, and no further."

The prohibition on states passing legislation "impairing the Obligation of Contracts" has been mostly ignored or artfully sidestepped during more than two centuries of constitutional jurisprudence. It seems that precedent is much stronger for the arguments in favor of "substantive due process," which rely on the due process clause of the 14th Amendment to strike down state legislation intervening in the private economy. Those arguments held sway for three decades, from 1905 (*Lochner v. New York*) to 1936–37 (*Nebbia* and *West Coast Hotel*). Takings clause arguments have also enjoyed some brief successes, though — as Sandefur points out with regard to the 2005 *Kelo* decision — the Supreme Court may be heading back toward a policy of restraint in takings cases.

Sadly, the only argument which has placed any restraint — however briefly, and however weakly — on economic legislation by the federal government has been the commerce clause argument, in combination with arguments based on the 10th Amendment (I am thinking of the period from *Hammer v. Dagenhart* in 1918 to *NLRB v. Jones & Laughlin* in 1937). But as the 2005 *Raich* decision demonstrated, the commerce clause is worse than a dead letter: it has become the justification for every

conceivable abuse of federal power, economic or otherwise.

Tom Jenney
 Phoenix, Ariz.

Ad Populum

Gary Jason, in his review of Jay P. Greene's book, "Education Myths" ("Lies Your Teachers Are Telling You," June) says, "Greene . . . targets the pernicious myth that there is no evidence that vouchers work." Once again, we have a writer in favor of vouchers who does not mention at least four of their drawbacks.

1. In *every* referendum, vouchers have lost by a large margin. California has had two referenda for vouchers, in 1993 and 2000, which were voted down, both by about 70–30%.

2. Only about 10% of K-12 students attend private schools, and most private schools are at least 90% full. Don't assume that entrepreneurs would start new private schools to get the government vouchers; a future administration could easily end the voucher program.

3. At least four out of five private high schools require their students to take an entrance exam. Since only about half of public-school 8th-graders can read at or above grade level, then the half who cannot read at grade level would not be admitted.

4. Government money means government control. If private schools accepted vouchers, then the government might force them to adopt affirmative action or bilingual education.

Joseph McNiesh
 Staten Island, N.Y.

Jason responds: I thank Mr. McNiesh for his criticisms; however, I find them all utterly unpersuasive. Taking them in order:

Contra 1: Yes, the teachers' unions in California have killed two voucher initiatives in the past. But they had to spend tens of millions of dollars to do it, setting up out-of-state boiler-rooms to bombard voters with antivoucher propaganda. This is especially easy to do in union-shop states such as California, where teachers are compelled to give enormous dues to unions, even when they are not members, and where those unions are free to spend those funds on politics as they see fit. Someday, if the Supreme Court ever implements the *Beck* decision, the

union power will change, and vouchers will pass. Democracies often make mistakes, though they usually get it right in the long run. In the meantime, I hope voucher initiatives make the ballot over and over again, if only to drain those malignant union coffers.

Contra 2: The novel criticism here is one that was put forth by the teachers' unions in the last California voucher initiative fight: if we adopt vouchers, there won't be enough private schools for all the students who want them. Amazing. Note first that this criticism implicitly grants that most parents would flee the government-monopoly educational system if given a chance — quite an indictment. Second, it assumes that people couldn't or wouldn't start private schools over (say) five years to handle the demand of parents who would now have a guaranteed method of paying the tuition — quite absurd.

Third, even assuming this criticism is true, and students would be stuck in existing public schools, they would be no worse off than they are now. Fourth, the criticism overlooks actual experience. When Sweden, for example, adopted vouchers, they found that only

a small minority of students moved to new private schools. What occurred was that as students moved from lousier schools, those schools moved rapidly to clean up their acts. In short, what occurs when vouchers are adopted is what one would expect when competition is introduced in a formerly monopolistic system: the competition for customers forces all the players, including existing ones, to be more responsive to the customers and improve the quality of their service.

Contra 3: The criticism here is that the majority of existing public school students couldn't pass the tests to get into private schools. Again, first note the major concession about how lousy the existing public schools are. And again, second, even if we accept the criticism, and half the public school students can't escape their existing horrid public schools, those students are no worse off than they are now, while the half who can escape would be much better off. Half a loaf is better than none, one might say.

Third, again, faced with clients who are guaranteed to pay the tuition, entrepreneurs would open schools

for those who can't pass entry exams for the best existing private schools. Fourth, as competition forces existing schools to improve their quality, more students will be reading, writing, and computing at grade level.

Contra 4: "Government money means government control." We already have that, and worse. Currently, most middle-class and all poor folks are compelled to go to government-run as well as government-controlled schools.

Note also that no private schools would be (or are, in existing systems) forced to take vouchers. Any existing private school could just refuse vouchers and be no worse off than they are now. So government control would not extend more widely than it does now, except by free choice.

And what government "control" are we talking about? Voucher programs need not (and typically do not) require racial quotas, busing, affirmative action, and other noxious measures which existing public schools so notoriously require. The only restriction we need to place on schools taking vouchers is that they not discriminate

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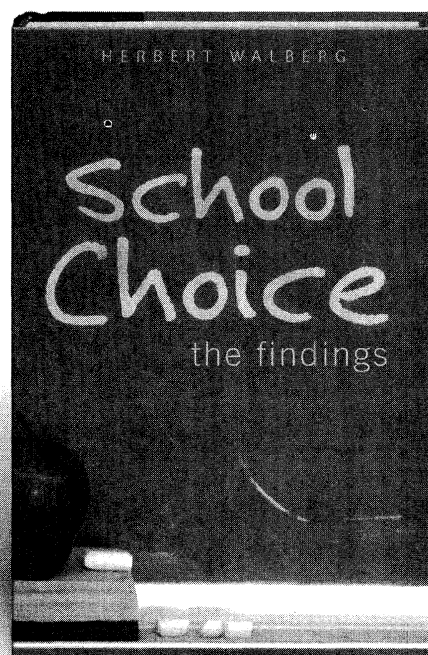
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on the basis of race, creed, or gender. Otherwise, they would be (and are in existing voucher systems) allowed wide latitude to design curricula, establish behavioral policies, hire and fire teachers and staff, adopt or reject bilingual education, or whatever else, as they wish — except that they are punished for adopting bad policies by the loss of their client base. If they do wish to discriminate on such irrelevant features, they can still do so — just refuse to take voucher students.

In sum: the situation now is that the wealthy and upper-middle-class have free consumer choice in education, but virtually everyone else is compelled to go to government monopoly schools. With vouchers, everyone would have free choice. It puzzles me why critics such as McNiesh continue to believe that while competition results in the best quality product for the consumer in every other facet of economic life, it won't in education.

Seceding Where Others Fail

I suspect I am the "libertarian blogger" whose argument on behalf of secession Bruce Ramsey criticizes in "Pondering a Heap" (Reflections, August). Mr. Ramsey objects to my analogy between prohibiting emigration and prohibiting secession on the grounds that it ignores the difference between the consequences of a single individual's action and that of many.

But I do not understand how the relation between emigration and secession suddenly becomes a difference between individuals and large groups. Is Ramsey assuming that emigrants will be few but secessionists many? If so, he offers no reason to follow him in this assumption.

And if he thinks it's numbers that matter, does that mean that he would be happy to prohibit emigration as well, if the number of emigrants became high enough? Presumably not; so it remains unclear why he rejects my analogy.

Nor does he offer any argument for his claim that anyone who defends secession must be uninterested in consequences. As an Aristotelean, I certainly think consequences are part, though not the whole, of what we need to take into account when framing moral and political principles.

Roderick T. Long
Auburn, Ala.

Ramsey responds: Mr. Long recognized himself, all right. To compare secession to emigration is a neat lesson for a philosophy class, but as a practical matter the two are not as comparable as Long maintains. And yes, I am assuming that emigrants will be a dribble and secessionists a movement of mass.

The reason is that secession is the collective action of a political subdivision, one that thinks of itself as an independent nation, and this tends to take a significant group of people. And historically, I think of the 13 states of the Confederacy, from the United States; Norway, from Sweden; Singapore, from Malaysia; Slovakia, from Czechoslovakia; Slovenia, Croatia, et al., from Yugoslavia; and the de facto secession of Taiwan from China. Unlike emigration, secession happens all at once and takes the physical territory with it. It involves issues that don't come up with emigration, such as what becomes of the central government's resources: would the gold in Fort Knox, for example, be Kentucky's if Kentucky seceded? If Taiwan formally secedes, should it return the Chinese art taken to the island in 1949? If Quebec secedes from Canada, will it pay its share of Canada's national debt? Would Quebec have the right to block the movement of people and goods between the Maritimes and the rest of English Canada?

Tricky -ic

I noted, in the June issue, a disturbing tendency on the parts of both Gary Jason and Jon Harrison, to refer

repeatedly to the Democratic Party as the "Democrat" Party. While I am a conservative, and this rather trivial implication that the Democratic Party is not really democratic is of little intrinsic importance, I find the adoption of the gratuitously insulting speech patterns of Bush, Cheney, and Rove to be repulsive. Could they not find anyone more worthy to copy?

Anthony Teague
Vienna, Va.

Jason replies: I have used the phrase "Democrat Party" for over 30 years, beginning long before I ever heard of Rove et al., and I see no reason to change now. I have always found the phrase "Democratic Party" a trifle loaded — as if only they believe in democracy.

Harrison replies: While it should be plain from my writings that I find Bush, Cheney, and Rove repulsive, I don't believe any of the terrible three-some originated the term "Democrat Party." I do think it predates the Bush II administration by some years. Seems to me I first heard it in the '80s, though I confess I couldn't say who first said or wrote it.

If Mr. Teague can point to a Bush II origin for the term, I am prepared to drop its use. Otherwise I prefer to keep it. I once used it in a posting on a liberal website, and one of my Democrat readers waxed indignant about it. This was satisfying, albeit in a small way.

"Never offend an enemy in a small way" someone once said. Quite so. Yet with Nancy the Tuna and the Democrat Party in Congress even lower in the polls than Bush, I feel a little mud in the eye can't hurt.

Third Opinion

In the June Liberty, Richard Kostelanetz reflected on his experience with an MRI of his spine. Kostelanetz had earlier spoken against intelligence tests, and was here raising doubts about other tests as well.

While I'm less convinced than Kostelanetz is about the lack of value of intelligence testing (I'm one of a small number, it seems, who actually read "The Bell Curve"), I must say, as a practicing radiologist, that here

Letters to the editor

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Reflections

Climbing the ladder — In 2005, Bill Clinton made (or, at least, reported) \$7.5 million in income. The large majority of this came from the giving of speeches. He made \$650,000 for two speeches given to a Tony Robbins gathering. He made \$800,000 for four speeches given to Gold Service International of Bogota.

You gotta hand it to him: not everyone looks at the presidency of the United States as a stepping stone.

— Ross Levatter

We pride ourselves on efficiency —

The news that China's head of food and drug safety was executed for incompetence and corruption caused me mixed feelings. On one hand, I recoiled in horror from the notion of executing an incompetent employee. Having spent the majority of my job history just on the border of competence, such a dismissal makes me a little uncomfortable. Getting fired is never a good thing, but I never had to face an actual firing squad.

On the other hand, my driver's license and plates are up for renewal. I'm going to be forced to spend a whole day driving through the pollution check and waiting in line at the BMV. I guess as long as execution is a punishment reserved only for government employees, I'm not really opposed to it. Nothing like fear to get the lines moving a little faster.

— Tim Slagle

(Not so) free love — Sometimes the pampering of college students really gets to me. Okay, to attract students, schools must have luxurious dorms, lavish intramural gyms, and a shopping-mall-like food court (no "dorm food" for our little darlings).

But low-cost birth control pills?

The Chronicle of Higher Education reported on July 13 that prices of contraceptives are going up on campus. At the University of Wisconsin at Madison prices of brand-name

birth control pills jumped from \$8 to \$40 or \$50 per month, and there are similar examples elsewhere. Indeed, prices used to be so low that some college health services offered contraceptives for free. That practice will end.

What caused the price rise? It turns out that, for years, a federal law has subsidized birth control on college campuses. (What sort of social engineering was that?) But a provision

of the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 kicked in last January and will have major implications this fall. The law, according to the Chronicle, "removes incentives for drug companies to provide deeply discounted prices to college health clinics."

So how are students responding? Some students who used to pay in cash are using insurance, and some have switched to generics or condoms. (One student chose to pay for her groceries rather than birth control, but how her behavior changed was not stated.) And some may still be deciding. A member of a "student sexual-health group" is offering advice "to those covered by their parents' insurance about broaching the topic with Mom and Dad," the Chronicle said.

— Jane S. Shaw

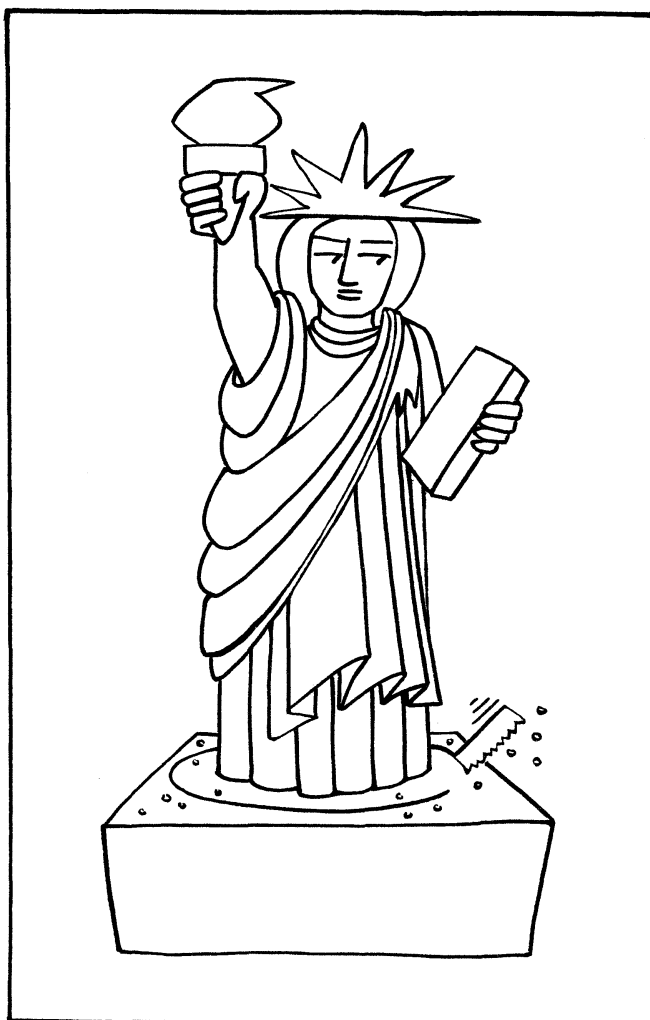
Commie chic —

Actress Cameron Diaz, best known for a role in which she rubbed semen into her hair in the belief that it was styling cream, recently managed to offend the people of Peru by wearing a messenger bag decorated with a red star

and a slogan from Mao Tse-Tung ("Serve the people").

Now, the Peruvians have seen what happens when the Chairman's slogans are put into action, when the people are served. It wasn't so long ago that Shining Path was killing tens of thousands of peasants, putting entire villages to the machete. The group pops up even now to take credit for a handful of murders each year.

But one doesn't need the Peruvian perspective to get riled up about the trendy satchel. Mao killed tens of millions of



SHCHAMBERS

Chinese, of every social class (including many, many entertainers), leaving entire provinces to face his cultural revolutionaries. His combination of communist autocracy and personality cult has served for decades as a model for aspiring dictators throughout the Third World, and is the primary reason that Africa remains poor, despite the best efforts of celebrities everywhere.

I'm sure Diaz meant no harm. And it is too much to expect stars to know anything about politics or history: that would interfere with the pronouncements they like to make. But they — or their handlers, paid to attend to every aspect of their employer's image — ought at least to make sure that their apparel, no matter how fashionable, isn't an advertisement for mass murder.

— Andrew Ferguson

Smooting free trade — With the defeat of the Senate compromise immigration bill, Bush's presidency is now truly in its lame — not to say dead — duck phase. One major part of his loss of power is his loss of the capacity to negotiate free trade deals.

Under the "fast track" powers given to Bush in 2002, he could negotiate such agreements without congressional meddling. Of course, Congress still retained the power to ratify or kill the final agreements. But presidents back to the mid-1970s have had this power, and Bush has used it — indeed, used it more than his predecessors. Since 2002, he has concluded agreements with Australia, Bahrain, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Morocco, Oman, Panama, Peru, Singapore, and South Korea. Most of the agreements have been ratified and implemented. Those with Costa Rica and Oman are awaiting implementation. (In the case of Costa Rica, protectionists — who are just as strong there as here — have stalled the agreement in their own congress.) Peru and South Korea still await U.S. congressional approval.

That may never come, because the Pelosi-Reid Democratic Congress is the most pro-union, anti-free-trade Congress in

a generation. This Congress stripped Bush of his fast-track authority, effective July 1, 2007 — only the second time in history this has ever been done. Comments by Democrat congressional leaders make it clear that they oppose free trade. As Speaker Pelosi said in a written statement — co-authored, unfortunately, by Rep. Charlie Rangel (D-N.Y.), hitherto rather reasonable on free trade — "Before that debate [on renewing President Bush's fast-track authority] can even begin, we must expand the benefits of globalization to all Americans." Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.) said he had other priorities than free trade, like helping workers impacted by it, thus making it clear he thinks free trade harms workers. Senator Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) has gone further, advocating rewriting the old agreements to protect union jobs (and screw consumers). You would think the unemployment rate was 25%, not the 4.5% it actually is. Incredible.

My theory is that the same rising sentiment of protectionism that has killed all chances for comprehensive immigration reform has now killed all chances for expanding free trade, and if demagogues like Brown get their way, will contract it if not eliminate it entirely. The last time America saw this level of protectionism was the mid- to late-1920s, culminating in the Smoot-Hawley tariffs that killed international trade.

The results were not pretty then, nor will they be so now.

— Gary Jason

The health of libertarianism — In a Wall Street Journal op-ed (July 17), libertarian legal theorist Randy Barnett concludes his arguments against Ron Paul: "[Pro-war libertarians] are concerned that Americans may get the misleading impression that all libertarians oppose the Iraq war — as Ron Paul does — and even that libertarianism itself dictates opposition to this war. It would be a shame if this misinterpretation inhibited a wider acceptance of the libertarian principles. . . ."

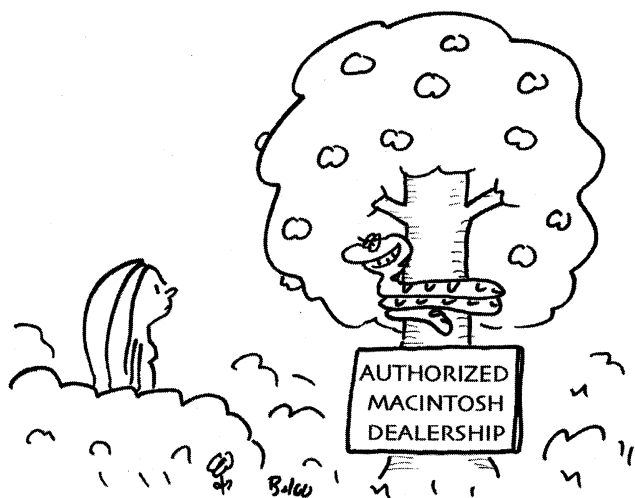
Yes, absolutely. Perish the thought that anyone be misled into believing libertarians would oppose something as traditional and all-American as war. War, after all, is the health of a strictly limited government, structured to defend civil liberties and maintain peace and prosperity.

— Ross Levatter

The market has spoken — On June 12, the Antioch College Board of Trustees announced that the 155-year old institution would be closing its doors because of "low enrollment and lack of funding." Surprise, surprise! Being a national center for political correctness and left-wing lunacy doesn't pay. Who'd a thunk it?

Founded by Horace Mann in 1852, Antioch was at first a beacon of sound progressivism. It was co-ed. It admitted black students. It made a woman a full professor. All this happened before the Civil War — and it was something to be proud of.

But Antioch never really took off as a great center of higher learning. Probably its most distinguished graduate was Stephen Jay Gould (class of 1963), the paleontologist and popular science writer. (Gould was also an exceptionally arrogant guy, which may tell us something about his alma mater.) Other graduates included Eleanor Holmes Norton and Chester Atkins, who was my congressman back in the 1980s. Ms. Holmes Norton, the D.C. representative, is I'm sure well known to Liberty readers. Atkins I remember as a Tip O'Neill



A Preview of Our Current Attraction — “South Park”

and I haven’t always been friends. When the animated TV series began ten years ago, its existence irritated me. It seemed like a typical product of the New Class, junior grade: those no-good people who hang around universities, tech-ridden companies, and subsidized venues for “art,” snickering at standard American values, having none of their own. All I saw in “South Park” was round-headed children using dirty words.

A year or so later, my friend John Nelson called me to order. “Listen,” he said. “This is really funny. [Turning on the television.] Now sit still and watch.” He was right, and I began following the series. Later, when the thing really took off and all the world seemed to be images of round-headed children with wistful but mocking little smiles, I lost interest. The show had worn out its welcome. Then, one afternoon, Paul Beroza and I were sitting around having a drink, and we caught an episode that was a slashing satire of modern-liberal politics. Whether “South Park” had matured, or I had (I can’t imagine that the wine was responsible), what I saw on Paul’s TV was a cruel but endlessly inventive inquisition into officially sanctioned heresies, delivered from a libertarian point of view.

I found myself watching “South Park” regularly again, and the more I watched, the more impressed I was. There was the episode in which the kids were dragged by their dog-good teacher to Central America to protest the destruction of rain forests, only to be rescued from the horrors of forest life by the guys with the bulldozers. There was the episode in which, for the first time on TV, the teachings of Scientology were given a literal representation (“Scientologists actually believe this”). And there was the great, great episode in which South Park goes crazy because it thinks it sees Global Warming coming down the street.

“South Park” didn’t just con-

sider the Issues; “South Park” named names. It showed Al Gore, Tom Cruise, Mel Gibson, and innumerable other media heroes for the fools they really are. And “South Park” was amazingly quick on the draw. Only about ten days were required for Trey Parker and Matt Stone to come up with a 20-minute satire on a current political event. And the satire almost always came from a libertarian direction.

Isabel Paterson said that “literature is not to be expected every minute.” Certainly that is true of satire. Very few ages of this world have produced anything remarkable in that respect. Enduring comedy is rare; satire that memorably targets prominent individuals is rarer still. But now — yes, now — we are living in one of the world’s great ages of comedy and satire. The fact that the best efforts of our time appear in animated TV shows is no cause for concern; Marshall McLuhan to the contrary, the medium is not the message.

To find rivals to “South Park” (or “The Simpsons,” or “Futurama”) you have to go back 2,400 years, to the birthplace of comedy, the Athens of Aristophanes. It’s true that Aristophanes had more than intelligence, satiric intransigence, disgusting scatology, and direct personal reference; he also had magnificent poetry, which “South Park” assuredly does not. The songs are fun, but they’re not “Forth came love, the longed for, / Shining with wings of gold.” But in other respects, “South Park” is as good or better than he was.

There. I’ve said it. And I realize that more than half the people who read these remarks will now conclude that I’ve gone crazy. Ninety percent of my fellow academics have already reached that conclusion about anyone who praises “South Park.”

Well, they’re wrong: and there are now two books about “South Park” to prove it. They’re both written from an intellectual perspective, by people familiar with the history of ideas. They both show how successful “South Park” is at connect-

ing itself with the great currents of Western thought. And they’re both called “South Park and Philosophy”! One is “South Park and Philosophy,” edited by Richard Hanley (Open Court, 2007). The other is “South Park and Philosophy,” edited by Robert Arp (Blackwell, 2007).

Each of these books provides a serious consideration of the big themes of “South Park,” and each of them is as lively as the subject suggests. In the Hanley book, you can read essays called “Start the Evolution Without Me,” “I Learned Something Today: ‘South Park’ and the State of the Golden Mean in the Twenty-First Century,” and “Chef, Socrates, and the Sage of Love.” In the Arp book, you will find such articles as “Satan Lord of Darkness in ‘South Park’ Cosmology,” “Cartmanland and the Problem of Evil,” and “AWESOM-O and the Possibility and Implications of Artificial Intelligence.” “AWESOM-O” is . . . well, never mind. The point is that if you like “South Park,” you’ll want to get both these books; and if you don’t like “South Park,” well, you ought to. And then you can find out about “AWESOM-O.”

The best thing in the Arp anthology is an essay by Paul Cantor, showing that the ideas of “South Park” are libertarian, through and through. Paul is well qualified to write on this subject. When he was a teenager, he and a buddy of his called up Ludwig von Mises, the great libertarian economic theorist, and asked whether they could become part of the seminar that met in his home. “Well, yes,” Mises said, and Paul became his youngest disciple. Paul knows what he’s talking about when he writes about libertarian ideas.

After reading Paul’s work on “South Park,” I asked him to consider revising and expanding it, especially for the readers of Liberty. He said, “Well, yes”; his publisher said the same thing; and this issue of Liberty features the resulting essay. If you’ve never liked “South Park” before, this is your chance to try it out.

— Stephen Cox

clone who was always voting to deny funds to anticommunist forces in places like Angola.

After the *annus horribilis* of 1968, Antioch went off the rails. It recruited some of the worst riff-raff it could find into the student body. It transmogrified from a college into a Petri dish for perpetual revolution. At the end, it was no more than a parody of itself. Who can forget its hilarious code of sexual conduct, providing written guidelines for the art of love? (May I remove your blouse? May I insert my . . . ?)

The trustees announced that despite the shrinking enrollment, the puny endowment, and the crumbling facilities, Antioch would seek to reopen in 2012. I say the market has spoken. Turn the campus into something more useful — a mall, maybe?

— Jon Harrison

Meeting needs — Another victory for free choice in education — albeit a modest one — should be noted. Georgia just enacted a voucher program for special-needs children. Effective in the fall, over 4,000 such students will receive a full *pro rata* voucher for roughly \$9,000 to attend the school of their choice, public or private.

The battle was a close thing, with teachers' unions hammering legislators incessantly; the final vote in the state

General Assembly was barely a majority. Key to the victory was the organizational work done by the Alliance for School Choice, based in Washington, D.C., and the release of a poll shortly before the vote showing that 59% of the state's voters favored the bill, and almost that many favored vouchers for all students.

That makes it 14 states that now enjoy some form of publicly funded vouchers, not to mention a few others that have privately funded voucher systems. And this year alone some 40 laws for vouchers or tuition tax credits have been introduced in 19 states. Of special interest are the five states in which the proposed laws would give vouchers to all students.

The battle continues. Stay tuned.

— Gary Jason

Martial law — Over the years I have felt my personal liberty threatened by policemen, guidance counselors, social workers, Democrats, Republicans, reds, greens, pinkos, judges, school teachers, security guards, people with social theories, people with religious theories, people with no theory at all save the heartfelt opinion that they are better equipped to make my decisions for me than I am to make them for myself, socialists, collectivists, communitarians, red-staters, white supremacists, blue-staters, black studies professors,

Word Watch

by Stephen Cox

On a recent slow-news morning, Fox kept running bulletins about a school in Florida that was "locked down" because of some supposed threat of violence. This was one of those "news" stories that have nowhere to go, because nothing had actually happened and nothing was about to happen, either. Sometime in the afternoon, the non-story vanished like "a snail which melteth," as the Psalmist says in the King James Version. But there were two things about the incident that — to vary the animal imagery — continued to stick in my craw.

One was that phrase "locked down." It originated in the argot of prison guards. Prisoners are literally *locked down* when there's a security problem in the joint. So why was the language of penology being used to describe the protection of school kids? I can think of at least two reasons. (A) Americans are increasingly deaf to the associations of words. (B) Americans are increasingly fixated on the mechanisms and the language of control. Other expressions might have been chosen, but even such essentially military terms as "high security," "temporary alert," and "limited access" were obviously not strong enough, when penitentiary terms were available.

The second thing that irritated me was an expression that the news guys kept using to describe the motives of the school officials, who acted, it was said, "out of an abundance of caution." This legalism, *abundance of caution*, is now obligatory for everything a bureaucracy does when it goes to ridiculous extremes of risk-avoidance. Again, it's the language of security and control. It's also evidence of what happens to language

when people lose respect for the difference between what's significant and what's not. So long as a bureaucrat is *doing his due diligence* (i.e., mucking around in the most pompous way possible), that distinction need not be made.

In a country where kids "graduate" from kindergarten wearing the caps and gowns of 18th-century Oxbridge dons, it's not surprising that the meditations of school principals should be described as if they were the counsels of Fabius Maximus. In a country where baristas from Starbucks are wedded with enough ceremony to gratify a Margravine of Brandenburg-Ansbach, one cannot be shocked to find that a *spa* is any storefront with an exercise machine, a *trattoria* is any diner with three tables on the sidewalk, a *university* is any Bible college or school of computer maintenance, and a *cathedral* is any 30-by-30-foot building containing someone who thinks he's a *bishop*.

"And what's your name?" That's the question that Addison DeWitt, the great drama critic (no, not *drama queen*) asks the teenage girl who suddenly materializes, at the end of *All About Eve*, as the embodiment of social climbing.

"Phoebe," she answers.

"Phoebe?" he replies — sensing, from the relish with which she said it, that it must be a lie.

"I call myself Phoebe."

"And why not?" he says, with a deep rumbling laugh.

Why not, indeed? It's very easy to rename yourself, or anything associated with you. Even if your job is paper-supply tender in the Xerox room, you can always have cards printed

crusading movie stars, mindless TV anchors, politically correct newspaper reporters, labor leaders, congressmen, senators, governors, presidents, ex-wives, business leaders, protest singers, mortgage companies, collection agencies, IRS people, NSA people, TSA people, ATF people, customs officials, and every sort of do-gooder from PTA leader to Maoist, but I have never, once, felt my liberty threatened by the American military. Okay, maybe once. But I was in the military at the time so it doesn't count.

I don't believe that mine is a uniquely American experience. I can't think of a mature democracy anywhere in the world whose military threatens the liberties of its own citizens. Nobody in Canada has to worry about freedoms being stolen by the Canadian Army. It's the taxman you have to worry about in Canada. In France, it's taxmen and social theory. All over the European Union, it isn't the Dutch army and it isn't NATO; it's bureaucrats. Wherever someone is grabbing for your freedom, you can bet it's civilians doing the grabbing — elected, appointed, and self-appointed.

Maybe I'm naive about this, but I can't help thinking that if the decision to invade Iraq had been left to the military, we wouldn't have invaded Iraq, that it was civilian leaders who

got us into that mess. That it was Donald Rumsfeld who figured out we could pacify the country with a quarter of the troops we really needed. That it was Paul Bremer who decided to disband the Iraqi army and fire everybody who knew how to run the place. That it may have been some deeply Freudian thingy involving the president and his dad that was behind the whole business but that, whatever it was, it was not a bunch of generals sitting around the Pentagon. That the only reason the generals went along was because they believe, just like the rest of us, in civilian control of the military. Maybe we would be better off if they didn't.

Germany certainly would have been better off during the Second World War if its military had looked at Hitler and said, Invade Russia? No thank you, very much. We prefer to keep our soldiers in France and Czechoslovakia and Poland where they belong. But the generals weren't running things. So they saluted, and set out in the mud and snow to do what any fool except the head civilian fool could see was impossible.

I don't know what conclusion to draw from this. Nobody wants the military calling the shots, especially somebody who has actually been in the military. But I don't want to watch my country get involved in botched adventures overseas, either.

saying that you're the Senior Reproductions Analyst. Your company will probably be happy to print them for you.

It may seem cruel, but I couldn't help thinking that the same process of relabeling was going on when I read the comments of an environmentalist author about the circumstances in which he wrote his most recent book. "On a personal note," he says, as if he were giving deep background on his foreign-policy decisions, "at the same time that I was writing [the book], my wife became very ill with a mental disability." In other words, she lost her mind. But it sounds so much better the other way. And it's nice to know that the whole thing was "a crisis with an opportunity" — something like Themistocles' evacuation of Athens, I guess.

Speaking of crises with opportunities, I need to comment on a statement issued on June 16 by Richard Brodhead, president of Duke University. The statement provides a strange, though predictable, retrospective on the legal persecution of three Duke students by the local district attorney, joined in spirit by politicized members of the Duke faculty and by the university itself, which suspended two of the young men and fired their lacrosse coach because of false charges of rape launched by a mentally disturbed stripper. Those charges have now been dismissed, and the district attorney has been disbarred. On June 18, Brodhead and the university trustees announced that Duke had reached a financial settlement with the students in order "to eliminate the possibility of future litigation."

So what does the university's chief executive have to say about this drama? First he comments on "the unprecedented crisis" that the rape allegations "unleashed." Then, in his peroration, he emits these syllables: "As Duke University's president, I resolve to do my part to repair the harm unleashed by [the DA's] actions and to move forward from this painful episode."

Brodhead's strange preference for the word "unleashed" betrays the fixation on control that I noted above — a fixation so strong, in his case, as to master all considerations of verbal propriety. Try picturing "harm" being "unleashed." Good luck with that. Then we have "move forward from" — the nation's most common cliché for "ignore." "This painful episode" is the usual press-agent translation of "I did something wrong but am unwilling to specify what it was."

But the word I especially relish is "resolve." At Gettysburg, President Lincoln said, "We here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain." At Durham, President Brodhead highly *resolved* to repair the harm that had somehow gotten itself *unleashed*. But how would he do it? What were his means? He must be referring to that financial settlement with the students. Yet that sounds so paltry, so, so . . . guilty. The words about *doing his part* sound so much better.

And why not? Just because you're paying somebody off with somebody else's money, why shouldn't you make yourself sound like Abraham Lincoln, or Mother Teresa, or Balto the Wonder Dog?

A final note. This column's Award for Honest and Effective Language in the Political Field (a coveted award, seldom given) goes this month to two justices of the Supreme Court, for opinions announced on June 28 in the Louisville and Seattle race-in-the-schools cases. The recipients are Chief Justice John Roberts, who wrote that "the way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to stop discriminating on the basis of race"; and Associate Justice Clarence Thomas, who wrote of Associate Justice Stephen Breyer, his obstreperous opponent in the 5–4 decision: "Justice Breyer's good intentions, which I do not doubt, have the shelf life of Justice Breyer's tenure." I hope that Thomas is as good a prophet as he is a writer.

There needs to be some kind of feedback loop in which our military leaders can tell the civilian fools, No thank you very much, we prefer to keep our soldiers in Ft. Dix and Ft. Lewis and Ft. Benning rather than sending them into the sand and heat to try to do what any fool besides you fools can see is impossible.

— Bill Merritt

Supreme smackdown — I think most readers of this journal share my visceral revulsion at factional use of government coercion. I despise the way some farmers push for quotas and tariffs to keep the prices for their produce high. I despise the way some businesses push for quotas and tariffs to keep out competition from abroad, and push for subsidies to guarantee that their profits remain high. I despise the way some guilds (such as the AMA and the various trial lawyers' associations) exploit government to keep their numbers low and their incomes high. And I despise the way some unions push for laws compelling workers to join them, as well as laws protecting their members' jobs from competition.

That is why I like to celebrate victories over factional coercion whenever they occur, as they occasionally do. So let us duly note that a modest but satisfying legal victory against union coercion just occurred. The Supreme Court has ruled, in one of its important round of early summer decisions, that unions can't rip off money from nonmembers to fund union political activities.

At issue was a Washington state "paycheck protection" initiative overwhelmingly passed in 1992. Under this initiative, workers who resign from a union may still have to pay the union for collective bargaining work on their behalf, but will not be required to pay dues to that union's political fund. And the initiative required unions to get explicit approval from any nonmember before taking his or her money (an "opt-in" system), reversing the union practice of only allowing nonmembers to withhold that portion of the dues used for political activities when an employee explicitly requests it (an "opt-out" system).

The difference between the two systems is not merely semantic; it is immensely practical. The opt-out system allows the union to make the nonmembers jump through a lot of hoops to keep their money, such as requiring them to file a long, legalistic document to opt out. Indeed, it was the Washington Education Association (the teachers' union)

that originally sued, arguing in true Orwellian fashion that the "opt-in" system was too onerous a burden for the union to bear! And the Washington Supreme Court (dominated by guess what type of justices) agreed.

The U.S. Supreme Court reversed that, and the nice thing was that it did so unanimously. Even the liberal judges thought the WEA's claim was asinine, that opt-in systems constitute no major burden. And the ruling was broader. It held, in the words of Justice Scalia, who wrote the primary opinion, "Unions have no constitutional right to the fees of nonmember employees." Kudos to the free-market think-tank Evergreen Freedom Foundation, which fought this fight against the WEA for a decade. (Disclosure here: I am a contributor to the Evergreen Foundation.)

Unfortunately, the Court did not go further and require unions to use opt-in for their members as well. It should have implemented the right granted workers in its prior Beck ruling — namely, the right not to be compelled to support the political activities of their union. The Court should have required unions to implement opt-in procedures for everyone, nonmembers and members alike. Even better, as the National Right to Work Foundation noted, it should have struck down compulsory unionization in general. (More disclosure: I also contribute to the National Right to Work Foundation.)

Still, you have to savor even the small victories.

— Gary Jason

Cash comes a copper — With the value of copper rising, the cost of making new pennies is now more than the value of the pennies themselves. Nickels that consist of 75% copper and 25% nickel cost more than five cents to make. The U.S. Treasury has warned that it's unlawful to melt coins for their copper content and sell the metal for scrap.

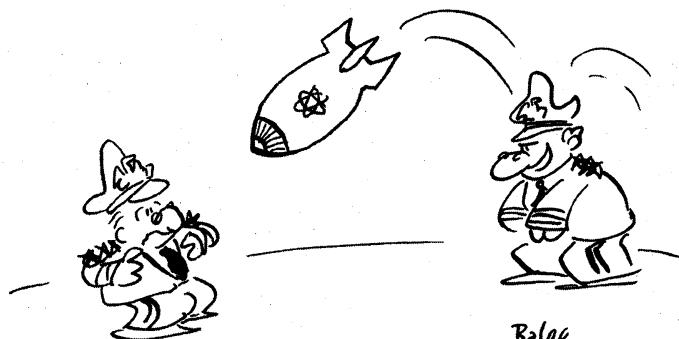
In my state, the chairman of Arizona's Corporation Commission — which regulates utility rates (among other things) — recently penned an article for the Arizona Republic, the state's leading newspaper, outlining collateral problems associated with the rise in the price of copper. It seems that lowlifes have taken to stealing bulk wire, pipes, motors — anything with a high copper content — from farms and industry or construction sites, and selling it for cash at recycling centers and scrap yards. The problem is serious.

I recently had the privilege of discussing the problem with a very high state official. It wasn't pretty. Some of the possible solutions being considered are worse than the problem itself. One trial balloon being floated is to outlaw cash transactions for bulk copper at scrap yards. When confronted with our currency's declaration that "this note is legal tender for all debts, public and private," my philosophical sparring partner conceded that I "had a point."

Nonetheless, he seemed to perceive the obstacle as no more than a technicality and averred that he'd run it through his legal department before making a recommendation to the legislature. For good measure he concluded that "the Constitution is whatever the legislature says it is."

— Robert H. Miller

The case for land war in Iran — The neocons are at it again! In the June issue of *Commentary*, Norman Podhoretz, co-godfather (with Irving Kristol) of the neocon movement, penned an article entitled "The Case for Bombing



"Hey, Ferguson — think fast!"

Baloo

Iran." The title says it all. And, just in case you're wondering, Norman's not joking.

Over 3,500 Americans dead, tens of thousands wounded, and tens of thousands of slaughtered Iraqis aren't enough for Norman. No, we must have another war, this time against Iran, to . . . do what, exactly? Preserve and protect the United States? Is Iran a power of the caliber of Nazi Germany or Soviet Russia? Indeed not. Will it nuke us if it gets the bomb? Considering our 6,000 or 7,000 warhead superiority, I doubt that even a wacko like Iranian president Ahmadinejad is going to start a nuclear war against us.

Will it pass the bomb on to terrorists? Can't rule that out, I guess, but considering the difficulties of setting off a nuclear device inside the United States, I'm not prepared to start yet another war on the very long odds of that scenario coming to pass.

Podhoretz is sufficiently in touch with reality to dismiss (though with obvious regret) a ground war against Iran. He wants air strikes to take out the Iranian nuclear facilities. An air campaign of this sort, to be successful, would probably require some nuclear "bunker-buster" bombs. Iranian civilian casualties (a.k.a. "collateral damage") would be enormous, for many of the key Iranian sites are located near population centers. This does not deter Podhoretz. Civilian casualties only seem to concern him if they occur inside the borders of Israel or the United States.

Rather than death from the air, I say let's go ahead and have a ground war with Iran. Give old Norman and his pudgy son John each a rifle, and airlift them to the Persian Gulf. They take it from there.

— Jon Harrison

The Greater Satan — Al Gore and the other solons who negotiated and tried to foist on the U.S. the Kyoto Treaty, which would have put massive restrictions on our industry while exempting massive developing nations such as China, Brazil, and India, had a rationale. It was that the Great Industrial Satan, the evil U.S., was the biggest polluter, so should be the first to commit industrial hara-kiri. The Senate unanimously refused to ratify the treaty, even under Gore's

reign as VP, but Gore has constantly hammered Bush for not adopting it.

But now a recent AP report makes it official: the U.S. is no longer the biggest producer of carbon dioxide. The new Great Industrial Satan is China. The Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency, using what one expert on global warming calls "the best currently available" data and methodology, estimates that China overtook the U.S. by 8% in carbon dioxide emissions last year — two years ahead of prior estimates. China relies heavily on coal (which it possesses in abundance) to generate its electricity.

The whole rationale for putting the American economy in a stranglehold, while letting the Chinese off the hook, in order to "save" the planet, looked like complete nonsense at the time, and is now even more risible.

— Gary Jason

Scooter this — I once wrote a Reflection saying that I just couldn't get excited about all the Scooter Libby stuff, and I am still not much moved. I start reading about it and am bored. I ask people who think it is very, very important: "What is this about? You tell me." Maybe the significance will sink into my barbarian skull.

Well, there was this fellow, Wilson, an old Africa hand, who was sent by the CIA to Niger to find out about Iraqi agents buying uranium. Wilson decided the Iraqis had not been there, and returned to Washington and told the CIA so. Several months later Bush told the world, yes, the Iraqis had been in Niger trying to buy uranium. Wilson, who was by then retired and therefore free to speak, was furious and began circulating the story of his trip, finally writing a piece for the New York Times. The Bush people, who were politically embarrassed, let it out that Wilson's wife was a CIA agent. That was supposed to be their way of retaliating against him. And it is a federal crime to "out" a covert agent, so there was an investigation in which several people were questioned by the FBI and a grand jury. One was Scooter Libby, who worked for Vice President Cheney. Libby told the grand jury that he hadn't known about Wilson's wife being in the CIA, when actually he had known it.

News You May Have Missed

Bush Getting Used to Commuting

WASHINGTON — White House sources say that President Bush, after commuting I. Lewis ("Scooter") Libby's 30-month prison sentence for lying and obstruction of justice to no prison time and a fine, has decided he enjoys commuting so much that he now has a Secret Service helicopter drop him off in the Washington suburb of Bethesda, Md., every morning so he can hop on the Metro subway line and commute back and forth to the White House, often spending the entire day at it. During the brief periods when he's at his desk in the Oval Office, the president eagerly

commutes every long, uncalled-for sentence he can get his hands on. One awed White House aide says that Bush, without the slightest hesitation, commuted a typical, staggering 736-word sentence by French author Marcel Proust to a sentence just four words long: "Thanks for the memories." He then commuted all of the sentences in Herman Melville's "Moby Dick" to one brief seven-word sentence, "I had a whale of a time."

The president has recently taken to commuting his own sentences as well. When he found a long, unwieldy sentence in an old speech of his that went,

"All democratic societies must be based on the consistent, and never arbitrary, rule of law, which shows no favoritism, and offers no special privileges, but is always applied equally to everyone, so that the average citizen can say, 'The legal system is there to protect me and treat me the same as it does other citizens, no matter how rich, powerful, and well-connected they may be,'" Bush commuted this lengthy and "boring" sentence to a "much more manageable" twelve-word one: "All democratic societies must be based on the . . . arbitrary rule of . . . me."

— Eric Kenning

We have three Bad Things:

1. One of Bush's principal justifications for war was false.
2. Several high-level federal employees told reporters that Wilson's wife was in the CIA, and
3. Libby told the grand jury he didn't know anything about something he did know about.

Libby's lying to cover up for himself, fellow leakers, and his boss is the least important of these things. I suppose it deserves a penalty, but not a large one, and commuting Libby's sentence for it does not deserve four columns above the fold in the New York Times of July 3. The real story is not Scooter Libby. It is the war itself. It is about tens of thousands of people being killed, maimed, and impoverished because of decisions made by George W. Bush. My liberal friends say, yes, and we talk about No. 3 in order to get to No. 1. And I think, why do it that way? If you want to talk about the war, talk about the war.

I explained this to a colleague, who said, "Are we supposed to think our government is about lying?" And I muttered, "Yeah, pretty much," but by then someone had changed the subject.

— Bruce Ramsey

The freedom of speech, and the freedom to think like an ignorant slob —

There are many ways to tell someone to shut up. Consider these hypothetical examples of a hypothetical radio program, Big Talk A.M.:

- The host tells a caller to shut up.
- The host hangs up on a caller whose views he dislikes.
- The host hangs up on a caller who bores him.
- The host refuses to take a call from a man who wants to talk about civil liberties.
- An association of bloggers promotes an effective boycott of Big Talk.
- An association of bloggers promotes an effective boycott of commercial sponsors of Big Talk.
- The sponsors of Big Talk tell the radio station to stop talking about civil liberties or lose their sponsorship.
- A woman who doesn't like what the Big Talk host has to say invades the studio and shoots him dead.

Now which of these examples implicates constitutional, First-Amendment freedom of speech?

Trick question. The correct answer is, none.

Why is that? Because the First Amendment does not protect you from being told to shut up or even from being made to shut up, except in special circumstances.

The special circumstances are clearly stated in the Constitution: "Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances." There you go. Any laws being passed or enforced in my examples? No. In other words, any state action involved? No. Therefore, no infringement of free-speech rights.

The popular image of the "marketplace of ideas" is apt. You can bring your ideas to the marketplace and find no tak-

ers. You can even bring your ideas to the marketplace and get pummeled to death. That would be a crime but not an infringement of the First Amendment, unless the pummeler is a cop or a congressman.

That seems simple to me. But the simple fact that the Bill of Rights, and much else in our Constitution, limits *government* powers is lost on the ignorant slobs who now appear to constitute a majority of the polity. Why do so few Americans know this? It's basic and important information about our government. It's not some kind of legal technicality: the entire Bill of Rights is about limiting government powers, not about limiting private powers or corporate powers. And the Bill of Rights is, or was, an important part of the American identity. As the authoritative Wikipedia puts it, "The Bill of Rights plays a central role in American law and government, and remains a fundamental symbol of the freedoms and culture of the nation."

Earlier this year, hundreds of blogging activists promoted a boycott of Disney-owned radio station KSFO-AM in San Francisco because the hosts allegedly made racist comments. A Disney company sued one of the bloggers for copyright violations. Both sides claimed that their speech rights were being attacked, and the reporter seemed to agree, calling it a "First Amendment flap." The First Amendment has nothing to do with it.

Ignorance on this topic goes far and wide. How far? Again and again, I hear on the radio and read in the press that the (presumably and sometimes explicitly constitutional) right to free speech should protect us from various forms of speech itself. You can't hang up on me or tell me to shut up, or refuse to take my call, or strongly disagree with me, or tell me I'm an idiot for thinking what I think, or boycott the Dixie Chicks, or withdraw your sponsorship, because that would infringe somebody's right to free speech. These sloppy arguments are sneaking up on the ultimate idiocy: the assertion that to protect the victims of these "infringements," well, there ought to be a law.

Do I have to draw you a picture? — Michael Christian

Handicapping the race — The 2008 presidential campaign is shaping up as one of the most exciting in history. Hillary Clinton and Rudy Giuliani appear to be the frontrunners now, with John McCain and Barack Obama secondary prospects. So much between now and November 2008 will determine the outcome of the election that it is hard to make a prediction at this point, other than the likely nominees. Will Republican-fatigue or Clinton-fatigue be a stronger force? I am inclined to think the latter.

The crucial question is, whom would the next president nominate to the Supreme Court? The future of *Roe v. Wade* could well hang in the balance. Right now, Giuliani appears to me the most likely next president, followed by McCain, then Clinton, then Obama. Romney is an outside possibility on the Republican side, but the Democratic race has likely been reduced to two possibilities.

The major reason why, notwithstanding President Bush's low popularity, a Republican seems likely to be the next president is that the Democratic Party has allowed too many fringe perspectives to permeate it. One recent poll indicated that something like 30% of Democrats believe that the Bush

administration was actively implicated in September 11 (not just that it responded inappropriately). This is too high a percentage for a political party to have a secure shot at winning the White House, even after eight years of an unpopular incumbent from the other party. — Lanny Ebenstein

Jefferson Monument — Grandma Pelosi, our burqa-wearing Speaker of the House, swept to power promising to end the “culture of corruption” that she said characterized the prior Republican-controlled House of Representatives. Her claim to be the Great House Cleaner, however, was dealt a severe blow by the indictment of Rep. William Jefferson (D-La.). Jefferson’s indictment appears to set a new record for such busts, easily eclipsing the case against such crooks as Reps. Randy Cunningham (R-Calif.), Bob Ney (R-Ohio), and the classic James Traficant (D-Ohio).

Jefferson, immortalized on videotape accepting a \$100,000 cash bribe (most of which he stored in his freezer), has been hit with a 94-page indictment on 16 counts, which exceed those of Cunningham, Ney, and Traficant combined — quite an accomplishment, when you reflect on it — and could bring him over 200 years in the slammer.

Yet Jefferson brazenly refused to resign from Congress, and Pelosi — who earlier this year tried to put him on the Homeland Security Committee(!) — stubbornly refuses to get her minions to expel him.

Moreover, there is the amazing hypocrisy of Pelosi and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC). When former Rep. Tom DeLay (R-Texas) was indicted on far less compelling evidence and on far fewer counts, both Pelosi and the DCCC demanded that Republican representatives who had received campaign donations from DeLay immediately return that money. But the \$140,000 that Jefferson donated to the DCCC, along with the many thousands of dollars he donated to 20 Democratic representatives, has not been returned (except by one congressman), and the arrogant hypocrites don’t seem likely to return it any time soon.

So much for House cleaning. — Gary Jason

Fatwa foofaraw — The British government’s recent decision to honor novelist Salman Rushdie with a knighthood has brought down upon it the ire of those Muslims worldwide who see the continued existence of the author as an affront to their religion. A number of countries, including Iran and Pakistan, have protested the award; mass demonstrations, newspapers, and various organizations have done the same. A tape, purported to be that of Ayman al-Zawahiri, has surfaced; in it, al Qaeda’s number two goes so far as to threaten Britain with reprisals. In the wake of Britain’s unfortunate brushes with terrorism in recent years, such threats, and the broader outcry over Rushdie, are troubling indeed.

One is reminded of the similar furor surrounding the publication in late 2005 by the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten of a series of cartoons decried by some as, among other things, racist, ignorant, blasphemous, and insulting to Islam. As may yet happen with Rushdie, the cartoons were met with demands for retractions and apologies, bloodshed, indiscriminate destruction of Western property, including the Norwegian and Danish embassies in Syria, and vitriolic threats of further violence and death. These reprehensible tactics, those of the bully and of the thug, should be seen for

what they are and dealt with as such.

There is a school of thought that trouble with our enemies, be it “international terrorism,” “Islamofascism,” “Islamic fundamentalism,” or whatever the latest terms may be, is at heart because of our being “over there,” provoking them. They hate us, plot to bomb us, behead us, and do other nasty things to us, because we go and bother them in the first place. If we were to leave them to their own devices, they would return the favor. So the thinking goes.

Critics of this thesis often dismiss it by accusing its advocates of “blaming the victims.” While there is occasionally some truth to this, as in the case of the despicable Ward Churchill, it is not quite so simple. The same, however, could be said of the theory itself. As the Rushdie affair, and others like it, should make clear to us, any affront, real or imagined, constitutes a possible pretext for threats and bloodshed. Though there may be a number of good reasons for the withdrawal of troops from Iraq and elsewhere, the possibility that it would appease our enemies is not one of them.

— Liam Vavasour

Protest is the marinade of freedom — “What is this, socialist China?” asked Teresa Matuska. “This must be a joke,” added Rose Terkay. “There are many more things that need watched other than if I make a hot dog or a piece of kielbasa after eight.”

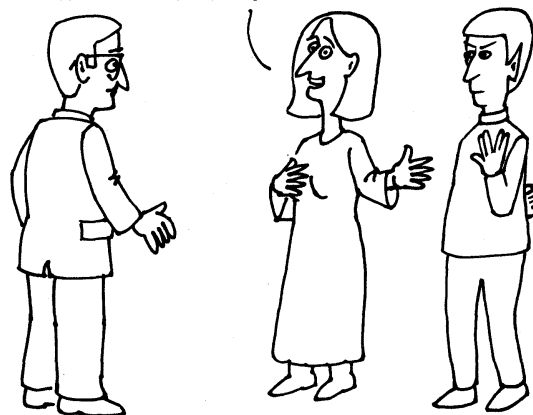
Those complaints were quoted in the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review after the mayor of Canonsburg, a small town to the south of Pittsburgh, issued an executive order banning the use of propane, wood, or charcoal grills after 8 p.m.

“Laura Marra, 72, who attends every council meeting, said the mayor issued the order Monday night after Canonsburg resident Dave DiTullio complained that a neighbor constantly starts fires next door, sending smoke onto DiTullio’s property,” reported the Tribune-Review.

There’s a warning for first-time offenders and then fines up to \$300 per each occurrence of after-eight grilling.

Predictably, the new edict isn’t popular. Said Barb Mavrich,

HI! I'M STAR. I'M A VEGAN. THIS IS MY PARTNER STANLEY. STANLEY'S A VULCAN.



S.H. Chambers

a local librarian: "Now you can't even eat a weenie at night! You've got to eat your weenies before eight."

The town isn't without its rebel history. There's a Whiskey Rebellion Race each July 4th through the streets of Canonsburg, before the Independence Day parade, commemorating the time when the locals met at the Black Horse Tavern, downed some homemade spirits, and proceeded to tar and feather a federal tax collector and burn down the houses of some local excise officials, to protest the new federal tax on whiskey, a levy on the homemade product of their stills. George Washington sent in militias from Pennsylvania, Virginia, New Jersey, and Maryland to crush the insurrection.

In that same unruly spirit, Canonsburg resident Robert Folk, 22, said he will stand his ground: "I will," he declared, "grill illegally."

Protest sometimes pays off. On July 12, the mayor rescinded his order.

— Ralph Reiland

Class war — Sen. John Edwards, candidate for the Democratic nomination for president, is famously a one-speech (silky) pony. He constantly laments that there are two Americas, one rich and one poor. He is of course an immensely wealthy trial attorney, but he feels for the poor, as he so emotionally assures us. His cure is to jack up taxes on "rich" people, who he even more emotionally assures us aren't paying their "fair" share.

I think Edwards is right that there are two Americas, but he hasn't identified them correctly. Consider the figures just released by the Treasury Department on who pays what in taxes, based on year 2004 returns.

The figures are surprising. The upper 1% of all income earners earned 19% of all income, but paid 36.9% of all federal income taxes. The upper 5% earned 33.4% of all income, but paid 57.1% of all federal income taxes. The upper 10% paid 70.8% of such taxes. Finally, the top 40% of all income earners paid 99.1% of all federal income taxes.

That means that the bottom 60% of wage earners — people at \$43,000 a year or less — paid essentially none of the income taxes. None of the income taxes the federal government uses for national defense. None of the income taxes the federal government uses for welfare. None of the income taxes the federal government uses for the million other things it so busily does. So 60% of the population has absolutely no financial reason to keep the growth of government in check, much less to reduce it.

This explains why the promise of tax cuts gets less and less voter support: the majority now pays no taxes, so doesn't care. And despite the howls of protest from leftists who claim the Bush tax cuts favored the rich, the percentage of federal taxes paid by the rich has gone up under Bush.

Now, when it comes to who derives the most benefits from government, again there is a huge split among the citizenry. In a recent Christian Science Monitor report, economist Gary Shilling estimates that 52.6% of Americans now derive a substantial portion of their income from the government. Shilling's estimate breaks down as follows: about 20% work directly for government or for companies tied to it; another 20% or so receive Social Security or a government pension; and the remaining 13% or so are receiving education grants, subsidized housing, food stamps, or all of the above.

(Note that I haven't even mentioned Medicare, Medicaid, or the Earned Income Tax Credit.) Back in 1950 the figure that is now 52.6% was only 28.3%. By 2040 it will be 60% — a substantial majority living off government.

It is important to keep the dimensions of government in mind. The federal government alone took in \$2.4 trillion from taxation. (This, while the combined local and state tax burden hit a record high of 11% on average.) By way of comparison, the feds are taking in taxes an amount roughly equal to the total GDP of Japan or Germany, and much greater than the GDP of China (which even after its recent phenomenal growth has a GDP of only about \$1.9 trillion). And this is about what the GDP of the U.S. was in 1950 (inflation adjusted).

So, yes, Mr. Edwards, there are two Americas: the tax payers and the tax takers. The first America is the "upper" 40% of wage earners, who pay all the income taxes. The other America is the majority of Americans, who now live off the first. The second America is growing rapidly, and will grow even more rapidly if Mr. Edwards gets his new spending programs enacted.

The first America can only wonder how likely it is that there will ever be a meaningful shrinkage of government, much less a flat tax.

— Gary Jason

Surge the insurgence — On June 17, General David Petraeus, the top U.S. commander in Iraq, presented the viewing audience of "Fox News Sunday" with an interim report on the surge.

One can't help but feel a bit sorry for Petraeus. He does not have sufficient forces at his disposal to crush both the Sunni insurgents and the Shiite militias that stand in the way of a stable Iraq. Having just received the full complement of reinforcements promised him under the surge, he is expected to show real progress by September. I'm afraid even a Napoleon couldn't pull that off.

Petraeus had to dance around some pointed questions from the Fox show's host, Chris Wallace. At one point, however, he stated that successful counterinsurgencies generally require at least nine or ten years of effort. For that bit of candor, the general should be commended.

Successful counterinsurgencies are pretty rare. The U.S. was successful in combating the Huk Rebellion in the Philippines, an effort that lasted from 1946 to 1955. The British defeated a communist insurgency in Malaya that went on from 1948 to 1960. But beyond that, the counterinsurgency record is pretty grim.

In Iraq, we have a failed state that's more like South Vietnam than post-World War II Malaya or the Philippines. Additionally, we face not one but *three* opponents — the Sunni insurgents of al Qaeda in Iraq, the Baathist Sunnis (supporters of the old Saddam Hussein regime), and the Shiite militias. There is no single enemy to focus on, which complicates the counterinsurgency effort quite a bit. It's as if we were intervening in the European religious wars of the 16th and 17th centuries — not on the side of either Protestant or Catholic, but against both, and with both as bitterly opposed to us as they are to each other.

The sectarian factor is, I believe, insurmountable. It took a couple of centuries before Protestant and Catholic learned to coexist peacefully in one polity. We can't wait that long in

Iraq, can we? I previously have advocated a tilt in favor of the Iraqi Shiites as part of a two-track policy that would include engagement with Shiite Iran. Allied with the Shiites, we could defeat al-Qaeda in Iraq and the Hussein regime holdovers. A stable Iraq ruled by its majority Shiites would be preferable to the situation we currently face, particularly if a workable U.S.-Iranian relationship is established.

The Bush administration will have none of this, partly because of the objections that Israel and our Sunni Arab allies Egypt and Saudi Arabia have to such a policy, and partly because the administration is incapable of practicing real-politik. The old Nixon-Kissinger team could have pulled it off; so too Bush-Baker-Scowcroft. Secretary of State Rice and Defense Secretary Gates probably possess the required intelligence and flexibility, but the current President Bush clearly does not. Moreover, Vice President Cheney, with the administration's neocon rump at his side, would vociferously oppose such a policy change.

We are left then with an ongoing commitment, at a lower level of violence perhaps (once the Surge is done), but continuing for years. More and more people in the Bush administration are talking openly of a Korea-like presence in Iraq stretching out over decades.

As Napoleon's war in Spain dragged on, it became known as the "Spanish ulcer." We have got an "Iraq ulcer," and no cure is in sight. A dismal prospect.

— Jon Harrison

Mencken's Baltimore — On Independence Eve, I took the train from Washington to Baltimore in pursuit of the ghost of H.L. Mencken, the libertarian journalist who, in the first half of the 20th century, personified independence of an eminent sort. I found his city sagging and tired, far from the charming literary capital to which he ascribed "the brilliance of a circus parade." It was obvious that the parade had long ago abandoned Baltimore, and I wondered if it ever had existed.

Naturally the city patriots tried to relax my doubts — mainly through the revelation that F. Scott Fitzgerald had lived in Baltimore. But they were not so quick to admit that the city was more purgatory than paradise for Fitzgerald, who supported his wife Zelda as she undertook treatments for mental illness at the Johns Hopkins Hospital. Edgar Allan Poe resided in Baltimore, and died there too. Apparently the city was sinister enough to inspire "Berenice," his first horror story.

Navigating through dirt and decay, I imagined that Mencken loved his city not for its lights or wonder, but for the underrated reason that it was *his*. Returning from New York to Baltimore, he wrote, "is like coming out of a football crowd into quiet communion with a fair one who is also amiable, and has the gift of consolation for hard-beset and despairing men..."

But the city does not return the sentiments. Aside from the Enoch Pratt Library's Mencken Room, which is open only to scholars, Baltimore has evicted its legend. Streets aren't named for him. Statues don't boast of him. Official guidebooks ignore him. The city considers the Mencken House at 1524 Hollins St. a piece of "surplus property." And though the Friends of the H.L. Mencken House, having received

right of entry, give tours of the vacant house by appointment, they are forbidden from running a real museum.

It was Dr. Vincent Fitzpatrick, the gentlemanly curator of the Mencken Room (where some of Mencken's effects are stored), who gave me the tour of Baltimore as the Sage experienced it. "That's where Mencken lived with his wife," Dr. Fitzpatrick said, pointing to the plastic-covered building of a Maryland museum. "And that's where he went to school," pointing to a hospital. "And he drank his famous toast to the end of Prohibition here" — once the bar of an elegant hotel, now a parking lot.

It was as if, to the objective world, Mencken's Baltimore had vanished, leaving its scents and trails only in the imagination of those who knew of it. The experience reminded me of Rudyard Kipling's poem about that lost road through the woods, which had forever vanished. Yet if "you enter the woods of a summer evening late," he wrote:

You will hear the beat of a horse's feet,
And the swish of a skirt in the dew,
Steadily cantering through
The misty solitudes,
As though they perfectly knew
The old lost road through the woods.
But there is no road through the woods.

— Garin K. Hovannisian

RISK: health care edition — All the major candidates for the Democratic nomination for president have come out in favor of a comprehensive federally operated national health-care system. They tend to be sketchy on which existing national health service they think is worth emulating — would that be Canada's? Or France's? Or perhaps Great Britain's?

I suspect that the reason people who favor nationalized health care are reluctant to name a country whose nationalized system works well is that there is no such country, and they know it. So they argue for a "new" system (i.e., one that exists only in their imagination) free from the defects of any existing one, and infinitely superior to the present American one, natch.

This suspicion occurred to me when I read a recent news story in *The Guardian* (June 8). It summarized a British Department of Health analysis of wait-times endured by National Health Service (NHS) patients scheduled for surgery. Only now, apparently, is the British government attempting to track this accurately, and the results are eye-popping.

It turns out that only 48% — less than half — of patients scheduled for surgery receive it within four months of the approval date. About 30% of them have to wait even longer — up to seven months. And 12.4% of them — one in eight! — have to wait more than a full year. (The report doesn't address how many patients died while waiting.)

The operations for which patients waited the longest were for ear, nose, and throat procedures, and for gynecological, orthopedic, and general surgery.

The stated goal of the NHS is to make sure that all surgeries happen in less than 18 weeks (four months) after approval. But in the two years since that feeble goal was set, the NHS has clearly not even come close to achieving it.

Would patients in this country be satisfied waiting five

months to get a knee fixed or a cataract removed? I doubt it. Funny how none of the candidates pushing national health care discuss this issue.

— Gary Jason

To each their own — When I was young, I used the most sexist language you can imagine. I called servers “waiters” or “waitresses” and flight attendants “stewardesses.” Mail carriers were “postmen” to me. I even called fishers “fishermen.” Oh, I know, so did everyone else, but that’s no excuse. Not really. I should have known better, and I’m ashamed that I didn’t.

Eradicating sexism from our language has been a decades-long struggle. There have been many skirmishes along the way. Some have resulted in victory, while others have yet to be won.

The victories have been sweet. When in high school, I read notices like this: “Anyone who wants to go to the game on Friday should bring his money tomorrow.”

No, I didn’t go to an all-male high school. Yes, people really wrote things like that. Today the notice would automatically be written like this: “Anyone who wants to go to the game on Friday should bring their money tomorrow.”

The victory? The grating, sexist “he” has been replaced by the melodious, inclusive “their.”

Of course, “anyone,” although indefinite, is singular and cries out for a singular possessive pronoun to precede “money.” But, in addition to being singular, “anyone” is neuter and cries out for a neuter possessive pronoun. Using “its” isn’t allowed, so we must prioritize these cries in the form of a rule: gender trumps number, as in: “If you love somebody, set them free.”

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And now, a skirmish yet to be won. The other day at the mall I watched as a woman approached a group of women and said, “Omigosh! You guys look like totally awesome!”

See how she needlessly tacked “guys” onto the perfectly inclusive second person plural “you”? Her impulse to pluralize the already plural “you” is understandable, if only because today “you” serves as both singular and plural. But pluralizing “you” can be done in modern English without making the plural masculine. In the South, “y’all” has been forged from “you all.” In Appalachia, what was once “you ones” has been shortened to “you’uns” and even “yins.” While these alternatives may not appeal to everyone, if only for stylistic reasons, they are preferable to “you guys” because they are truly gender neutral. In remote corners of the Northeast, it is said, the objective second person plural is sometimes “yous guys.” This is a very bad choice.

In Late Middle English, all of this was nicely sorted out. The second person pronouns were as follows: the subjective was singular, thou, or plural, ye, while the objective was singular, thee, or plural, you. The clarity of this formulation gives rise to the thought that consideration might be given to expanding the struggle for gender neutrality to include a systematic reintroduction of these pronouns into modern American English, perhaps at the undergraduate level in progressive universities. Mmmm.

But back to the woman in the mall: can’t she hear herself? A guy is a male, not a female. Is proof needed? “It’s a guy thing.” Not convinced? Try this: “Queer Eye for the Straight Guy.” Or how about: “Oprah Winfrey is a very powerful guy.” You get the point.

I am sure that this woman does not think of herself as a slave to the patriarchy. But sexist language is insidious and forms our perceptions from the deepest levels of our collective consciousness, often at a more fundamental level than thought. Indeed, language is the very stuff from which thoughts are made. Throwbacks like “you guys” must not be allowed to creep into a language that so many have worked so hard to make gender neutral. It is simply not acceptable.

Remember: gender trumps number, as in: “Omigosh! You look like totally awesome!”

It is better to be a bit unclear about whether you are talking to an individual or to an entire group than it is to risk undoing the linguistic progress of a generation by calling women men. In other words, for the betterment of all mankind, each of us must do his level best to avoid calling gals “guys.” Okay, you guys?

— Scott Chambers

Customer service — In “Capitalism” (1951, pp. 40–41), David McCord Wright lists the requirements of healthy “social growth.” Along with obvious ones such as saving and investment and education, he includes “criticism.” By that he means “insistence on *qualitative* standards,” not mere growth in output per head, counting even “garbage.” Wright’s point has broader application. Not everything done in the name of business deserves applause. Pressures of informal complaints and warnings may make for a freer society than government coercion routinely enlisted. As Stewart Alsop wrote (“Let’s Raise More Hell,” *Newsweek*, March 9, 1970), “the man who makes a justified fuss does a public service.”

Have Liberty's readers experienced obstruction of contacts within firms and between firms and their customers? Aren't such obstacles ironic in this age of high-tech information and communication, when even half the students walking around town and campus are talking on cell phones?

My change of residence (but not of phone number) within the same town provided more and worse examples than I would have imagined. I notified the phone, internet, and credit card companies of my new address. The internet service provider put an improper and unauthorized charge onto my credit card; and a long-distance company, without my consent, drafted me into being their purported customer and began adding charges for its imaginary services to my local phone bill. Four companies thus became involved. Repeated efforts to explain the errors and insist on their correction brought repeated frustrations. I tried phone calls to the extent permitted by the rigmarole of pushing buttons, having inadequate categories of subject matter to choose from, being connected to recordings rather than persons, being put on hold and exposed to advertising, being bounced from company to company, department to department, and clerk to supervisor, being disconnected and having to try again from scratch, and sometimes talking to an uncomprehending robot with an Indian accent.

A frequent ploy was to cite company "records," mockingly and provocatively ignoring that whether those records were correct was precisely the issue. Email messages, sent so far as I could track down the email addresses, usually brought either no replies at all or canned replies at right angles to my points. Letters sent by U.S. mail — to the extent permitted by either concealed or multiple addresses — brought similar non-results. At least once I was connected by phone to a sympathetic listener who, atypically, actually paid attention and agreed with me, only finally to say, "but that's not my department."

After more than five months, the errors have at last been corrected, or almost. (But can I be sure? Perhaps some clerk will resume acting according to some erroneous old record.) The whole affair, including having to compose innumerable letters, has cost me hundreds or maybe even a couple of thousand dollars worth of time and mental and emotional energy. I suppose I could have just given up at any time, but I would have despised myself for passively accepting such abuse.

Trying to get service under warranty for a defective new stove revealed that performance and responsibility were fragmented among three separate companies: the manufacturer, an independent service company, and a parcel service for delivery of parts. All three offered resistance in various ways to hearing from the customer, and they communicated largely by one-way-only prerecorded phone calls (for example, instructing the customer to remain available all the following day).

What could account for such resistance? Perhaps the company, or perhaps only an irresponsible employee, may hope to fatigue the customer into giving up. (The Declaration of Independence complains, remember, that George III "has called together Legislative Bodies at Places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the Depository of their

Public Records, for the sole Purpose of fatiguing them into Compliance with his Measures.")

More plausibly, perhaps, fragmenting information, records, and responsibility among and within companies has the advantages (and disadvantages) of the division of labor. Using machines instead of humans and using overseas telephone-answerers instead of Americans saves money. Classifying types of inquiry into prefabricated pigeonholes, even if inadequate, facilitates the push-button system for incoming phone calls. Putting callers on long holds avoids time that phone clerks might otherwise sometimes spend idle. The pigeonholes also simplify programming machines and persons for prefabricated responses to inquiries and complaints. (Deliberate fraud ranks pretty low on my list of possible explanations, though I do not totally rule it out for one of the phone companies.)

Cost savings like these might perhaps excuse the occasional unintentional abuse of a customer. But those savings should let companies afford systems for recognizing and making amends for the abuse when it does occur.

Let's join with David McCord Wright and Stewart Alsop in making "a justified fuss."

— Leland B. Yeager

The elephant in the mine — Miners used to take a canary in a cage with them as they descended into the earth, to monitor the air. If the canary died, it was a forewarning that the air was not breathable. Well, in many ways, California serves as a canary for the national economy — except that the canary is more like an elephant. What you see going wrong in America's most populous state is a giant warning sign for the rest of the country.

Certainly, taxpayers around the country are waking up to a hitherto unnoticed problem: the explosive growth of public employee pensions and the health-care expenses of retired public employees. Until recently, these liabilities were hidden. State and local governments, constantly ground by public employee unions, simply handed out ever more generous benefits.

But now these governments are being required to disclose their liabilities, just as private companies have long been forced to do; and the information that is slowly coming out is chilling. In my own lovely state of California, State Controller John Chiang — a liberal Democrat, please note — has just released his estimate of the health-care costs for retired state employees over the next 30 years. He puts the figure at \$47.9 billion.

Reflect upon that a moment. The figure does not include the cost of pensions, which are a huge separate liability. And Chiang's estimate is based on the very dubious assumption that in the future, health-care costs will rise much less quickly than they do now. If those costs keep rising at the present rate, the liabilities will likely hit \$70 billion. Chiang recommends that the state start putting aside funds to cover those future liabilities, but with a liberal legislature and governor, there is absolutely no chance that will happen. Saving money doesn't buy votes; spending does.

These estimates are just for state employees. City, county, school district, and community college employees are apt to cost taxpayers \$90 billion more in health-care expenses alone.

Add in pension costs, and the amount is astronomical.

If the situation in California is any indication, another fiscal meteor, or asteroid, will hit America during the next 15 or 20 years: health-care obligations for state and local employees. As if Social Security, Medicare-Medicaid, the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, and state and local employee pensions weren't enough.

— Gary Jason

Hans Sennholz, R.I.P. — Charles Darwin had his bulldog, Thomas Huxley, and Ludwig von Mises had his drill sergeant, Hans Sennholz. Sennholz (1922–2007) was a World War II fighter pilot under the Luftwaffe, but to anyone who knew him, he spoke and wrote like a libertarian drill sergeant. Every day of his life was spent preaching, teaching, and speaking to anyone who would listen about the virtues of free-market capitalism. His speeches were inspirational and powerful. In his thick German accent he delivered an unmistakable message of “Austrian” economics: fight the state and its furious power to tax, spend, and inflate.

Sennholz was a monetary gold bug, more a follower of Ludwig von Mises than of Milton Friedman. He wrote books with titles such as “Inflation or Gold?”, “Debts and Deficits,” “The Age of Inflation,” and “Money and Freedom.” After Friedman died late last year, Sennholz was still taking him to task for his proposal to increase the money supply at a constant rate of 4–5%, equal to long-term real GDP growth. “In its search for stability,” he wrote, “the Friedman amendment, unfortunately, proceeds on the old road to nowhere. There is no absolute monetary stability, never has been, and never can be.” For Sennholz, a true Misesian, there was only one solution to inflation: return to the classical gold standard, in which the dollar is backed by gold.

Sennholz's plane was shot down by Allied troops, and he spent several years as a P.O.W. in the United States. After the war, he earned a Ph.D. at the University of Cologne, Germany, discovered Mises, and returned to the United States to earn a second Ph.D. in economics in 1955 from New York University, where Mises taught. During 36 years, Sennholz taught Austrian economics to 10,000 students at Grove City College in western Pennsylvania. (Peter Boettke, top Austrian economist at George Mason University, is one of his many students.)

Sennholz was a prolific advocate of the Austrian school, writing 17 books and over 500 articles. He wrote regularly for “The Freeman,” “Human Events,” and financial publications such as “The Inflation Survival Letter.” Beginning in 2000, he wrote columns online at sennholz.com. He and his wife Mary (eight years his senior, and herself an editor and writer) once met Ronald Reagan, who said, “I’ve been plagiarizing you for years.”

But Hans Sennholz was best in his role as an electric speaker with that unforgettable German accent. He flew his plane all over the country giving speeches on the evils of inflation, deficit spending, and the falling dollar. His audience was bankers, stockbrokers, businessmen, and religious leaders. I first met him at a Howard Ruff conference in the late 1970s. After hearing him for only a few minutes, I was smitten by this true believer in sound money. He was the Douglas MacArthur of free market economics. He was ready

for any crowd. He once told Larry Reed: “If there are 10, I give a talk. If there are 25, I give a lecture. Over 100, I give a speech. To 200 or more, I give an oration.”

Still, like other Austrian economists, Sennholz was a pessimist. In the 1970s, he warned that America was headed toward an inflationary Armageddon. He debated John Exter, a former Citibank executive, on “Inflation or Deflation?”, and while Exter predicted massive deflation, Sennholz warned of triple-digit inflation. Both were proven wrong. Neither anticipated the supply-side revolutions of Reagan and Thatcher, which brought some sanity back to the global economy.

Sennholz thought the Reagan-Thatcher revolution was temporary, and remained a pessimist. His final column, “Money is flooding the world markets” (May 19) says, “A few pessimistic economists are convinced that a devastating economic cataclysm lies ahead. They usually point to three threats that may have a serious impact on the American economy. There is the burgeoning tower of public and private debt resting on a foundation of greed and overindulgence. There [is] a multimillion dollar list of promises to a retirement system and a vast building of government guarantees and promises that are bound to be unkept. There even is a world of complex derivatives, the value of which depends on something else, such as stocks, bonds, futures, options, loans, and even promises. They all, according to these economists, will be the victims of the coming cataclysm. This economist, who has observed central bank policies since the 1950s, is in basic accord and feels sympathy for these pessimists.”

Despite his unfavorable prognostications, Sennholz was an astute investor. He wasn't especially keen on investing in stocks and bonds, and wasn't particularly successful in trading commodity futures, but he was a clever real estate investor and became a multimillionaire by specializing in small-town rental properties. He was at one time the largest landlord in Grove City.

After Sennholz retired from college teaching at the age of 70, he and his wife assumed the daunting task of reviving the Foundation for Economic Education, the first free-market think tank, founded by Leonard Read in 1946 in Irvington-on-Hudson, N.Y. After Read died in 1983, FEE struggled financially and lost influence. Sennholz was elected by the board to save FEE. Over the next five years he righted the ship and got it back on course. In 1996, FEE celebrated its 50th anniversary by having Margaret Thatcher as the keynote speaker.

It was during his tenure as president of FEE that I got to know Sennholz personally. He frequently invited me to speak at FEE's monthly lecture series. Later he asked me to be a columnist for its journal “The Freeman.” I am sure that I was elected president of FEE in 2001 as a result of his unwavering support. I was also privileged to participate in writing a collection of essays in honor of Sennholz, “A Man of Principle” (Grove City College, 1992). My favorite book by Sennholz is “The Politics of Unemployment” (Libertarian Press, 1987). His books are available at libertarianpress.com, run by his son Robert.

Douglas MacArthur said, “Old soldiers never die; they just fade away.” Hans Sennholz may have faded away, but he will never be forgotten.

— Mark Skousen

Cartman Shrugged: “South Park” and Libertarianism

by Paul A. Cantor

It's a funny thing — really *funny* — that the South Park kids know so many things that the political establishment has yet to find out.

Since libertarians don't have much to cheer about on television, especially when watching the Evening News, “South Park” ought to be dear to their hearts. But it can be difficult to convince someone unfamiliar with the show that it is really worth watching — not just because it is uproariously funny, but also because it consistently defends freedom against its many enemies today, on both the left and the right.

The critics of “South Park” — and they are legion — bitterly complain about its relentless obscenity and potty humor. And they have a legitimate point. But if one wanted to mount a high-minded defense of the show's low-minded vulgarity, one might go all the way back to Plato to find a link between philosophy and obscenity. Toward the end of his dialogue the “Symposium,” a young Athenian nobleman named Alcibiades offers a striking image of the power of Socrates. He compares the philosopher's speeches to a statue of the satyr Silenus, which is ugly on the outside, but which, when opened up, reveals a beautiful interior: “if you choose to listen to Socrates' discourses you would feel them at first to be quite ridiculous; on the outside they are clothed with such absurd words and phrases. . . . His talk is of pack-asses, smiths, cobblers, and tanners. . . . so that anyone inexperienced and thoughtless might laugh his speeches to scorn. But when these are opened . . .

you will discover that they are the only speeches which have any sense in them.”¹

These words characterize equally well the contrast between the vulgar surface and the philosophical depth of the dialogue in which they are spoken. The “Symposium” contains some of the most soaring and profound philosophical speculations ever written. And yet in the middle of the dialogue the comic poet Aristophanes comes down with a bad case of hiccoughs that prevents him from speaking when his turn comes. By the end of the dialogue, all the characters except Socrates have consumed so much wine that they pass out in a collective drunken stupor. In a dialogue about the spiritual and physical dimensions of love, Plato suggests that, however philosophical we may wax in our speeches, we remain creatures of the body and can never entirely escape its crude bodily

functions. In the way that the "Symposium" moves back and forth between the ridiculous and the sublime, Plato seems to be making a statement about philosophy — that it has something in common with low comedy. Both philosophy and obscene humor fly in the face of conventional opinion.

High Philosophy and Low Comedy

I'm not sure what Plato would have made of "South Park," but his Silenus image fits the show quite well. "South Park" is at one and the same time the most vulgar and the most philosophical show ever to appear on television. Its vulgarity is of course the first thing one notices about it, given its obsession with farting, shitting, vomiting, and every other excretory possibility. As Plato's dialogue suggests, it's all too easy to become fixated on the vulgar and obscene surface of "South Park," rejecting out of hand a show that chose to make a Christmas icon out of a talking turd named Mr. Hankey. But if one is patient with "South Park," and gives the show the benefit of the doubt, it turns out to be genuinely thought-provoking, taking up one serious issue after another, from environmentalism to animal rights, from assisted suicide to sexual harassment. And the show approaches all these issues from a distinctly libertarian perspective. I know of no television program that has so consistently pursued a philosophical agenda, week after week, season after season. If anything, the show can become too didactic, with episodes often culminating in a character delivering a speech that offers a surprisingly balanced and nuanced account of the issue at hand.

Plato's "Symposium" is useful for showing that vulgarity and philosophical thought are not necessarily antithetical. Before dismissing "South Park," we should recall that some of the greatest comic writers — Aristophanes, Chaucer, Rabelais, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Swift — plumbed the depths of obscenity even as they rose to the heights of philosophical thought. The same intellectual courage that emboldened them to defy conventional proprieties empowered them to reject conventional ideas and break through the intellectual frontiers of their day.

Without claiming that "South Park" deserves to rank with such distinguished predecessors, I will say that the show descends from a long tradition of comedy that ever since ancient Athens has combined obscenity with philosophy.

The genius of Parker and Stone was to see that in our day a new frontier of comic transgression has opened up because of the phenomenon known as political correctness.

There are almost as many fart jokes in Aristophanes' play "The Clouds" as there are in a typical episode of "The Terrance and Phillip Show" as presented in "South Park." In fact, in the earliest dramatic representation of Socrates that has come down

to us, he is making fart jokes as he tries to explain to a dumb Athenian named Strepsiades that thunder is a purely natural phenomenon and not the work of the great god Zeus:

First think of the tiny fart that your intestines make.
Then consider the heavens: their infinite farting is
thunder.

For thunder and farting are, in principle, one and the same.²

Eric Cartman couldn't have said it better.

Speaking the Unspeakable

Those who condemn "South Park" for being offensive need to be reminded that comedy is by its very nature offensive. It derives its energy from its transgressive power, its ability to break taboos, to speak the unspeakable. Comedians are always pushing the envelope, probing to see how much they can get away with in violating the speech codes of their day. Comedy is a social safety valve. We laugh precisely because the comedian momentarily liberates us from the restrictions that conventional society imposes on us. We applaud the comedian because he says right out in front of an audience what, supposedly, nobody is allowed to say in public.

Paradoxically, then, the more permissive American society has become, the harder it has become to write comedy. As censorship laws have been relaxed, and people have been allowed to say and show almost anything in movies and television — above all to deal with formerly taboo sexual material — comedy writers like the creators of "South Park," Trey Parker and Matt Stone, must have begun to wonder if there was any way left to offend an audience.

The genius of Parker and Stone was to see that in our day a new frontier of comic transgression has opened up because of the phenomenon known as political correctness. Our age may have tried to dispense with the conventional pieties of earlier generations, but it has developed new pieties of its own. They may not look like the traditional pieties, but they are enforced in the same old way, with social pressures and sometimes even legal sanctions punishing people who dare to violate the new taboos. Many of our colleges and universities today have speech codes, which seek to define what can and cannot be said on campus, and in particular to prohibit anything that might be interpreted as demeaning someone because of his race, religion, gender, handicap, and a whole series of other protected categories. Sex may no longer be taboo in our society, but sexism now is.

"Seinfeld" was probably the first television comedy that systematically violated the new taboos of political correctness. The show repeatedly made fun of contemporary sensitivities about such issues as sexual orientation, ethnic identity, feminism, and handicapped people. "Seinfeld" proved that being politically incorrect can be hilariously funny in today's moral and intellectual climate, and "South Park" was quick to follow its lead.

The show has mercilessly satirized all forms of political correctness: anti-hate crime legislation, tolerance indoctrination in the schools, Hollywood do-gooding of all kinds, including environmentalism and anti-smoking campaigns, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Special Olympics — the list goes on and on. It's hard to single out the most politically incorrect moment in the history of "South Park," but

I'll nominate the fifth-season episode called "Cripple Fight." It documents in gory detail what happens when two "differently abled," or rather, "handicapable" boys named Timmy and Jimmy square off for a violent — and interminable — battle in the streets of South Park. The show obviously relishes the sheer shock value of moments such as this. But more is going on here than transgressing the boundaries of good taste just for transgression's sake.

A Plague on Both Your Houses

This is where the philosophy of libertarianism enters the picture in "South Park." The show criticizes political correctness in the name of freedom. That is why Parker and Stone can proclaim themselves equal opportunity satirists; they make fun of the old pieties as well as the new, savaging both the right and the left insofar as both seek to restrict freedom. "Cripple Fight" is an excellent example of the balance and evenhandedness of "South Park," and the way it can offend both ends of the political spectrum. The episode deals in typical "South Park" fashion with a contemporary controversy, one that has even made it into the courts: whether homosexuals should be allowed to lead Boy Scout troops. The episode makes fun of the old-fashioned types in the town who insist on denying a troop leadership to Big Gay Al (a recurrent character whose name says it all). It turns out that the ostensibly straight man the Boy Scouts choose to replace Big Gay Al is a real pedophile who starts abusing the boys immediately by photographing them naked.

As it frequently does, "South Park," even as it stereotypes homosexuals, displays sympathy for them and their right to live their lives as they see fit. But just as the episode seems to be simply taking the side of those who condemn the Boy Scouts for homophobia, it swerves in an unexpected direction. Big Gay Al himself defends the right of the Boy Scouts to exclude homosexuals on the principle of freedom of association: an organization should be able to set up its own rules and the law should not be able to impose society's notions of political correctness on a private group. This episode represents "South Park" at its best — looking at a complicated issue from both sides and coming up with a judicious resolution of the issue. And the principle on which the issue is resolved is freedom. As the episode shows, Big Gay Al should be free to be homosexual, but the Boy Scouts should also be free as an organization to make their own rules and exclude him from a leadership post if they want to.

This libertarianism makes "South Park" offensive to the politically correct, for if applied consistently it would dismantle the whole apparatus of speech control and thought manipulation that do-gooders have tried to construct to protect their favored minorities. With its support for unconditional freedom in all areas of life, libertarianism defies categorization in terms of the standard one-dimensional political spectrum of right and left. In opposition to the collectivist and anticapitalist vision of the left, libertarians reject central planning and want people to be left alone to pursue their self-interest as they see fit. But in contrast to conservatives, libertarians also oppose social legislation, and generally favor the legalization of drugs and the abolition of all censorship and anti-pornography laws.

Parker and Stone have publicly identified themselves as

libertarians, which explains why their show ends up offending both liberals and conservatives.³ Parker has said: "We avoid extremes but we hate liberals more than conservatives."⁴ This does seem to be an accurate assessment of the leanings of the

"South Park" is at one and the same time the most vulgar and the most philosophical show ever to appear on television.

show. Even though it is no friend of the right, "South Park" is more likely to go after leftwing causes. In an interview in "Reason," Matt Stone explained that he and Parker were on the left of the political spectrum when they were in high school in the 1980s, but in order to maintain their stance as rebels, they found that, when they went to the University of Colorado, Boulder, and even more when they arrived in Hollywood, they had to reverse their positions and attack the prevailing leftwing orthodoxy. As Stone says: "I had Birkenstocks in high school. I was that guy. And I was sure that those people on the other side of the political spectrum [the right] were trying to control my life. And then I went to Boulder and got rid of my Birkenstocks immediately, because everyone else had them and I realized that those people over here [on the left] want to control my life too. I guess that defines my political philosophy. If anybody's telling me what I should do, then you've got to really convince me that it's worth doing."⁵

Defending the Undefendable

The libertarianism of Parker and Stone places them at odds with the intellectual establishment of contemporary America. In the academic world, much of the media, and a large part of the entertainment business, especially the Hollywood elite, anticapitalist views generally prevail.⁶ Studies have shown that businessmen are usually portrayed in an unfavorable light in movies and television.⁷ "South Park" takes particular delight in skewering the Hollywood stars who exploit their celebrity to conduct left-wing campaigns against the workings of the free market (Barbra Streisand, Rob Reiner, Sally Struthers, and George Clooney are among the celebrities the show has pilloried). Nothing is more distinctive about "South Park" than its willingness to celebrate the free market, and even to come to the defense of what is evidently the most hated institution in Hollywood, the corporation. For example, in the ninth-season episode "Die Hippie Die," Cartman fights the countercultural forces that invade South Park and mindlessly blame all the troubles of America on "the corporations."

Of all "South Park" episodes, the second season "Gnomes" offers the most fully developed defense of capitalism, and I will attempt a comprehensive interpretation of it in order to demonstrate how genuinely intelligent and thoughtful the show can be. "Gnomes" deals with a common charge against the free market — that it allows large corporations to drive small

businesses into the ground, much to the detriment of consumers. In "Gnomes" a national coffee chain called Harbucks comes to South Park and tries to buy out the local Tweek Bros. coffee shop. Mr. Tweek casts himself as the hero of the story, a small business David battling a corporate Goliath. The episode satirizes the cheap anticapitalist rhetoric in which such conflicts are usually formulated in contemporary America, with the small business shown as purely good and the giant corporation shown as purely evil. "Gnomes" systematically deconstructs this simplistic opposition.

In the conventional picture, the small businessman is presented as somehow being a public servant, unconcerned with profits, simply a friend to his customers, whereas the corporation is presented as greedy and uncaring, doing nothing for the consumer. "Gnomes" shows instead that Mr. Tweek is just as self-interested as any corporation, and he is in fact cannier in promoting himself than Harbucks is. The Harbucks representative, John Postem, is blunt and gruff, an utterly charmless man who thinks he can just state the bare economic truth and get away with it: "Hey, this is a capitalist country, pal — get used to it." The great irony of the episode is that the supposedly sophisticated corporation completely mishandles public relations, naively believing that the superiority of its product will be enough to ensure its triumph in the marketplace.

The common charge against large corporations is that, with their financial resources, they are able to exploit the power of advertising to put small rivals out of business. But Mr. Tweek cleverly turns his disadvantage into an advantage, coming up with the perfect slogan in his circumstances: "Tweek offers a simpler coffee for a simpler America." He thereby exploits his underdog position as a small businessman, at the same time preying upon his customers' nostalgia for an older and presumably simpler society. He keeps launching into commercials for his coffee, accompanied by soft guitar mood music and purple advertising prose; his coffee is "special like an Arizona sunrise or a juniper wet with dew." His son may be appalled by "the metaphors" (actually they're similes), but Mr. Tweek knows just what will appeal to his nature-loving, yuppie customers.

"Gnomes" thus undermines any notion that Mr. Tweek is morally superior to the corporation he's fighting, and in fact the episode suggests that he may be a good deal worse. Going over the top as it always does, "South Park" reveals that the

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coffee shop owner has for years been overcaffeinating his son (one of the regulars in the show) and is in fact responsible for the boy's hypernervousness. Moreover, when faced with the threat from Harbucks, Mr. Tweek seeks sympathy by declar-

ing: "I may have to shut down and sell my son Tweek into slavery." It sounds as if his greed exceeds Harbucks'. But the worst thing about Mr. Tweek is that he's not content with using his slick advertising to compete with Harbucks in a free market. Instead he goes after Harbucks politically, trying to enlist the government on his side to prevent the national chain from coming to South Park. "Gnomes" thus portrays the campaign against large corporations as just one more sorry episode in the long history of businessmen seeking economic protectionism — the kind of alliance between business and government that Adam Smith wrote against in "The Wealth of Nations." Far from the standard Marxist portrayal of monopoly power as the inevitable result of free competition, "South Park" shows that it results only when one business gets the government to intervene on its behalf and restrict free entry into the marketplace.

The Town of South Park vs. Harbucks

Mr. Tweek gets his chance when he finds out that his son and the other boys have been assigned to write a report on a current event. Offering to write the paper for the children, he inveigles them into a topic very much in his self-interest: "how large corporations take over little family-owned businesses," or, more pointedly, "how the corporate machine is ruining America." Kyle can barely get out the polysyllabic words when he delivers the ghostwritten report in class: "As the voluminous corporate automaton bulldozes its way . . ." His language obviously parodies the exaggerated anticapitalist rhetoric of the contemporary left. But the report is a big hit with local officials and soon, much to Mr. Tweek's delight, the mayor is sponsoring Proposition 10, an ordinance that will ban Harbucks from South Park.

In the debate over Prop 10, "Gnomes" portrays the way the media are biased against capitalism and the way the public is manipulated into anti-business attitudes. The boys are enlisted to argue for Prop 10 and the man from Harbucks to argue against it in a television debate. The presentation is slanted from the beginning, when the moderator announces: "On my left, five innocent, starry-eyed boys from Middle America" and "On my right, a big, fat, smelly corporate guy from New York." Postem tries to make a rational argument, grounded in principle: "This country is founded on free enterprise." But the boys triumph in the debate with a somewhat less cogent argument, as Cartman sagely proclaims: "This guy sucks ass."

The television commercial in favor of Prop 10 is no less fraudulent than the debate. Again, "Gnomes" points out that anticorporate advertising can be just as slick as corporate. In particular, the episode shows that the left is willing to go to any length in its anticorporate crusade, exploiting children to tug at the heartstrings of its target audience. In a wonderful parody of a political commercial, the boys are paraded out in a patriotic scene featuring the American flag, while the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" plays softly in the background (the show reminds us that in recent years liberal candidates have begun using patriotic images almost as frequently as conservatives do). Meanwhile the announcer solemnly intones: "Prop 10 is about children. Vote yes on Prop 10 or else you hate children." The ad is "paid for by Citizens for a Fair and Equal Way to Get Harbucks Out of Town Forever." "South Park"

loves to expose the illogic of liberal and left-wing crusaders, and the anti-Harbucks campaign is filled with one non sequitur after another. Pushing the last of the liberal buttons, one woman challenges the Harbucks representative: "How many Native Americans did you slaughter to make that coffee?"

Prop 10 seems to be headed for an easy victory at the polls until the boys encounter some friendly gnomes, who explain something about corporations to them. At the last minute, in

What many intellectuals hold against capitalism is precisely the fact that it has made available to the masses luxuries formerly reserved to cultural elites.

one of the most didactic of the "South Park" concluding message scenes, the boys announce to the puzzled townspeople that they have reversed their position on Prop 10. In the spirit of libertarianism, Kyle proclaims something rarely heard on television outside of a John Stossel report: "Big corporations are good. Because without big corporations we wouldn't have things like cars and computers and canned soup." And Stan comes to the defense of the dreaded Harbucks: "Even Harbucks started off as a small, little business. But because it made such great coffee, and because they ran their business so well, they managed to grow until they became the corporate powerhouse it is today. And that is why we should all let Harbucks stay."

At this point the townspeople do something remarkable — they stop listening to all the political rhetoric and actually taste the rival coffees for themselves. And they discover that Mrs. Tweek (who has been disgusted by her husband's devious tactics) is telling the truth when she says: "Harbucks Coffee got to where it is by being the best." Indeed, as one of the townspeople observes: "It doesn't have that bland, raw sewage taste that Tweek's coffee has." "Gnomes" ends by suggesting that it is only fair that businesses battle it out, not in the political arena, but in the marketplace, and let the best product win. Postem offers Mr. Tweek the job of running the local franchise and everybody is happy.

Politics is a zero-sum, winner-take-all game, in which one business triumphs only by using government power to eliminate a rival, but in the voluntary exchanges that a free market makes possible, all parties benefit from a transaction. Harbucks makes its profit, and Mr. Tweek can continue earning a living without selling his son into slavery. Above all the people of South Park get to enjoy a better brand of coffee. Contrary to the anticorporate propaganda normally coming out of Hollywood, "South Park" argues that, in the absence of government intervention, corporations get where they are by serving the public, not by exploiting it. As Ludwig von Mises, the eminent economic theorist, makes the point:

The profit system makes those men prosper who have suc-

ceeded in filling the wants of the people in the best possible and cheapest way. Wealth can be acquired only by serving the consumers. The capitalists lose their funds as soon as they fail to invest them in those lines in which they satisfy best the demands of the public. In a daily repeated plebiscite in which every penny gives a right to vote the consumers determine who should own and run the plants, shops and farms.⁸

The Great Gnome Mystery Solved

But what about the gnomes, who, after all, give the episode its title? Where do they fit in? I never could understand how the subplot in "Gnomes" related to the main plot until I was lecturing on the episode at a summer institute and my colleague Michael Valdez Moses made a breakthrough that allowed us to put together the episode as a whole. In the subplot, Tweek complains to anybody who will listen that every night at 3:30 AM gnomes sneak into his bedroom and steal his underpants. Nobody else can see this remarkable phenomenon happening, not even when the other boys stay up late with Tweek to observe it, not even when the emboldened gnomes start robbing underpants in broad daylight in the mayor's office. We know two things about these strange beings: (1) they are gnomes; (2) they are normally invisible. Both facts point in the direction of capitalism. As in the phrase "gnomes of Zurich," which refers to bankers, gnomes are often associated with the world of finance. In the first opera of Wagner's Ring Cycle, "Das Rheingold," the gnome Alberich serves as a symbol of the capitalist exploiter — and he forges the Tarnhelm, a cap of invisibility.⁹ The idea of invisibility calls to mind Adam Smith's famous notion of the "invisible hand" that guides the free market.¹⁰

In short, the underpants gnomes are an image of capitalism and the way it is normally — and mistakenly — pictured by its opponents. The gnomes represent the ordinary business activity that is always going on in plain sight of everyone, but which people fail to notice and fail to understand. The citizens of South Park are unaware that the ceaseless activity of large corporations like Harbucks is necessary to provide them with all the goods they enjoy in their daily lives. They take it for

When the boys ask the underpants gnomes to tell them about corporations, all they can offer is an enigmatic diagram of the stages of their business. The diagram encapsulates the economic illiteracy of the American public.

granted that the shelves of their supermarkets will always be amply stocked with a wide variety of goods and never appreciate all the capitalist entrepreneurs who make that abundance possible.

What is worse, the ordinary citizens misinterpret capitalist activity as theft. They focus only on what businessmen take from them — their money — and forget about what they get in return, all the goods and services. Above all, people have no understanding of the basic facts of economics and have no idea of why businessmen deserve the profits they earn. Business is a complete mystery to them; it seems to be a matter of gnomes sneaking around in the shadows and mischievously heaping up piles of goods for no apparent purpose. Friedrich Hayek noted this longstanding tendency to misinterpret normal business activities as sinister:

Such distrust and fear have . . . led ordinary people . . . to regard trade . . . as suspicious, inferior, dishonest, and contemptible. . . . Activities that appear to add to available wealth, 'out of nothing,' without physical creation and by merely rearranging what already exists, stink of sorcery. . . . That a mere change of hands should lead to a gain in value to all participants, that it need not mean gain to one at the expense of the others (or what has come to be called exploitation), was and is nonetheless intuitively difficult to grasp. . . . Many people continue to find the mental feats associated with trade easy to discount even when they do not attribute them to sorcery, or see them as depending on trick or fraud or cunning deceit.¹¹

Even the gnomes do not understand what they themselves are doing. Perhaps "South Park" is suggesting that the real problem is that businessmen themselves lack the economic knowledge they would need to explain their activity to the public and justify their profits. When the boys ask the gnomes to tell them about corporations, all they can offer is this enigmatic diagram of the stages of their business:

<u>Phase 1</u>	<u>Phase 2</u>	<u>Phase 3</u>
Collect Underpants	?	Profit

This chart encapsulates the economic illiteracy of the American public. They can see no connection between the activities businessmen undertake and the profits they make. What businessmen actually contribute to the economy is a big question mark to them.¹² The fact that businessmen are rewarded for taking risks, correctly anticipating consumer demands, and efficiently financing, organizing, and managing production is lost on most people. They would rather complain about the obscene profits of corporations and condemn their power in the marketplace.

The "invisible hand" passage of Smith's "Wealth of Nations" reads like a gloss on the "Gnomes" episode of "South Park":

As every individual, therefore, endeavours as much as he can both to employ his capital in the support of domestick industry, and so to direct that industry that its produce may be of the greatest value; every individual necessarily labours to render the annual revenue of the society as great as he can. He genuinely, indeed, neither intends to promote the publick interest, nor knows how much he is promoting it. By preferring the support of domestick to that of foreign industry, he intends only his own security, and by directing that industry in such a manner as its produce may be of the greatest value, he intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention. Nor is it always the worse for the society that

it was no part of it. By pursuing his own interest he frequently promotes that of the society more effectively than when he really intends to promote it. I have never known much good done by those who affected to trade for the publick good.¹³

The "Gnomes" episode exemplifies this idea of the "invisible hand." The economy does not need to be guided by the very visible and heavy hand of government regulation for the public interest to be served. Without any central planning, the free market produces a prosperous economic order. The free interaction of producers and consumers and the constant interplay of supply and demand work so that people generally have access to the goods they want. Like Adam Smith, Parker and Stone are deeply suspicious of people who speak about the public good and condemn the private pursuit of profit. As we see in the case of Mr. Tweek, such people are usually hypocrites, pursuing their self-interest under the cover of championing the public interest. And the much-maligned gnomes of the world, the corporations, while openly pursuing their own profit, end up serving the public interest by providing the goods and services people really want.

Et Tu, Wal-Mart?

The dissemination of an earlier version of this essay on the internet brought the wrath of the anticorporate intelligentsia down upon me. I was accused of having sold my soul for a double latte. (For the record, I don't even drink coffee.) I had already noticed that whenever I lectured on "South Park" at college campuses, nothing infuriated my audiences more than my explication of "Gnomes," with its implicit championing of Starbucks. I am somewhat mystified by the way this particular episode provokes so much indignation, but I think it has something to do with the defensiveness of intellectual elitists when confronted with their own elitism. What many intellectuals hold against capitalism is precisely the fact that it has made available to the masses luxuries formerly reserved to cultural elites, including their beloved mocha cappuccinos.

For roughly a century, the left argued unsuccessfully that capitalism impoverishes the masses. But the continuing economic success of capitalism forced the left to change its tune and charge that free markets produce too many goods, overwhelming consumers with a dizzying array of choices that turns them into materialists and thus impoverishes their souls rather than bodies. Parker and Stone regularly do a marvelous job of exposing the puritanical character of the contemporary left. It doesn't want people to have fun in any form, whether laughing at ethnic jokes or indulging in fast food. As Cartman might say: "You can impoverish my soul all you like, as long as I can still have my Cheesy Poofs."

Having had the audacity to defend Starbucks, in its eighth season "South Park" took the even more radical and politically incorrect step of rallying to the cause of Wal-Mart, using an even more thinly disguised name in an episode called "Something Wall-Mart This Way Comes." The episode is brilliantly cast in the mold of a cheesy horror movie, as the sinister power of a Wal-Mart-like superstore takes over the town of South Park amid lengthening shadows, darkening clouds, and ominous flashes of lightning. The Wall-Mart exerts "some mystical evil force" over the townspeople. Try as they may, they cannot resist its bargain prices. Just as in "Gnomes," a local merchant starts complaining about his inability to

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compete with a national retail chain. In mock sympathy, Cartman plays soupy violin music to accompany his lament. When Kyle indignantly smashes the violin, Cartman replies simply: "I can go get another one at Wall-Mart — it was only five bucks."

Widespread public opposition to the Wall-Mart develops and efforts are made to boycott it, ban it, and even burn it down (the latter to the uplifting strain of "Kumbaya"). But like any good monster, the evil Wall-Mart keeps springing back to life and the townspeople are irresistibly drawn to its well-stocked aisles at all hours ("Where else was I going to get a napkin dispenser at 9:30 at night?"). All these horror movie clichés are a way of making fun of how Wal-Mart is demonized by the intellectuals in our society. They present the national chain as some kind of external power, independent of human beings, which somehow manages to impose itself upon them against their will — a literal "corporate monster." At times the townspeople talk as if they simply have no choice in going to the superstore, but at other times they reveal what in fact attracts them — lower prices that allow them to stretch their incomes and enjoy more of the good things in life. (To be even-handed, the episode does stress at several points the absurdities of buying in bulk just to get a bargain, for example, ending up with enough Ramen noodles "to last a thousand winters.")

In the grand horror movie tradition, the boys finally set out to find the heart of the Wall-Mart and destroy it. Stan Marsh's father, Randy, has gone to work for the Wall-Mart for the sake of an extra 10% employee discount, but he nevertheless tries to help the boys reach their objective. As they get closer, though, Randy notes with increasing horror: "The Wall-Mart is lowering its prices to try to stop us." He deserts the children when he sees a screwdriver set marked down beyond belief. "This bargain is too great for me," he cries, rushing off to a cash register to make his purchase. When the boys at last reach the heart of the Wall-Mart, it turns out to be a mirror in which they see themselves. In one of those didactic moments libertarians must learn to love, the spirit of the superstore tells the children: "That is the heart of Wall-Mart — you, the con-

sumer. I take many forms — Wal-Mart, K-Mart, Target — but I am one single entity — desire."

Once again, "South Park" proclaims the sovereignty of the consumer in a market economy. If people keep flocking to a superstore, it must be doing something right, and satisfying their desires. Randy tells the townspeople: "The Wall-Mart is us. If we like our small-town charm more than the big corporate bullies, we all have to be willing to pay a little bit more." There is the free market solution to the superstore problem; no government need intervene. The townspeople accordingly march off to a local store named Jim's Drugs and start patronizing it. The store is so successful that it starts growing, and eventually mutates into — you guessed it — a superstore just like Wal-Mart. "South Park" has no problem with big businesses when they get big by pleasing their customers.

Parker and Stone acknowledge that they themselves work for a large corporation, the cable channel Comedy Central, which is owned by the media giant, Viacom. In the "Reason" interview, Stone says: "People ask, 'So how is it working for a big multinational conglomerate?' I'm like, 'It's pretty good, you know? We can say whatever we want. It's not bad. I mean, there are worse things.'"¹⁴ Anticorporate intellectuals would dispute that claim, and point to several occasions when Comedy Central pulled "South Park" episodes off the air in response to various pressure groups, including their parent company.¹⁵ But despite such occasional interference, the fact is that it was Comedy Central that financed the production of "South Park" from the beginning and thus made it possible in the first place. Over the years, the corporation has given Parker and Stone unprecedented creative freedom in shaping a show for television — not because the corporate executives are partisans of free speech and trenchant satire but because the show has developed a market niche and been profitable. "South Park" does not simply defend the free market in its episodes — it is itself living proof of how markets work to create value and benefit producers and consumers alike. □

This article was revised and enlarged from an essay originally published in "South Park and Philosophy," ed. Robert Arp (Blackwell, 2007).

Notes

1. "Symposium," 221E–222A. Quoted in the translation of W.R.M. Lamb, "Plato: Lysis, Symposium, Gorgias," Loeb Classical Library (Harvard University Press, 1925) 239.

2. "The Clouds," lines 392–94. Quoted in the translation of William Arrowsmith, "The Clouds" (New American Library, 1962) 45.

3. See, for example, "They Killed Kenny . . . and Revolutionized Comedy," "CQ," February 2006, where Matt Stone says: "We're libertarian. Which is basically: Leave me alone — and I'm okay with drugs and gays" (146).

4. As quoted in Brian C. Anderson, "South Park Conservatives: The Revolt against Liberal Media Bias" (Regnery, 2005) 178.

5. "Reason" 38.7 (December, 2006) 66.

6. For an analysis of why such groups turn against capitalism, see Ludwig von Mises, "The Anticapitalistic Mentality" (D. Van Nostrand, 1956) and especially 30–33 for the turn against capitalism in Hollywood.

7. A perfect example of Hollywood's portrayal of businessmen is the cruel banker Mr. Potter in the classic "It's a Wonderful Life" (directed by Frank Capra, 1946). For a comprehensive survey of the portrayal of businessmen in American popular culture, see the chapter "The culture industry's representation of business" in Don Lavoie and Emily Chamlee-Wright, "Culture and Enterprise: The development, representation and morality of business" (Routledge, 2000), 80–103. Here are some representative figures from media studies: "Of all the antagonists studied in over 30 years of programming, businessmen were twice as likely to play the role of antagonist than any other identifiable occupation. Business characters are nearly three times as likely to be criminals, relative to other occupations on television. They represent 12 percent of all characters in identifiable occupations, but

account for 32 percent of crimes. Forty-four percent of all vice crimes such as prostitution and drug trafficking committed on television, and 40 percent of TV murders, are perpetrated by business people" (84).

8. Mises, "Anticapitalistic Mentality" 2.

9. George Bernard Shaw offers this interpretation of Alberich; see his "The Perfect Wagnerite" (1898) in George Bernard Shaw, "Major Critical Essays" (Penguin, 1986) 198, 205.

10. For the way H.G. Wells uses invisibility as a symbol of capitalism, see my essay "The Invisible Man and the Invisible Hand: H.G. Wells's Critique of Capitalism," "American Scholar" 68, 3 (1999) 89–102.

11. F.A. Hayek, "The Fatal Conceit: The Errors of Socialism" (University of Chicago Press, 1988) 90, 91, 93.

12. Several email responses to an earlier version of this essay argued that the gnomes' diagram makes fun of the sketchy business plans that flooded the Initial Public Offering market in the heyday of the dotcom boom in the 1990s. Having helped write one such document myself, I know what these correspondents are referring to, but I still think that my interpretation of this scene fits its dramatic context better. If the gnomes' business plan satirizes dotcom IPOs, then it really has no relation to the rest of the episode.

13. Adam Smith, "An Enquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations" (1776; reprinted by Liberty Classics, 1981) I.456.

14. "Reason" interview, 63.

15. The episodes in question were pulled only from the repeat rotation; they were allowed to air originally and they are now once again available in the DVD sets of the series.

Somalia: The Rubble And the Blossom

by Vince Vasquez

Go to the world's worst-run country, and discover
that what the government can't run, prospers.

International media outlets reported this March that rebel fighters in war-torn Somalia shot down a foreign military helicopter in the nation's largest city, dragging the bodies of dead soldiers through rotting streets with an air of jubilation. The scene evoked memories of the United Nations' earlier, failed intervention in the anarchic country, an intervention that resulted in the loss of 18 U.S. soldiers. Though many would conclude that little has changed in this lawless land between 1993 and now, an economic blossom has emerged from the national rubble with more peacemaking power than any military mission or unanimous resolution passed on the floor of the Security Council.

Few corners of the world evoke more images of despair than Africa, home of some of the most broken, poverty-stricken nations on the planet. Chief among those is Somalia, a country of more than 8 million people that has lacked a functioning central government for over a decade and is beset with one of the highest infant mortality rates in the region. But it wasn't always that way.

Freed from its European colonial overseers, the United Kingdom and Italy, in July 1960, Somalia had a promising start as a fledgling democracy. But a brief glimmer of fair elections and individual freedoms came to an end in 1969, when a military coup installed General Mohamed Siad Barre as president, in charge of a Soviet-style Marxist regime. Practicing what he described as "scientific socialism," Barre coerced a

nation of nomads and herdsmen into the new direction of large-scale public projects. During the next two decades his regime nationalized industries, jailed thousands of dissidents, and stifled free speech. The human costs of his boldly statist objectives were egregiously high. As Amnesty International noted in a 1988 report, "Human rights have been persistently violated in Somalia ever since 1969 when the present government assumed power. The evidence reveals a consistent pattern of torture, lengthy and often arbitrary detention of suspected political opponents of the government and unfair trials."

As for the regime's effect on the economy, a good example was what happened to the telecommunications industry. What little telecommunications infrastructure was laid in Somalia during its colonial and democratic periods was quickly seized by Barre. The entire industry was reorganized under a single, state-owned monopoly, administered by the

newly fashioned Ministry of Post and Telecommunications. It is estimated that the Ministry inherited a small telegram system and an overworked telephone network of roughly 7,000 land lines, almost all of which were in Mogadishu, the country's capital and home to more than a million people. By the end of Barre's rule in 1991, government bureaucrats managed to do little more than double the number of land lines, accomplishing this only through the expertise and resources of generous foreign powers. Following a "master plan" drafted by UN technocrats to modernize Somalia's telecom infrastructure, more than \$60 million in projects were completed in the 1980s with an amalgam of loans, grants, and technical assistance from Japan, France, Italy, the Arab Development Fund, and the African Development Bank.

Even poor nations can embrace public policies that retain and augment a skilled workforce, create a consumer market, and encourage indigenous entrepreneurship and investment, thereby reducing the need for international handouts. But the practical experience of socialist systems throughout history has been that personal communication is perceived as a threat that must be placed under tight government control, so as to isolate and maintain power over people and markets, and promote the unfeasible goals of bureaucrats and the dictators they obey. Having eliminated incentives for private-sector investment and curbed the individual liberties of the populace, Somali officials had to depend on the goodwill of public leaders from more open, capitalist countries.

With no small businesses to speak of, and most citizens living on measly government wages, unable to afford the high rates of a phone call, the new-and-improved telecom network was a worthless edifice that served no one, a testament to the failures of state-controlled economies. Not surprisingly, the nation's phone network continued to decay even after additional upgrades. A newly installed President Barre proclaimed that Somalia had "broken the chain of a consumer economy based on imports" by breaking away from democracy, and that under socialism, the people would be "free to decide [their] destiny." The effects of his plan were evident. But after more than 20 years of dictatorship, the East Africans finally did take their future into their own hands.

Somali rebels, tired of Barre's costly military misadventures and human rights abuses, took up arms against the increasingly totalitarian government, overthrowing the dictator in 1991. A low-level civil conflict in Somalia has continued until today, replacing welfare statism with anarchy, as

market economy and individual choice; and these, in turn, have buoyed the nation from complete collapse. In addition, they have fostered some innovative solutions to the problem of meeting human needs in the vast, arid land.

For telecom, the industry's rebirth had to begin at ground zero. During the revolution that ousted Barre, marauders stripped the nation clean of anything that could be sold, including phone lines and other communications equipment. But starting from scratch proved easier when bureaucrats weren't in the way to tax and regulate business, directing the flow of investment for political reasons.

As *The Economist* noted in 1999, phone networks "are at the heart of Somalia's survival and recovery." Phones allow Somalis to stay in touch with their friends abroad and facilitate business deals between roaming herdsman and foreign meat markets. The millions of Somalis who live outside the country send up to an estimated \$1 billion back to their homeland each year. Because Somalia is strategically located on the Horn of Africa, at the mouth of the Red Sea and between major African and Arab markets, some expatriates saw Somalia as a lucrative business opportunity when the Barre government was overthrown. With the financial and business support of foreign and domestic investors, a new wave of entrepreneurs returned home to set up shop, serve local needs, and build the country they always believed it was possible to create.

Today, after more than a decade of anarchy, five major Somali-owned telephone companies, about a dozen mobile companies, and at least three internet service providers serve markets in Somalia, offering a range of top-notch products and affordable service plans. In all, more than 100,000 land lines have been strung throughout the country, half a million cellular phone subscriptions have been sold, and 90,000 internet users access the Web in cafes across the country. Marketplace competition keeps prices low and value high for consumers. As the CIA World Factbook states, "telecommunications firms provide wireless services in most major cities and offer the lowest international call rates on the continent." Somalia has more robust telecom investment and adoption than many of its neighbors — according to 2004 figures from the World Bank, the nation bests stable neighbors Ethiopia and Eritrea with regard to the number of phone lines, mobile subscriptions, and internet users per thousand residents.

The reason for this astonishing success? No government.

In the absence of industry bureaucrats, there is no need to obtain an operating license or a franchise to provide service; supply is free to meet unbridled demand. There are no legacy rules or government-sanctioned monopolies that would make investment unprofitable, or label certain technologies or markets off-limits. Lacking government lawmakers to create pork projects, mismanage funds, and engender budgetary shortfalls, there are no industry taxes to nickel and dime companies to death, nor any user fees or surcharges on consumer bills. Lacking duties or customs officials, entrepreneurs can bring equipment cheaply through private airstrips and ports, without the long delays or additional business costs incurred in public facilities. As one telecom entrepreneur put it, "The collapse of Somalia has been good for business. In many ways it is much better off than before. Then we had state monopolies and bureaucracy and corruption, and all the wealth was in Mogadishu."

The reason for this astonishing success? No government.

no aspiring faction has been strong enough to gain control of the entire country. It has been an unlovely and at times a horrifying spectacle. Because of the turmoil, however, state monopolies and public works have made way for a free-

And so far, the Somali telecom industry has successfully kept itself in check, united by a common desire for growth and profits. In 1998, local service providers came together to form the Somali Telecom Association, a self-regulating body that collects sector data, facilitates communication and business relationships, and offers training and development in the war-torn nation. Three telephone companies combined to set up the Global Internet Company, to administer the deployment of common internet network infrastructure, and, according to its website, provide services to startups and venture capitalists, including graphic design, marketing, research, and business development. In November 2005, five major phone companies voluntarily came to an agreement and introduced interconnection services for customers, allowing them to speak to one another across the various private networks. Other companies have followed suit, penning similar agreements with their rivals.

Though anarchy has its benefits for some risk-takers, it also has its shortcomings. Instability and security concerns are persistent problems, as anyone with a gun on the streets can rob or kill, or hold businesses hostage in the marketplace. Yet, even in the absence of the rule of law, or even a local banking system, profit-making companies persist, and attempt to work out their problems. Banking needs are handled in nearby Dubai or the United Arab Emirates, where many of the larger telecom companies are headquartered, and financial transactions are completed in dollars or euros. Mobile phone subscriptions are prepaid, and some landline companies use calling cards. Contracts can be enforced through the traditional clan system, and security is maintained either by hiring private guards or by contracting protection services from local warlords. Militias and gunmen would be foolish to destroy cell towers or disable phone lines, unless they wanted to be left without phone service themselves. Risks are very high, costs are all incurred up front, and there aren't any insurance or special government bailout programs if the political turmoil gets worse and enterprises fail. But economic frontiers are tamed by the strong and the brave, people who are willing to take risks for the chance to reap rewards.

Some may argue that the basis for telecom investment and entrepreneurship didn't exist before the collapse of the Barre regime. To be sure, satellite technology has dropped in price in the last few years, and internet access and mobile phones didn't hit the mass consumer markets until the mid-1990s, after Barre's overthrow. Even before that time, however, a capitalist economy would have spurred the adoption of additional service providers and alternate technologies, such as coaxial cable, which has been used commercially to deliver voice and video services since the 1940s. Lawmakers always have the option of fostering marketplace competition, empowering companies and consumers to chart an organic path of economic growth and capital investment.

Recently, the international community has sought to set in place a "new Somalia," but it's doubtful whether the plan serves the interests of Somalis. A UN-backed transitional federal government (TFG) was installed in Mogadishu in December 2006 after Ethiopian troops and TFG supporters wrested Islamic rebels from their regional strongholds. But Ethiopian troops, long reviled by Somalis recalling previous military engagements, have since taken up residence in

Somalia, serving as foreign occupiers; and this has not gone over well, even with pro-government Somalis. The Islamic radicals and other antigovernment forces have gone underground, waging a guerrilla war in the streets of Mogadishu

Socialist systems perceive personal communication as a threat that must be placed under tight government control, so as to isolate and maintain power over people and markets.

that has claimed hundreds of lives. This is the conflict that culminated in the bold attack on an Ethiopian helicopter that for many in America was all too reminiscent of "Black Hawk Down."

More troubling are the initial acts of the TFG, which has tasted the same cup of power from which President Barre once drank. Rather than take a fresh approach to providing security and fighting the radicals, TFG officials in early 2007 quickly called for everyday Somalis to surrender their arms to the state, and even shut down news media outlets they felt were "being biased" in their coverage of the conflict. Unfortunately for Somalis, these actions seem to come more from Barre's old policy playbook than the precepts of a democratic institution.

In the search for a lasting peace, heavy-handed foreign intervention and artificial, big-government solutions are poor choices for securing the loyalty of a tough, independent people that isn't likely to lay down arms and pay federal taxes so that Mogadishu can become an African Paris or San Francisco. Rather than continue efforts to impose foreign occupiers and a strong centralized government, leaders in the international community should put their energies into a bottom-up approach that recognizes local control, the importance of the basic rule of law, and the value of extending telecommunications across the nation.

A nation blanketed with information access and phone service can enjoy greater trade, greater growth, and stronger human relationships, both domestically and internationally. A vibrant communications backbone will encourage greater foreign direct investment and participation of expatriates in Somali society and the marketplace. In the absence of a strong central government, local police and courts, financed by local residents, can meet the needs of both businesses and the populace. If Somalis can feel secure in their own country, and tend to the needs of their families and their communities, they will be in a better position to consider the prospects of greater regional and national peacemaking efforts.

In the end, peace in this ravaged land may be nothing more than a phone call away, and pursuing that possibility may give Somalis a better chance at a lasting armistice than any bureaucrat or blue helmet could ever provide. □

Live Earth: Dead Show

by Tim Slagle

Faster than a sputtering Prius . . . more powerful than an icebreaker bound for Antarctica . . . able to wipe out liberal guilt with a single carbon offset . . . it's Al Gore!

Al Gore's new book, "The Assault on Reason," hit the shelves in May. Advance reviews and excerpts indicate more of his trademark condescending sighs — 308 pages of Al Gore shaking his head and telling us that we just don't get it. He believes Americans are so used to getting their information from emotional 30-second soundbites that we don't have the attention span to appreciate his smoldering intellect. On July 7, he tried to sell his anthropogenic global warming theory with Live Earth, a big rock show. Well, if you can't beat them, join them.

The whole global warming debate has been an Assault on Reason. Our exposure to the topic comes from those fearful soundbites: meteorologists speculating about why Chicago would see a 70-degree day in the middle of January, why there might be a mudslide in California, or a tornado in Kansas. The people delivering the message are more likely to be rock stars and politicians than climate scientists or tree surgeons; they're likely to be the ones who took the easy courses in college. From what I've learned, Al Gore probably doesn't even understand basic geography.

But who really needed to be made aware of global warming? Apparently there was a large group of potheads who have been so overwhelmed with trying to reach the next level of "Doom" for the past 13 years that they haven't seen the headlines about the earth in crisis. The only way to reach this lost demographic was to lure them out of their parents' basements with a rock show.

Except with this group, warming is part of the American conscience. People at the bank no longer ask if it's hot enough for you, if you brought the cold weather along, or if you mistakenly ordered all that rain. Today, when the temperature becomes unbearably hot, people just blame global warming. In the winter it is used as an excuse for a cold snap, sometimes without irony.

Americans have stubbornly resisted any global warming legislation, but it's not because we're unaware. With gas approaching four bucks a gallon, who isn't cutting back on the unnecessary trips? Do we really need another round of "Turn down your thermostat, and inflate your tires?" Most of the ideas proposed thus far are ridiculously impractical, like taking a bicycle to work. (Fine if you're a 20-year old living in Southern California.)

The only real solution is increasing taxes on energy. This would effectively price all the things that make America so delightful out of the reach of middle America. Air

conditioning, big cars, and pleasure craft would be accessible only to people like Al Gore. The resistance that the global warming proponents note is a well-reasoned refusal to accept a lower standard of life.

Yet in preparation for the show, Gore said, "The task of saving the global environment is a task we should all approach with a sense of joy." Joy. Giving up cars, boats and air conditioning should be approached with joy. This is probably like the ecstasy a flagellant monk feels as he mortifies his flesh with a cat o' nine tails.

Nobody wants to sacrifice, including the Live Earth rock stars. No musicians used unamplified instruments. The stage wasn't lit with CFLs. Madonna kept her microphone plugged in, even though she barely used it. And for the first time ever, she actually pretended to play an electric guitar.

According to the original press release: "[Live Earth's] aim is not just to drive awareness but to get people to take action . . . These actions are likely to include personal pledges to reduce emissions, for instance by using energy efficient equipment or flying less." But in the seven-point pledge, flying less is noticeably absent (see inset). Apparently someone passed Al Gore the definition of the word "irony." It's hard to ask people to fly less when you've got rock stars circumnavigating the globe.

The original plan was to perform "seven major concerts on seven continents." That would have required a flight into Antarctica. The only reason for an Antarctic show would be to make the continent count coincide with the concert date of 7/7/07, as well as the seven-point pledge. An Antarctic flight would only be a necessary expense for an obsessive-compulsive. There is a good chance that when the organizers conceptualized these shows, they hoped to photograph drowning polar bears and collapsing ice sheets: dramatic examples of the crisis we are facing. But they apparently forgot that Antarctica is on the bottom of the earth, and July 7 is midwinter there. It's dark almost 24 hours a day, and temperatures can reach 130 degrees below zero. So much for photographing those melting ice sheets. Oh yeah, and polar bears don't live there either. Then also, it must have been hard locating a stadium in Antarctica that was capable of hosting such a grand event, and wasn't already booked.

According to Linda Capper, press representative for the British Antarctic Survey, back in February Gore's office contacted the BAS requesting a flight into the Rothera Research station in Antarctica. He wanted to bring an "undisclosed artiste" to perform there. Rothera is under British jurisdiction and hosts a winter population of 22 residents. Gore was probably fairly certain he could get the flight in, too. In February, he boasted that Live Earth would present the "first ever rock concert in Antarctica." Unfortunately planes cannot land in July; the airports close for the season in March. Ships cannot get in after April, because of the sea ice (which, contrary to "An Inconvenient Truth," has not all melted). We all remember the story of the Russian Antarctic scientist who performed an appendectomy on himself one winter, because the only help his nation could provide was air-dropping a mirror, some clean scalpels, and a bottle of vodka.

When it was learned that a real concert would be impossible, Linda Capper suggested that perhaps some of the

scientists could play. Linda told me, "We have a house band — five of our science team. They are very good indie rock-folk fusion. The remaining 17 will be the audience on location." The band's name is Nunatak, which is a Greenlandic word meaning a mountain peak, rising above the ice.

Transportation is one of the biggest contributors to greenhouse gases. Even food transportation is scrutinized by environmentalists. Guidelines for presenting a green event were handed out by Live Earth and included suggestions to minimize the miles the products traveled and request local supplies whenever feasible. However, the Live Earth bookers sent American acts — the Red Hot Chili Peppers and the Beastie Boys — to the U.K., and British acts — Roger Waters and the Police — to the U.S. No word on who was supposed to get that trip to Antarctica.

As the date approached, things weren't looking very good for Live Earth. The Istanbul show was completely cancelled for lack of interest. The Rio de Janeiro show was free, but attracted far fewer (100,000) than the projected million, fewer than the Rolling Stones did just a month before (200,000). The Hamburg show still had half the tickets available only two days before the show and started giving them away.

Of course, that might have been because the headliner of the Hamburg show was a virtual unknown named Yusuf. Some might recognize Yusuf from his original identity as '70s pop star Cat Stevens. He fell into obscurity after converting to Islam and changing his name to Yusuf Islam. He wasn't heard from again until years later, when he made a famous remark to the effect that perhaps Salman Rushdie should be executed for his book, "The Satanic Verses" (New York Times, May 23, 1989).

Yusuf appeared, not in the robes he originally wore when

I PLEDGE:

1. To demand that my country join an international treaty within the next 2 years that cuts global warming pollution by 90% in developed countries and by more than half worldwide in time for the next generation to inherit a healthy earth;

2. To take personal action to help solve the climate crisis by reducing my own CO₂ pollution as much as I can and offsetting the rest to become "carbon neutral";

3. To fight for a moratorium on the construction of any new generating facility that burns coal without the capacity to safely trap and store the CO₂;

4. To work for a dramatic increase in the energy efficiency of my home, workplace, school, place of worship, and means of transportation;

5. To fight for laws and policies that expand the use of renewable energy sources and reduce dependence on oil and coal;

6. To plant new trees and to join with others in preserving and protecting forests; and,

7. To buy from businesses and support leaders who share my commitment to solving the climate crisis and building a sustainable, just, and prosperous world for the 21st century.

he converted to Islam, but looking quite Western in jeans and a button-down shirt. The only suggestion of his religion was his square-cut beard. He even dropped the Islam from his name, using only his first name, much like Cher, Madonna, and Bullwinkle. (I think he's trying to warm up to the West again. It's hard even for a humble Muslim to face obscurity.) I wonder, now that he's an environmentalist, if he imagines a similar pronouncement of death for SUV drivers?

There was one speaker of the day who might not disagree with such an idea. Paranoid ex-heroin user Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., lambasted the New Jersey crowd with a voice raw from rage. His speech stood out for its passion and commitment and anger. It also confirmed my suspicion that this whole movement isn't just about changing light bulbs, that there might be more sinister motives behind the message.

"It is more important," he said, "than buying compact fluorescent light bulbs or than buying a fuel efficient automobile. The most important thing you can do is to get involved in the political process and get rid of all of these rotten politicians that we have in Washington, D.C. — who are nothing more than corporate toadies for companies like Exxon and Southern Company, these villainous companies that consistently put their private financial interest ahead of American interest and ahead of the interest of all of humanity. This is treason and we need to start treating them now as traitors."

Wow. I haven't heard talk like that since communism went out of fashion back in the early '90s. Let's round up the capitalists! Grab your machete, Yusuf!

As for Nunatak, they finally appeared on stage around 1 a.m. on 07/08/07 (EDT). I was surprised to see them playing outside in the daylight. Since it is close to midwinter in Antarctica, and in the video the sun was fairly high in the sky, I suspected this was a part of "Live" Earth that was less than live. A quick note to Linda confirmed my speculation. The tape was actually made back in June. There is no way to transmit high-resolution video at a live rate out of the Rothera Station, so they sent video files back to England via the internet, and

had them edited. I'm guessing they had to add a soundtrack as well, since the guitars weren't plugged in.

Is this what anyone would call a "Major Concert" (as the original press release claimed)? No. It was obviously just a last-minute cover-up for a really bad idea. It appears that Al Gore, leader of the climate change movement, and Champion of Reason, would flunk Earth Science 101.

I wonder how many people thought they were watching a live performance. Or how many people were even watching. Ratings for the show were dismal, and turnout lukewarm

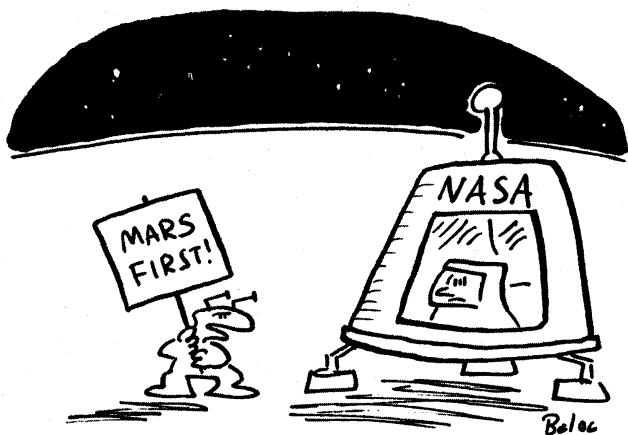
The people delivering the message are more likely to be rock stars and politicians than climate scientists or tree surgeons; they're likely to be the ones who took the easy courses in college.

at best. Here in the U.S., the TV show "Cops" beat out Live Earth in that time slot. Excuses were made around the world for the less than stellar audience. The weather, of course, was specially blamed. The U.K. leg of the concert held the unusually good weather responsible for the bad TV ratings, while South Africa complained that the unusually cold weather probably kept people away from the live show. It made me wonder whether global warming could be blamed for cold weather *and* for nice weather, in which case this concert was long overdue.

The most likely reason that people didn't tune in was just that they thought the show was stupid. How does jetting rock stars around the globe help the planet? It is one thing for Al Gore to fly around the world on a mission to get people to stop flying around the world, but it is completely different when you've got 100 of the world's biggest stars flying around in 100 private planes. Originally Gore planned on appearing live at both the U.K. and U.S. shows — until someone explained that this dual appearance might agitate those of us who are sensitive to hypocrisy. He took Amtrak between appearances in D.C. and N.J. and, surprisingly, still made the N.J. show. I guess that certain people *can* make the trains run on time.

Chris Rock had the best line of the event when he said in an interview with Jonathan Ross: "I pray that this event ends . . . global warming the same way Live Aid ended world hunger." Me too. I also hope that the cynicism shining through those words, along with the poor ratings, signal that the world is finally starting to realize the true motives of these charlatans. It's all about politics, and what they want is standards imposed on *us* that *they* have no intention of complying with.

Yes, there has been an Assault on Reason. And last Saturday, I saw the weapon. □



"That thing better not burn fossil fuels!"

Me and the Eiger

by Murray N. Rothbard

Murray Rothbard (1926–1995) was a distinguished economist and libertarian theorist. He was one of the original Associate Editors of *Liberty*. The Eiger is a peak in the Swiss Alps.

This essay appeared in *Liberty*'s March 1988 issue.

There are ethnocultural gaps between people that go far beyond ideology. I was forcibly reminded of this truth when I recently attended a scholarly conference at a beautiful rural spot. The twenty or so conferees were all intelligent, amiable, and scholarly, but I soon realized that there was an unbridgeable gulf between them and me. I'm not talking about the content of the conference, which was . . . a conference. I'm talking about the conversation that permeated the place outside of the formal sessions, over meals and over drinks. I soon realized, to my chagrin, that none of their conversation held the slightest interest for me. Not a word, not a thought, did they devote to human *culture* — to ideas, books, movies, politics, gossip. Nothing. Instead, they only talked about *nature*. They talked about the contents of the local soil, about the winds, about why it is that the grass freezes overnight more quickly if the climate is dry (or is it when humid?), about the ozone layer, and the ecosystem. Yecch!

At one point, I perked up. Two of my colleagues were talking about the "Eiger Sanction." At last I piped up: "Yes, that was a great Clint Eastwood movie." They looked at me as if I were crazy, and I realized, with mounting horror, that they were talking about the *real* Eiger, and how they had each lost several friends and relatives in their attempt to climb the dread south face (or is it the north face?) of the Eiger.

Let's face it: the difference is ethnic. I am willing to assert that there is not a single Jew who has ever climbed the Eiger, of whatever face, or had the slightest inclination to do so. Any Jew worth his salt regards any yen to climb the Eiger as *mashuggah* (crazy) and the famous answer of Sir Edmund Hillary to why he climbed mountains, "because they are there," as scarcely compelling. So why not swallow a big dose of cyanide because "it is there"? Climbing the Eiger is a striking example of what a friend of mine calls *goyim-nachas* (gen-

tile-happiness). Note what I am not saying: I am not saying that every single WASP talks about nothing but winds and the soil and the ozone layer, and is about to set out to challenge the Eiger. But I *am* saying that in a gathering of Jewish scholars, everyone would be conversing about ideas, books, movies, politics, and gossip. And not a single one would have any friends or relatives who died on the Eiger.

If one were needed, empirical confirmation of this great truth was provided at this conference by the one other urban Jew in this gathering of WASPs. While in other contexts we might have been at swords' point, here we were comrades-in-arms. During breaks between sessions, the WASPs, all thin and hardy, climbed neighboring mountains. I happily reclined in my plush hotel room, watching the baseball playoffs (there is nothing more soul-satisfying than watching *other* people engage in strenuous sport), while my fellow Jewish-ethnic, fat and wheezing at forty, ate double meals and fell into a snooze. God bless him, he's the sort of person who made America great.

For those who have lived on another planet and have never been introduced to this form of ethnocultural analysis, read Philip Roth and watch Woody Allen movies. *That's* what they are all about. □

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Love Song

by Alec Mouhibian

"Was it he, or she, reaching out arms and trying to hold or
to be held, and clasping nothing but empty air?"

— Ovid, *Metamorphoses*

*He saw a lot of strange
things on tour. He'd seen
a happy clown. He'd even
seen a sad widow. Bobby
Lipp looked out from the
stage over the casino as
the thunderous applause
from the six people sitting
below him died down.*

They sat at tables on the dance floor at the west end of the Mohican Valley Resort and Casino. Stood up by lady luck. Waiting on openings in the poker room. Or, in the case of one fellow in a suit and tie, there exclusively for the music.

Either way, they were listening to Bobby Lipp's second afternoon set and none of them could move, not even for a sandwich. Bobby Lipp looked out over them all before putting his glass back on the stool, adjusting his hat, and tightening his strings, just as he did after every song. Electric bells from the slot machines continued as his accompaniment. DING DING DING DING DING DING DING . . . he loved this gig!

After the set the man in the suit and tie approached him.

"I loved what you played. What kind of music is it?"

"I don't know," Bobby said.

"I'm from a record label," the man continued.

"Look, there's a bear!" Bobby said, and as the man turned to look he ran away.

It happens every time. The man isn't always wearing a suit and tie. Sometimes there is no tie and the shirt is unbuttoned enough to reveal a chain around his neck that reads Friends Don't Let Friends Kiss. Sometimes there is a watch and sometimes there is no watch. Sometimes he's from a record label and sometimes from a radio station. But there's always that man and he always approaches Bobby Lipp. Sometimes it's a woman.

Most people burn their bridges by forgetting to put out a fire or carelessly discarding a still-lit cigarette. Bobby did it the old-fashioned way. He used a torch.

Because he didn't like bridges. Wings were more his style. So he never recorded a song and had the most peculiar touring schedule of any musician this side of Gabriel. No theaters, no music festivals, no stadiums, no concert halls. Bowling alleys and bordellos were more his style, though often in the latter his gigs were cut short. Sandwich vendors don't always care for competition.

Bobby liked places where his sound had to compete, where he could play without being promoted. "Never let the same dog fuck you twice," his father once told him, but Bobby had never scored ribbons for his listening skills, and so through an odd interpretation — odder even than his take on "It Had To Be You" — he was left with the desire never to play more than one gig at any venue, a desire that ultimately could not be stitched with his desire to play every day of the year. Wayne Newton, he heard, had a one in 13,000 chance of singing to the same audience member. Bobby decided to do his multiples at the casino by performing at different hours on the different dates (the management, glad to have him, didn't mind), just to be safe. Of all the venues, the casino was his favorite.

You remember Bobby Lipp. He's "that guy I heard," "this singer I once saw." If you haven't heard him, one of your friends has, the one who bowls in the Tuesday night league or works in the bordello or mourns at Mohican Valley, and told you about it. Told you about the street singer whose voice transcended the Sirens. Told you about the performer at the car dealership sale who hit a note that made everyone hold their breath, turned every customer's face toward the salesman's in a stare of deep recognition.

"Do you have any CDs?" the lady with the bucket of coins asks him.

"No," he says.

"Why not?" she asks. "Your songs are lovely."

"I never sing a song the same way twice. And I don't want to be reminded of how I sang it once."

"That's interesting. Tell me, do you perform at weddings? My daughter is getting married in July . . ."

As she speaks he nods a few times and gently raises his hand to the side of her neck and pinches it, making her faint. A trick he learned in the military.

Not that Bobby Lipp had any problem with performing at weddings. They were usually where he felt most needed. Weddings were the only places he could be ironic by singing love songs. No, his problem was repeat customers — he wished never to play to them, at least not while being aware of the fact. Since the lady would be present at her daughter's wedding, Bobby could not be. Simple, logical reasoning.

You might say that Bobby Lipp was afraid of commitment. You might even call him detached, though you'd have to explain how so many strangers found in his unfamiliar sound a welcome respite from the ignorance of intimacy. Just don't think he's afraid of people. That's not it at all. He couldn't do without meeting people, even if once was enough.

Bobby's high school band conductor saw him for the first time in years at the flower trade-show gig. The look on Mr. Ogden's face, now that was something! Seeing his once-

underachieving lugubrious long note wielding sublime powers in an act of literal overachievement — imagine how such a sight would shape a man's face! It hasn't reverted since. So what if his students are none the better for it?

Bobby remembered the advice Mr. Ogden used to give and wondered if he still gave it. "Do things you hate when you're young to provide the basis for future art." Mr. Ogden could only cite anecdotal evidence in support of this advice. Back in the day, his ephemeral rock group took a quick trip to the charts with a song he wrote called "Paper Cut," inspired by an injury he got from playing Canasta with his grandmother.

Encounters with artistic types lasted the longest in Bobby's memory. Bozo, the stand-up comedian dressed as a clown (or was it the other way around?), at the prison gig. Bozo landed in the pen on conspiracy charges, due to an unfortunate set of circumstances combined with "a comedian's worst nightmare: telling a joke so unfunny that it's proven in court to be an expression of intent," as Bozo told Bobby.

The painter couple, at the art show. She was on a Campbell's Soup diet. He had painted a portrait of her. "It gets thinner and thinner as she diets, while she remains forever fat," he told Bobby with a wink.

The novelist, at the flea market. Her serious novel sold widely and won a literary award. The novel's first third is identical to its final third, which is too boring to remember, yet still evokes some vague recognition, making people feel she's reading their minds. The method was a metaphor of beginnings being the same as endings, or some such. A miserable woman, at the time. "I turned to writing popular fiction that sells terribly and now I'm happier than ever," she told Bobby Lipp.

And Bobby remembered. He didn't listen, really — Bobby wasn't much of a listener. But he remembered. Whens, whats, hows eluded his attention; essences rarely did. He'd get the song of a story, and often sing it.



"Don't quit your day job, Ramón."

One particular song he sang whenever he noticed an artist in the audience. Naturally his rendition varied a little each time, but the song's melody always comprised all tempos. One could start listening at a certain point and mistake it for a torch ballad, or a jump-rocker, or anything in between. Lyrically, it's a patchwork of stories he remembered from tour.

The song's about Orphy and Eura, the immaculate musician and his dearly beloved. Orphy's music fell in the transanimate soul genre — leaving as much of an impression on rocks, rivers, and trees as on people. Nature was his groupie. With only a voice and a banjo on his knee, he created a sound that steered ships and quelled quarrels. Whether a horn section would've made him sound even better is still fiercely debated among music scholars.

One day the young couple took a lover's walk, when Eura wandered ahead and stepped on an animal. If it'd been a snake it've bitten her. It was a snake and it did bite her, fatally, leaving Orphy mad with grief and his music accented with a sorrow it never before possessed. He couldn't live without Eura. He followed her spirit to the far reaches of the underworld, banjo on knee, singing iron tears out of the subterranean gods, pleading to allow dear Eura another chance at life. None could deny his music. They let her go. They let her follow him back to earth, under the condition that he never turn his head to look at her until they were both in the light. Along the uneasy path he worried for Eura's safety. Finally crossing the tricky threshold he turned back to take her in his hands, but it was too soon, for she had yet to emerge from the darkness, from the path of the underworld, and thus vanished with a faint cry of "Farewell."

That was too much for poor Orphy. He shortly sang himself to death, whereupon he rejoined Eura in harmony and serenaded her ever after.

Here Bobby goes into an instrumental riff and the audience thinks the song is about to end. But Bobby sneaks in one last verse. Addressed to "whom it may concern," it reveals that Eura knew exactly where she was stepping when her foot fell on that venomous snake, and did it as purposefully as she stalled in the darkness waiting for Orphy to turn around and lose her again. The purpose? Giving his music that extra dimension, that accent, the divine gravity that made it truly thorough.

"Beautiful," wrote the painter couple.

"Wow," laughed the novelist.

"Hahahaha," said the clown.

Forget the happy artists' reactions. What about the sad ones? What about the tall fellow who impersonates a midget for a living? What about the priest who sleeps on the couch because his wife is jealous of God? They loved it just as well.

On this night at Mohican Valley, when Bobby completed the song, things started going awry. Lights went off and on. More slots were out of order than usual. Roulette wheels started spinning ferociously. A ball bounced right off one of them into an old spinster's eye. Another spun clear off the table. Electric bells that sounded like natural jingles when accompanying Bobby were sounding electric again. Random gusts of screams now mixed with the falsetto coming out of Elvis nickel machines as the Wheel of Fortune progressive jackpot rose faster and faster and faster and faster until the stage trembled and Bobby jerked his head and in the corner of his vision — eyes losing steadiness, limbs losing strength, throat losing peace — saw what was hiding, unknown to him, in the shadows at so many of his gigs. He saw his wife.

That's right, he saw me. He saw me and ran away again. I didn't want him to see me. All this time I've followed him on tour and hidden out of sight. So be it if that's what it takes. You know, it's not like this was part of my plan. How should I have suspected that he'd try to disappear and never set foot in a recording studio and tell whoever asked that he got his gift for music from his *mother*? Little does he know. Little do I want him to know, if it ever means he'll stop playing. Let him hate me.

Of course *they* would never understand, and I'm fine with that too. They say I destroyed him. They think I'm one of those merciless man-eating bitches who deserves to turn into a tree. They think I was motivated by wine and malice to do those terrible things to Bobby. Fools. They can burn in hell.

At least you know the truth. And you'll understand why I'm going to keep on following him. This wasn't part of my plan. I knew he'd run away but never thought he'd try to hide. No, I expected to listen to his albums in the comfort of my own home and catch him whenever he headlined at the amphitheater, where the crowds would disguise me. I have the right to witness the fruits of my creation, don't I? At least once a week? Who does he think he is to deny me that?

Goddammit, I'm the one who got him pregnant. □

Letters, from page 8

he attempts to compare apples and oranges.

Any argument about IQ tests relates to a general problem with the tests. Any argument about how Kostelanetz's MRI was interpreted must be about the quality of the particular interpreter of the test. An MRI gives you a series of pictures of the body. To go from a claim that a specific

MRI was interpreted incorrectly to a claim that there is something wrong with these tests is like saying that there is something wrong with photography if a person misidentified you in a photograph.

Now, it is well known among radiologists who interpret spine MRI on a regular basis that there is often discordance between anatomic findings and patient complaints. It is *common-*

place. Twenty percent of people under the age of 60 *without pain* have MR evidence of a herniated disk. One can have a large herniated disk pushing directly on a nerve root in a patient with no symptoms relating to that finding. Kostelanetz says the interpreting radiologist said he "should have 'lower back pain'" based on the MR findings,

continued on page 53

Reviews

"Sicko," directed by Michael Moore. Dog Eat Dog Films, 2007, 113 minutes.

The Sicko Scam

Patrick Quealy

I liked "Bowling for Columbine," which makes me a minority of nearly one among libertarians and conservatives. It mystifies me that this should be so. It portrayed a citizen militia in a reasonably sympathetic light. It admitted without argument that it wasn't necessarily bad for millions of guns to be in private hands. Moore talked a lot about guns, but the thesis of the film was that Americans have been primed to fear everything, and are making poor life choices and political choices as a result. You don't have to be a modern liberal to agree with that.

"Bowling for Columbine" took cheap shots and got facts wrong. It was not a technically meritorious documentary. But even through its many flaws, it made a worthwhile point about American culture, and an intelligent person could get something out of it, unlike the hysterical "Fahrenheit 9/11" — and unlike Moore's most recent film, "Sicko."

Moore says at the beginning that millions of Americans are uninsured, but that "Sicko" isn't about them: it's about the problems faced by those who

are insured. That sounds reasonable, even nuanced; one might expect that what followed would be more than a discussion of the number of uninsured people in America and a call for universal, single-payer, socialized health care. Perhaps Moore would consider some of the huge practical problems with changing health care so drastically, or accurately portray a few of the major drawbacks of socialized health care. Instead, Moore sets the question up as a choice between two alternatives: the status quo vs. socialized medicine. "Sicko" inevitably becomes a paean to state-run health care.

We're shown horror stories of people who have dealt with HMOs. There's the man who lost two fingertips in an accident, whose policy would only cover reattaching one of them. There's the poor woman who was ejected from a hospital and put in a cab that dumped her at the curb of a charity on Skid Row. There's the woman whose infant daughter died from complications of a fever because the insurance company delayed treating her, as she was not brought to an "in-network" emergency room.

These and other outrages against basic decency ought not to happen.

But everybody already knew they were happening — right? "Sicko" is making waves because it's news to many people that HMOs cut corners and save costs any way they can, sometimes compromising patients' health. What rocks have these people been living under?

"I always thought the health insurance companies were there to help us," begins Moore's introduction to the segment on HMOs. Well, they're not they're to help us. They're there to make a profit by helping us, which is a different matter. Moore knows this, as he soon admits, laying the blame for everything that's wrong with health care at the feet of Richard Nixon, whose administration ushered in the managed-care model. In an excerpt from the Watergate tapes, Nixon is heard being talked into HMOs because they're for-profit and "the incentives run the right way."

A question at this point occurred to me about an anecdote from earlier in the film. A woman with cancer, and her husband who had several heart attacks, had incurred too many medical bills. They had to declare bankruptcy, sell their house, and move into the woman's daughter's spare room. Those dastardly insurance companies!

Moore let slip, though, several facts which were supposed to make this couple sympathetic: they had been gainfully employed (the husband in a unionized, presumably well-paying trade job); they had six kids, all of whom went to college; and the expenses that broke them were deductibles and copays.

I cannot imagine any collection of deductibles (maybe a thousand dollars) and copayments (ten dollars here, twenty there) that could bankrupt an employed couple that had saved responsibly, when they had six college-educated, presumably successful children on whom they could call for help. The best the kids could do is let them crash in a spare room? There's something wrong with that scene. If you're going to blame a president for it, blame FDR or LBJ, who did far more than Nixon to replace the family with the welfare state.

Moore thinks he's contrasting free-market medicine with socialism. He is actually contrasting various sorts of socialism, highlighting the failures of the lightly socialized American managed-care system and highlighting the successes of the fully socialized Canadian system and the heavily socialized French and British systems.

Moore does not talk to one of those admirable American doctors who refuse to see Medicare patients or bill insurance companies, so that he may run an inexpensive fee-for-service clinic accessible to the poor. There he'd find

competitive, affordable prices, short wait times, and service that is responsive to consumer wishes.

A girl in a waiting room for a Canadian health facility tells Moore: "We know, like, in America people pay for their health care, but I guess we just don't really understand, like, we don't understand that concept because we don't have to deal with that." Just so.

A French doctor describes French medicine as a system in which "you pay according to your means, and you receive according to your needs." Well.

Moore tells a French woman, cradling her newborn and standing next to a government-provided aide: "Nobody from the government comes to your home in America and does your laundry if you're a new mother." The new mother responds: "Difficult." American mothers have it tough. (Another woman says the difference between America and France is that in America people are afraid of the government, afraid of getting out and protesting. It seems more likely that the Americans, unlike the French, have jobs to be at.)

A former British MP says that socialized health care began with democracy: what democracy did was to give the poor the vote, and it moved power "from the wallet to the ballot." Another way of saying it moved the power to spend money "from those who earned it to those who wanted it."

"Sicko" is already best known for its ending, in which Moore takes ailing World Trade Center rescue workers to Cuba to get health care they can't afford in the U.S.

This sort of disingenuous device apparently seems harmless and beneficent to Moore — justifiable white lies to tell a convincing story. But he knows better than to pass it off as completely factual, which is why he plainly says, when asked, that his films aren't supposed to be docu-

mentaries: he has a point of view and he wants to convince you of it. He tells a story, and he does it in such a faux-naïf way that you'd have to be pretty

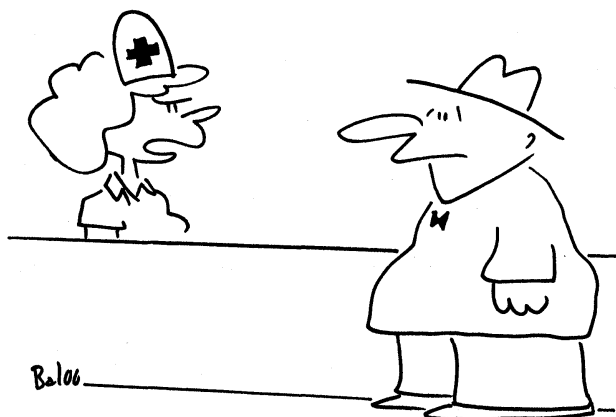
It's news to fans of "Sicko" that HMOs save costs any way they can, sometimes compromising patients' health. What rocks have these people been living under?

dense to eat it up. He knows full well, however, that a great many Americans are pretty dense. He counts on it. They are learning from Moore what kind of health care they want, and asking to get it good and hard.

But any person with the IQ of a turnip can see how convoluted the Cuba sequence is. It was so obvious, I thought, that I couldn't really hold Moore responsible. You'd have to *want* to be deceived to believe this Potemkin hospital and its doctors represented the kind of care ordinary Cubans get. You could almost hear Fidel in the room next door, still recuperating from his intestinal surgery, gasping orders over his respirator that the American visitors be cured and sent home to tell their countrymen of the merits of Cuban medicine.

"Bowling for Columbine," "Fahrenheit 9/11," and "Sicko" share the same repackaged premise: we should cut defense spending, and increase the size and scope of the welfare state, to make America a better place. Three times is enough; he should try making a different film.

If Moore wants to know what wonders the government can work in reforming health care, he need only look at the tender mercies visited by the feds upon AIDS and cancer patients who legally use medicinal marijuana, or terminally ill people who are denied experimental treatments. The jackboot or the invisible hand? — I'll take my chances with the latter, thanks. □



"This is a managed care facility, buster — stand up straight!"

"The Forgotten Man," by Amity Shlaes. HarperCollins, 2007, 464 pages.

A Low, Dishonest Decade

Timothy Sandefur

Franklin Roosevelt famously kidnapped William Graham Sumner's "forgotten man," the silent taxpayer whose earnings are taken to empower the government's compassion industry. Roosevelt used the term to refer to the poor man who needed government aid, thus forgetting, just as Sumner had anticipated, the worker who produces the wealth that the government redistributes. This was all too typical of the New Deal, which consisted for the most part of rhetorical, even propagandistic, disguises for bureaucratic gimmicks that were actually perpetuating unemployment, stifling innovation, and chasing wealth into hiding. Yet with a few minor exceptions — notably Jim Powell's "FDR's Folly" and Hadley Arkes' "The Return of George Sutherland" — historians have clung to the Roosevelt Myth, insisting that the New Deal — or worse, World War II — somehow cured the Great Depression. In fact, it was neither; it was the gradual elimination of official obstructions, most of all in the demilitarization following 1945, that restored prosperity and gave birth to the modern consumer culture.

But the Roosevelt Myth is more than a simple error of fact; it has a nor-

mative component that makes it one of the most pervasive and harmful in contemporary America. Forty years ago, historian Arthur Ekirch, Jr., wrote that "the years 1929 to 1941 transformed the traditional values and attitudes of the American people, conditioning them to look, as never before, to the national state as the basic arbiter and fundamental factor in their lives." And indeed, the notion that government planning rescued the economy — or the almost equally perverse notion that it "saved capitalism" — is firmly embedded in the catechism of untruths that rationalizes the ambitions of both Left and Right. It does not appear that any politician since Ronald Reagan has seriously questioned the success of the New Deal, and even he did not challenge its theoretical assumptions or moral pretensions.

Meanwhile, "agricultural adjustment" and similar schemes, allegedly devised to rescue America from a temporary economic emergency, remain in place more than half a century later, hurting producers, benefiting agitated constituencies, and redistributing wealth fast enough to provide the illusion of fostering prosperity (the real meaning of Keynes' "velocity of circulation"). Social Security steams undeterred toward bankruptcy, the

"Rural Electrification Administration" keeps its doors open, long after the last outhouse in Appalachia was wired, and bureaucrats operating under the Agricultural Marketing Agreement Act still confiscate tons of fruits and vegetables in order to raise the prices consumers pay and benefit agribusiness.

The most dramatic effects of this creaking, rusty machine of government meddling are on individual entrepreneurs who ask nothing more than that the government leave them alone to earn an honest living for themselves and their families. Take, for example, Marvin Horne, the Fresno-area raisin grower who was fined \$275,000 three years ago under a Depression-era law that forbids farmers from selling all the raisins they grow. They are required instead to hand over a large portion — usually a quarter, sometimes half — of their raisin crop to government regulators so as to increase the price of raisins and "stabilize" the market.

"This is America," a bewildered Horne told reporters. "I don't owe anybody any portion of my crop. The government cannot confiscate any of my produced raisins for the benefit of their program." But of course they can, and they got away with it. When other growers demanded just compensation for the raisins they lost, a federal trial court told them that the confiscation was the price they had to pay for the "privilege" of selling their raisins in "interstate commerce." The notion

The notion that government planning rescued the economy is firmly embedded in the catechism of untruths that rationalizes the ambitions of both Left and Right.

that selling the (literal) fruits of your labor is merely a government-created privilege is the most insidious of all the New Deal's awful legacies.

In his book on Justice Sutherland (Roosevelt's great legal opponent), Arkes called for someone to write a "people's history of the New Deal," which might detail the many ways in which FDR's reign oppressed workers who wanted nothing more than to earn their living without unreasonable interference. Regular entrepreneurs like the Schechter family of New York, for instance, who found themselves subject to federal "codes of competition" under the National Industrial Recovery Act — the most extensive and authoritarian attempt ever floated for controlling the economic activity of Americans — were deprived of their right simply to work, free from absurd meddling by alleged economic "experts" engaged in "bold, persistent experimentation." These codes, among other things, required poultry sellers to charge above certain minimum prices, and prohibited consumers from choosing the chickens they bought. The theory was that low prices harmed producers, so the law should require buyers to pay more for lousy chickens than they otherwise would.

Obviously this increased food prices for buyers who were already suffering, in order to transfer wealth to

private interests. Moreover, it encouraged wasteful practices by industries whose productive capacities were desperately needed. The restrictions were particularly harsh on family-owned businesses, such as the Schechters' poultry company, that lacked political influence and the market dominance that allowed larger companies to suck it in and survive under the NIRA's regime. The Schechters challenged the law in the Supreme Court, and in 1935 the justices unanimously annulled the Act, precipitating Roosevelt's infamous showdown with the judiciary. The case is a high drama that focuses attention where it ought to be focused: on the serial anticompetitiveness of bureaucrats who toyed with the livelihoods of the nation's persevering workers.

Amity Shlaes' new history of the Great Depression aims to address these issues. Her chapter on the *Schechter* case is one of very few in-depth treatments of the case. She accurately describes the way muddleheaded plans — like the "undistributed profits tax" imposed on corporations — obstructed recovery and even worsened economic conditions. Shlaes describes the failed "resettlement" experiments in which federal authorities, led by Stalin admirer Rexford Tugwell, moved poor farmers onto government-managed communes, and the drag on the economy produced by Roosevelt's rhetorical attacks on the wealthy, his increases in taxation, and his coddling of labor union activism.

Shlaes is right in arguing that restrictions on firing employees blocked businesses from increasing their efficiency and led them to close down instead. Meanwhile, the growth of the welfare state sapped ambition and initiative, and encouraged citizens and businesses to look to government to solve their problems — diverting time and energy that could have been spent creating jobs and satisfying consumer demands.

Perhaps worst of all, the vacillating policies of FDR — a man who changed course rapidly and often without warning — deterred businesses from investing and expanding. Roosevelt, Shlaes writes, "could not make up his mind which problem was the worst, or which must be addressed, and in what manner. And he could not see that it was important to be consistent." History shows that economies can find ways

around almost any obstacle, even if transactions end up highly inefficient or are driven underground. But when the obstacles shift their positions, inves-

Bureaucrats still confiscate tons of fruits and vegetables in order to raise prices to consumers and benefit agribusiness.

tors become less willing to run risks. And FDR didn't merely vacillate; he also took investment capital away, giving it to shareholders or welfare recipients, or transferring it to government make-work projects that served the politicians' own interests rather than consumer need. Most blatant were the projects for writers and artists, who spent government largesse glorifying Roosevelt and his administration in plays, photographs, and murals.

To put this simply: FDR was no hero; his New Deal was unconstitutional and wasteful, a deterrent to recovery and a major assault on American values that has left this generation chained to an awful legacy it cannot seem to shake off. All of this is prime material for a correction of the record. But although eagerly anticipated by many libertarians, Shlaes' book disappoints. It is not a narrative history, or a precise detailing of the intellectual developments of the period; it is written in an almost impressionistic style that is not really suited to history. Shlaes skips back and forth between different focuses of action so quickly that it is exceedingly hard to keep track, and she often drops in details that, instead of illuminating, merely intrigue or confuse.

Briefly describing a Supreme Court case in which the Agricultural Adjustment Act was held unconstitutional (her entire discussion takes up four sentences), Shlaes mentions that "Stanley Reed, the lawyer for the government — the same one who had argued *Schechter* — became ill and had

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" here, simply ignored by the "experts," and without a peep of protest. For, in libertarianism, you win the argument by running and hiding from it, and "live in the sunshine" by burying your head in the sand.

For the last economist standing, and real sunshine, see *Intellectually Incorrect* at intinc.org and *The Mises Anti-Institute* at intinc.blogspot.com.

to stop his argument and sit down." What was his illness? How does it relate to the case? Shlaes says nothing more. Another paragraph begins, "That month, 'Migrant Mother' was published for the first time. At the Tennessee Valley Authority, Arthur Morgan was still seeking a territorial truce with the private companies. To him the war with them was a distraction . . ." Shlaes goes on to discuss the conflict between the TVA and private utility companies. But what does this have to do with the publication of Dorothea Lange's famous "Migrant Mother" photograph? Nothing at all.

These may seem minor infractions. But 454 pages of such quick glimpses and rapid-fire changes of subject leave one dizzy, not enlightened. Shlaes' book never resolves into clarity, compelling narrative, or systematic argument.

To succeed, a period history relying on representative characters simply must tell a story; Louis Menand's "The Metaphysical Club" or H.W. Brands' "The Age of Gold" come to mind. Rather than tell an integrated story, however, Shlaes piles characters and incidents upon one another, with a bewildering effect. To take one example at random: in the five paragraphs on pages 198–99, she describes Tugwell's confirmation hearings before the Senate, the signing of the Reciprocal Trade Treaty, the formation of the Securities and Exchange Commission and the choice of Joseph Kennedy to lead it, and a meeting between Roosevelt and John Maynard Keynes, who criticized some aspects

hundred pages, and the treaty never again. If readers can absorb a theme and remember an argument from such shotgun details, they must be better students than I.

Of course, one can write a scholarly history that is not narrative, but then it must be structured as a logical and systematic argument, as in "FDR's Folly" or G. Edward White's marvelous "The Constitution and The New Deal." This style requires the writer to stick with a theme, assemble evidence to fit the argument, and carefully cite his sources. Shlaes doesn't do that, either. In fact, her style seems much more suited to interviews (such as her very interesting

appearance on a recent "Econtalk" podcast) or short articles in The Wall Street Journal. There, her brief idiosyncratic closeups on detail are helpful since the format does not call for stamina.

Alas, the flaws of Shlaes' book are fatal, because her interpretation of the New Deal is still unfortunately in the minority. The generally accepted tale of the New Deal is still that Roosevelt and his witch doctors really did save the country. Overturning the Roosevelt Myth requires a powerful argument and a "people's history" that will tell moving human stories to a large audience. For that, we readers still have to wait. □

"George Kennan: A Study of Character," by John Lukacs. Yale University Press, 2007, 207 pages.

Containment and Character

Jon Harrison

Most educated people over the age of 30 know that George Kennan (1904–2005) was the architect of the doctrine of containment. For 40 years containment was, more or less, official U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union. Criticized by both left- and right-wingers, Kennan and containment won vindication when the Soviet empire collapsed in 1989–91. The scion of a rather typical middle-class family from the American Midwest had proved a prophet, or so it seemed.

John Lukacs has written not a standard biography of Kennan, but a "study of character." This was wise on Lukacs'

part. Few of us today have either the time or the desire to absorb the details of Kennan's childhood, married life, or adult friendships. (This is especially true given the very long span of Kennan's life.) What we need, and what Lukacs has given us, is a biography of a *mind*. Where relationships and personal experiences throw light on the formation of Kennan's character and thought, Lukacs is informative. Beyond that, he is economical.

Kennan was one of the Wise Men, that small circle of hardheaded thinkers and men of affairs who were "present at the creation" as Dean Acheson (secretary of state, 1949–53), perhaps the most prominent of them, phrased it.

If readers can absorb a theme and remember an argument from such shotgun details, they must be better students than I.

of the New Deal. (The Keynes meeting occurred in May, and the treaty was in June, but Shlaes tells them out of order.) The SEC isn't mentioned again for a

Acheson was referring to the creation of the post-World War II national security apparatus that implemented containment policy toward the Soviet Union.

Among the Wise Men, Kennan was something of an outsider. This was partly because of class distinction (most of the Wise Men were upper-crust; Kennan, on the other hand, worked part-time as a mail carrier while a student at Princeton), and partly because of Kennan's refusal to tailor his thinking to match the political winds of the day. Among the other Wise Men, Charles "Chip" Bohlen, who in 1953 succeeded Kennan as ambassador to the Soviet Union, was a close friend. With the rest, however, Kennan forged no close personal ties. This was probably more helpful to the development of his thinking than not.

Kennan's moment as a policy mover and shaker was rather brief. His first outstanding achievement was in the negotiations with Portugal for U.S. bases in the Azores during World War II. Acquisition of the bases was very important for the conduct of the war in Europe. After Washington had done just about all it could do to rub the Portuguese the wrong way, Kennan, then a mere *chargé d'affaires*, was able to rescue the situation, winning his point in a personal interview with President Franklin Roosevelt. It was a remarkable

He came to regard his part in the CIA's birth as "the greatest mistake I ever made," which it was.

accomplishment for a 39-year old junior diplomat. The Azores negotiations first revealed Kennan as a man of rare boldness and independence of mind.

Posted to Moscow in 1944 as min-

ister-counselor (second in rank to the ambassador, Averell Harriman), Kennan, who had already served four years in Moscow after the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1933, found himself in the very midst of world politics. It was already clear that with the total defeat of Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union would emerge as the great power in Europe, and in the world second only to the United States. The nature of the relationship between Stalin's communist dictatorship and the world's greatest democracy was bound to shape the postwar world.

Kennan understood that the Soviet Union was motivated solely by its own perceived interests; any idea of friendship and cooperation with the capitalist West after the defeat of Germany was a will-o'-the-wisp (a will-o'-the-wisp that many Americans for a time believed had substance — both because of simple naivete and because of the propaganda put out by communists and fellow travelers in the American government, academia, and the media). For various reasons, which I need not go into here, many American leaders (including Roosevelt, and for a time even Harry Truman) tried to avoid this fact. Fed up with the misperceptions of his countrymen, Kennan in February 1946 penned the "Long Telegram" — an 8,000-word missive on Russia and Soviet Communism. Kennan's timing was perfect. Lukacs puts it this way:

Six months earlier this message would probably have been received in the Department of State with raised eyebrows and lips pursed in disapproval. Six months later, it would probably have sounded redundant, a sort of preaching to the converted. (74)

The effect on official Washington was electric. Eyes were opened, as it were, to the Soviet menace and all it portended. The Long Telegram was read by the secretaries of state, war, and Navy, and apparently even by President Truman. It began the process that led to the Truman Doctrine, the National Security Act of 1947, NATO — the whole apparatus of the American national security state that remains, alas, in place to this day, though the Soviet Union is long gone.

Kennan was called to Washington, where he was first assigned to lecture at the National War College.

In 1947, Secretary of State George Marshall named him head of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff. As such, he played a key role in the creation of the Marshall Plan.

At the same time, in July 1947, he published in *Foreign Affairs* an article called "The Sources of Soviet Conduct,"

A realist foreign policy such as George Kennan espoused is something that America desperately needs today.

under the pseudonym "X" — though his authorship was soon revealed to the public. After the appearance of this article, the word "containment" became common parlance.

For the next two or three years Kennan was a major player in the American foreign policy establishment; then he began to lose influence until, in 1953, he was gone from the State Department and off to the Institute of Advanced Studies at Princeton. What had happened?

Here Lukacs is particularly valuable, for the nuances in Kennan's thinking are not nearly so well known as the basics of his role in formulating America's response to the Soviet challenge.

Eric F. Goldman wrote that Kennan "proved the scholar-diplomat, if the United States ever had one."^{*} He was simply too well versed in history to fall in with the political passions of the moment. Thus, as attitudes toward the Soviet Union hardened, and the U.S. approach to containment grew ever more militarized, Kennan found himself increasingly isolated. As early as 1947, reading over the draft of the speech announcing the Truman Doctrine, Kennan objected to its far-reaching

^{*}Eric F. Goldman, "The Crucial Decade — And After: America 1945–1960" (Vintage, 1961) 69. When he wrote this, Professor Goldman presumably had forgotten that John Quincy Adams had served as both an ambassador and secretary of state.

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nature. His mind was too independent to accept the restraints imposed by the reflexive and febrile anti-Communism of the 1950s. As a result, after about 1949, his standing dropped. Dean Acheson, Marshall's successor as secretary of state, virtually stopped listening to him, or at least acting on his recommendations. The egregious John Foster Dulles, Acheson's successor, could find no useful work for Kennan at State. Kennan's official career thus came to an end. Lukacs traces all this in masterly fashion.

It is sometimes said that Kennan changed his mind about the Soviet threat. It was not so. It was, rather, that he refused to accept simple answers to complex questions. This characteristic is not typical of Americans, and it generally baffles them. Kennan's thinking was nimble rather than inconsistent. Lukacs, Hungarian-born and with a mind quite open to nuance, is a perfect interpreter of Kennan, and elucidates for the reader the true rigor of his subject's thought.

That Lukacs admires Kennan is obvious. He knew and corresponded with him; in 1997 they collaborated on a book, "George F. Kennan and the Origins of Containment, 1944–1946," published by the University of Missouri. The book drew upon their correspondence of the mid-1990s and refuted the revisionist claim that containment was an over-hasty and perhaps unnecessary policy.

Lukacs mentions some of Kennan's mistakes. Appointed ambassador to the Soviet Union in 1952 (a plum that came too late; Cold War attitudes had hardened, and he himself had lost influence), Kennan allowed the constraints placed upon him by the Soviets to get the better of him. Passing through Berlin, he remarked to a journalist that his situation in Moscow resembled the period of internment he had undergone in Nazi Germany after Pearl Harbor. Stalin, who didn't like having Kennan in Moscow anyway, took the opportunity to have him declared *persona non grata*.

More seriously, during his period of influence in the late 1940s, Kennan proposed the creation of a Central Intelligence Agency, which became the CIA we all know today. Many of the CIA's later actions disturbed Kennan,

who had sought the creation of a professional, civilian-run organization to collect and analyze intelligence. He came to regard his part in the CIA's birth as "the greatest mistake I ever made," which it was.

Another point, albeit now an academic one, is whether the policy of

containment was actually sufficient for dealing with Soviet communism over the long term. The central thesis of containment was that the Soviet system would prove incapable of extending and, in the end, even maintaining its imperial pretensions. This was very shrewd thinking in the 1940s, but it

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left one question hanging: would the United States be willing to stand guard at the gates for as long as it took the Soviet system to change or collapse?

Kennan, the foremost exponent of the realist school of U.S. foreign relations, was well aware that Americans desire quick, decisive successes, as opposed to long, expensive holding actions. Might they not grow tired of containment? He never answered that question, nor as it turned out did he need to. But 30 years into containment, the situation looked in some ways far worse than in 1947. The Soviet Union had maintained its grip on Eastern Europe and extended the frontiers of Communism in the Third World. It was now, arguably, the greatest military power on earth. Meanwhile, the United States — Jimmy Carter's United States — was looking far weaker than it had in 1947. The policy of appeasement, otherwise known as detente, was keeping the Soviet economy afloat through credits, technology transfers, and the like.

Had that policy continued into the 1980s, would the Soviet Union still have collapsed? We can never be certain, yet it is my suspicion that Ronald Reagan had a lot to do with the fall of communism. But for Reagan, the Soviet empire might very well have persisted into the 21st century. Could the United States, under the likes of Carter, Mondale, Dukakis, and Clinton, have held out that long?

Lukacs does not consider this question, because he does not accept the idea that President Reagan had anything to do with the Soviet collapse.* But this is the only major weakness I find in the book. Lukacs is a fine historian with a fine prose style. Now in his 80s, he remains one of the best minds of our time. In this book, he gives us the essential Kennan, which is something of value not just in historical terms, but for the present as well. A realist foreign policy such as George Kennan espoused is something that America desperately needs today.

Kennan's official career was ended by a speech he gave to the Pennsylvania Bar Association. In it, he quoted John Quincy Adams' famous words on American foreign policy: "We are friends of liberty all over the world, but we do

not go abroad in search of monsters to destroy." John Foster Dulles was not pleased (though as secretary of state he adhered to the policy of containment), and Kennan was sent into retirement. Kennan kept faith with Adams' words throughout his long life. Unfortunately, neither Lyndon Johnson nor George W. Bush saw fit to do the same.

Lukacs includes a chapter on Kennan the historian. Kennan combined a first-rate mind with a wonderful literary gift. Many of his works, especially the "Memoirs" and his two books on 19th-century European diplomatic history (which have honored places on my library shelves) repay study, and are a pleasure to read. □

"God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything,"
by Christopher Hitchens. Hachette, 2007, 307 pages.

Seeking God, Dead or Alive

Ted Roberts

Chris is at it again. I refer to Christopher Hitchens — an essayist — a scholar of our culture you might call him. You might also call him a skeptic, an iconoclast, an ex-Trotskyite, and 20 more synonyms, all describing a curious, intellectually rebellious mind. Oh, and you might also accurately describe him as a four-star atheist.

Well, atheists need money badly, since they must live affluently in this world; they certainly don't believe they'll find champagne and caviar in the next. And Mr. Hitchens isn't doing badly. His book is No. 5 on the New York Times bestseller list. Titled "God Is Not Great," it is subtitled "Religion Poisons Everything." You get the idea — it's as plain as a blazing cross. Actually, considering Hitchens' lack of faith it is a confounding title. A thing must exist in one world or another before it is condemned. If, as he contends, He "is not great," it is axiomatic that He must exist — an axiom that the author rejects.

In his book Hitchens does not defend his atheism. He does not explain how the cosmos happens to hang in infinity without an architect or even a golden hook. He just harps on the bloody history of the three major religions, selectively underlining their poisonous influence — ignoring their gifts to civilization.

We must give the author his due. He is not a trickster; he argues like a gentleman and tries to leave emotion out of the argument. I think I could sit with him at the corner bar over a drink or two and not leave drenched with his beer. Even if we discussed the Bible, a document he sees as a weapon of destruction because of its intolerance, as efficient a killer as the medieval pox. Most thinkers (secular, Christian, and Jewish) see it as a lighthouse of civilization (though secularists might call it a blinking beacon) in a stormy world.

His theme — simply put — is that subtitle: Religion Poisons Everything. The vile superstitions of the Abrahamic trio (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam)

*John Lukacs, "The End of the Twentieth Century and the End of the Modern Age" (Ticknor & Fields, 1993) 120.

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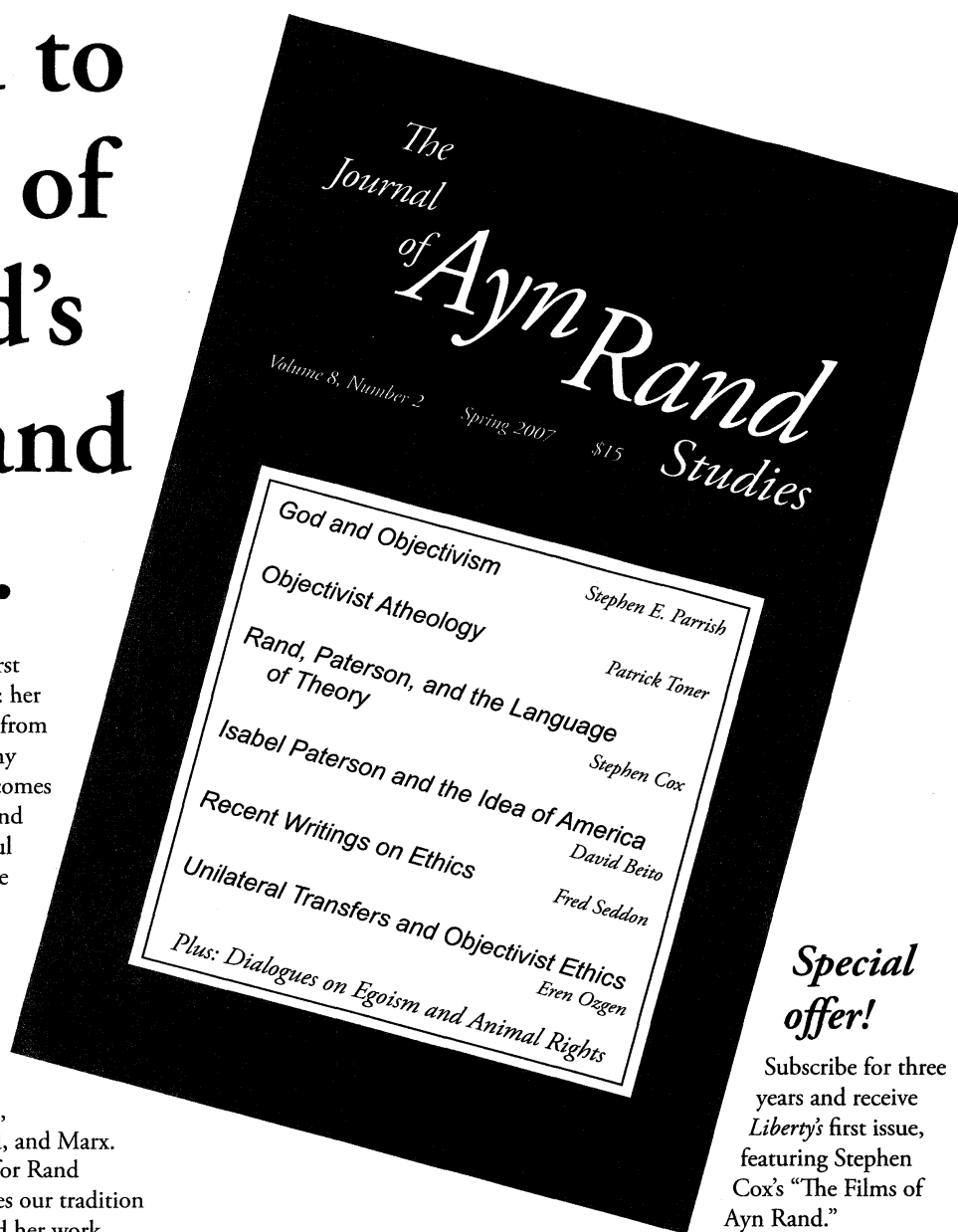
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have brought us nothing but suffering and bloodshed. "Religion — all religions — are fantasies and they breed hatred among people," he rants. Well, the latter point is no news bulletin. Anybody with a high school education knows about the Jew-hatred of the early church, the Inquisition, the Crusades, the pogroms of central Europe, the collapse and collusion of the church with Nazism. Yes, it must be admitted that the religion that advertises turning the other cheek made its share of ghastly ethical errors. And more than Jews suffered; so did Christianity's own heretics. For several centuries, Catholics and Protestants and third-party iconoclasts turned Europe into the World Wrestling Federation with their disagreements over what Hitchens would call "superstition."

They did, but they don't anymore. Civilization, spiritual refinement, reformation — whatever you want to call it — won out.

And we Jews? We get off no easier than the Christians. How about that angry, thundering, vengeful G-d of the Old Testament? Every fifth page, Hitchens reminds us, instructs us to kill Canaanites, Jebusites, Moabites. The best way to stay separate from those idol-loving, fornicating, child-sacrificing heathens was to kill 'em.

Hitchens has a point, but a treacherous one. You can't transpose today's ethics to yesterday, when the world was a butcher shop and everybody was killing everybody, including Philistines spearing Israelites. And even in his early days the Thunderer is often merciful and He becomes more so as we move to the prophets. Again, today, civilization prevails. We no longer hunt down Jebusites.

But some Sunnis do pursue and kill any Shiite they can get hold of. It seems that of the three major religions, only Islam — today — bears the Mark of Cain and validates Hitchens' accusation of theological bloodlust. So, 90% of the author's gripe — that religion engenders hate, resulting in crowded ERs in hospitals around the world — comes from Muslim sources: from readers of the Koran, but not from Judeo-Christians. Hitchens does not remark on the gentle evolution of Judaism or Christianity. Among his examples of religious poison he brings up the metaphor that Dennis

Prager often uses: you're in a strange city; it's getting dark; and here comes a group of youths. Would you feel safer or less safe if you knew they were coming from a prayer meeting? Who wouldn't answer with a loud "safer"? Not Hitchens, because, as he observes: what if the city is the eye of some religious storm, say Beirut or Baghdad or Bethlehem or Bombay (he throws in Belfast, too)? You'd prefer a secular gang. It's a clever answer, but there are ten thousand other cities in the world where you'd welcome and fear no evil

from a group of worshipers. Again, the Islamic threat, and only the Islamic threat, makes Hitchens' point about the violence of believers.

Again, note the title — "God is Not Great" — and its implicit recognition of the Creator's existence. One could be charitable to the author and state that his thesis is not the absence of a creator, but humanity's error in his worship. Hitchens is an exotic breed of atheist. He seems more antireligious than antiritualistic. Scratch an atheist and maybe find a lost soul. □

"The Coming Draft: The Crisis in Our Military and Why Selective Service Is Wrong for America," by Philip Gold. Ballantine Books, 2006, 256 pages.

How to Make an Army

Bruce Ramsey

In January 2003, defense analyst Philip Gold achieved acclaim, and some notoriety, by a parting of the ways with the Discovery Institute. That Seattle thinktank is noted for its defense of Intelligent Design, but it also supports a generally Bushian foreign policy. Gold was its defense guy until he disagreed over Iraq.

The antiwar Right hailed his defection. Lew Rockwell called him "the heroic Phil Gold."

I interviewed Gold. He is a short man with a beard, and does not fit my image of a Marine, though he has been one. He looks more like a college professor, and he has been one of those too. He is enormously well-read. He has a

love for a turn of phrase, and such an itch for humor that he cannot go for more than about four sentences without making a joke. He used to be a Goldwater conservative but was driven away by the religious Right.

His book, "The Coming Draft," is misnamed. It is really about how, in the course of history, America has chosen to fill the ranks of its armed forces, and how Gold thinks a free nation ought to do it.

The book rests on two ideas. The first is that consent is important: from individuals, in staffing the military, and from the people collectively, in taking them to war. Early in the book he says regarding the Iraq war that "the American people have passed a quiet judgment on this war by our clear disinclination to have at it."

The second idea is that the military needs to be more closely connected to the people, so that the people feel a sense of obligation to serve in it.

Some proponents of the second idea have called for universal conscription. Gold slams this idea as "a modest

The American military does not want a draft. Even when it had one, it never wanted to train and deploy all men.

unconstitutional proposal for establishing a gargantuan teenager-herding bureaucracy to implement a form of age-based involuntary servitude." It would also, he says, be "a requirement that young people perform such tasks as governmental social engineers decree." It would be "high cost," including the cost of the often unnecessary college educations that would no doubt be offered as plums at the end of it.

The American military does not want a draft. What's more, says Gold, even when it had one, it never wanted to train and deploy all men. The 20th-century draft was called Selective Service, and it was. In World War II and again in Vietnam it took less than half the eligible men. Between 1950 and 1965, nearly half of all inductees failed their physicals. "The United States has always assumed that if a man is medically unfit for combat, he should be exempted from all service," Gold writes. "This lets a lot of people off." Conscientious objection also lets them off. And since World War I, the military has culled out millions by means of mental tests.

Essentially, he says, every time the United States created a draft it included enough slack so that resourceful opponents could weasel out of it. And that, he writes, "served to defuse political opposition," making conscription palatable in America.

In the early 1970s, opposition to the Vietnam War was defused even more by eliminating the draft altogether.

After that, the quality of men in the service went down, and necessitated the wider use of women. Gold argues that women need to be trained for combat, the same as men, so that the men can rely on them. (His wife, Erin Solaro, wrote "Women in the Line of Fire: What You Should Know About Women in the Military," published in 2006 by Seal Press.)

Though Gold was opposed to the Iraq war, he argues that the U.S. military does have world obligations, and that Iraq dangerously weakened it. He further argues that the military's "decision to spend its trillions on things, operated by fewer and fewer professionals, could not be more deleterious, strategically and morally." The military, he says, needs more people and to be more connected to the People. And so he comes to the idea he shares with the conscriptionists: citizens of a free republic have a duty to defend the state.

He feels this deeply. He resents the belief that "defense is a service that the government provides for us," making Americans "consumers only." He argues that the Founders' conception of the militia was based on the much different idea of citizen obligation — not that the state could command the individual to fight, but that a good citizen would feel obligated.

He considers the Constitution. He takes the 13th Amendment's ban on involuntary servitude at face value. The only part of the Constitution that gives the federal government the power to compel military service, he says, is the power to "call for the militia." That, he writes, is "only through the states, and then only to meet specific defensive needs."

He ends his book with his proposal of reviving the militia in several layers. He prefers volunteers or a "draft" in which "the right of conscientious objection [is open] to everybody, no questions asked." But in case a "drafted" citizen refused to serve in any capacity, including a militia that legally could not be deployed outside the United States, he might be liable for a special surtax on income for the next 30 years.

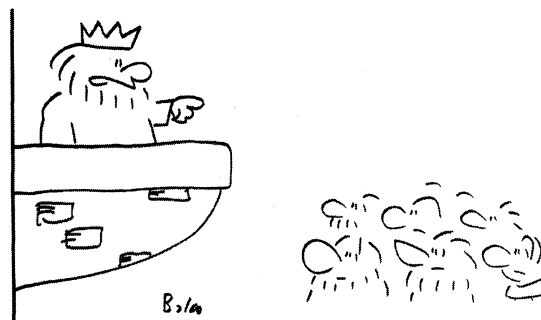
If that bothers you, turn it around. For those who volunteered to serve, imagine a tax deduction for the next 30 years.

This is not a thinktank book written to serve an ideological agenda or a particular group of donors. Gold wrote his book (and Solaro wrote hers) while they rented a place on the Olympic Peninsula, one of the hideaways of the Pacific Northwest, and there is much of his personality in it. The reader can hear the Marine, the jokester, and the well-read lover of English. For example, here is how Gold starts Chapter 7, "What the Founders Understood":

America's founders were the most optimistic bunch of paranoids ever to win a revolutionary war, survive the aftermath, and then contrive, as they phrased it back then, "an election of government." They were, we would call them today, conflicted. It wasn't just that they were conflicted with one another. They [were], even and especially when the cause to which they'd mutually pledged their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor seemed most endangered. Nor was it that, as individuals, so many were conflicted within themselves. They were, though only Thomas Jefferson seems to have raised inner ambiguity to an art form. It was how they handled the conflicts.

They were not paralyzed by them. Nor did they dodge their conflicts, subsuming them in some larger self-evident abstract truth, abandoning or denying messy reality. Instead, they used their conflicts to create.

Some readers will cringe at a style like this. The reviewer for my local newspaper did, and panned the book. I enjoyed it: a juicy rendering of a subject normally dry. This is a fun book to read, and a smart one. □



"They hate us because we're free — now everybody form a line to sign up for the draft."

"In Defense of Hypocrisy: Picking Sides in the War on Virtue," by Jeremy Lott. Nelson Current, 2006, 200 pages.

The Tribute Vice Pays to Virtue

Leland B. Yeager

A review should guide prospective readers. On this book, save your money and save your time. Lott's rather obvious message perhaps merited an article, but he smears it vaguely throughout a book full of padding and phony informality. This judgment stands even though Liberty's readers may welcome Lott's apparently anti-left-liberal inclinations and his opposition to what is commonly called political correctness.

Lott distinguishes, though only by examples rather than explicitly, between two senses of "hypocrisy": (1) endorsing or even pretending to have virtues that one does not in fact possess, and (2) pretending not to notice the moral lapses (including even the hypocrisy) of other persons. Hypocrisy in both senses skirts a moral relativism that would undermine distinctions between right and wrong; here the book's subtitle is relevant. The book's message is that, far from always undercutting the distinction between right and wrong, hypocrisy sometimes helps maintain it. Lott quotes (though he does not adequately develop) La Rochefoucauld's familiar aphorism, "Hypocrisy is the tribute that vice pays to virtue."

The American Founding Fathers

expressed ideas of equality and inalienable rights. Some of them owned slaves, but at least they were honoring aspirations beyond their own current practice. Pretending not to notice the sins or illegal acts of others (e.g., a clergyman's adultery or someone's assistance to a suicide) may be less subversive of morality than identifying yet excusing those transgressions. And such restraint may serve courtesy or decency. None of this implies, of course, that hypocrisy is always a good thing.

Lott spends several pages on former drug czar William Bennett. The media finally noticed and berated the supposed hypocrisy of Bennett's books and lectures that preached morality despite his record of high-stakes recreational casino gambling. Yet Bennett had neither condemned gambling nor denied his own, and he had prudently limited his bets to what he could afford to lose. Lott repeatedly alludes to this and other cases, including those of Britney Spears, Dick Morris, and Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky. (Lott may be trying to flatter his readers' ability to grasp his allusions to old news stories.) He summarizes the plots of various movies for their relevance (if only tangential, I would say) to the topic of hypocrisy. Included are "Dead Poets

Society," "The Majestic," "The Bells of St. Mary's," and "The Godfather." The "Casablanca" summary stretches over several pages.

A couple of quotations will illustrate how casual Lott's concern for evidence is. "In baseball, if a pitcher from the Seattle Mariners beans a batter from the Oakland Athletics, there is — how to say this? — a very high probability that an A's pitcher will brush back a Mariner with an inside pitch in the next inning" (144-5). "Ninety-nine point nine percent of American politicians want to 'get tough on drugs' because voters want them to get tough on drugs" (173). How does Lott know such probabilities and percentages?

These allusions, summaries, and digressions illustrate the book's padding. So do bits of autobiography and long-drawn-out accounts of interviews with people who said something about hypocrisy. All these tie in with Lott's straining for a casual style, straining that also appears in colloquialisms and even slang, occasionally apologized for with scare quotes. Such informality becomes obtrusive and distracting. The book's jacket blurbs are conventional, but I am surprised by Lott's long list of persons thanked for help: why didn't their help show up better in the final product?

To repeat, the main message of the book seems correct enough. Why, then, do I bother describing its general amateurishness? Principally because, intrigued by its title, I had promised

I am surprised by Lott's long list of persons thanked for help: why didn't their help show up better in the final product?

to write a review. Besides, identifying kinds of unsatisfactoriness may help discourage them in others' writings, and restrain them in one's own. □

"Live Free or Die Hard," directed by Len Wiseman. 20th Century Fox, 2007, 130 minutes.

Summer Sizzler

Jo Ann Skousen

While most of the summer sequels fizzled, one of them sizzled: "Live Free or Die Hard" entertains from start to finish. Once again Detective John McClane (Bruce Willis) is in the wrong place at the wrong time, but again he has what it takes to outsmart, outshoot, and outmaneuver the bad guys and save the day, all the while just trying to do his job and go home.

Several elements conspire to make this sequel work when so many others failed this summer.

1. Villains. This film has a high-tech mastermind with a high-tech masterplan that is believably frightening in the computer age: the bad guys have hacked into the mainframes of the nation's communications, utilities, and

finance networks, gaining control of everything that is controlled by computers — which is to say, everything, period. Even though nothing else in the movie is believable, the danger is, and that makes the film compelling.

2. Action. "Live Free or Die Hard" is a thrill ride of action sequences from start to finish, as McClane jumps out of an airplane without a parachute, drives a car into an elevator shaft to chase a villain, takes down a helicopter by launching a car into it (because, as he shrugs modestly, "I ran out of bullets") and generally becomes the superhero Spiderman should have been but wasn't. It's just plain fun.

3. The Sidekick. One of the icons of the "Die Hard" series is the young naive helper who, like McClane, is in the wrong place at the wrong time but still manages to help McClane save the

day. In this episode, Justin Long plays the young computer techie who has unwittingly helped the hackers break into the computers and now has the skills to undo the damage — if McClane can keep him from being killed.

4. The Leading Man. Bruce Willis is not a great actor, but I admit he makes my heart pound. He lacks the range of a Dustin Hoffman, Mel Gibson, or Johnny Depp. But what he does, he does exceptionally well. In this entry his character returns with all his idiosyncracies — the wry smile and sardonic wit, the reluctant heroism, the talking to himself that borders on mental illness. Willis makes this franchise work.

You'll probably notice that the dialogue doesn't match the mouth movement in several instances. After the filming was complete, the producers decided to go for a PG-13 rating. They could change the dialogue through post-production re-recording, but they couldn't reshoot the scenes. It's mildly annoying to see their lips form an "F" when the words are something else, but it's not too bad. Watch also for Justin Long's characteristic ad libs. On set, Long is a little like Robin Williams, taking his character into unexpected and unwritten directions that directors can't resist using because they are so natural and so funny. This is a breakthrough role for Long, who has spent most of his career in lightweight teen flicks and Mac commercials. He could be the new Matt Damon. (Watch for Long in "The Sasquatch Gang" this fall. I was on-set during some of the filming, and his ad libs were so funny that the command for "Quiet on the set!" became almost impossible to obey.) □

Letters, from page 40

and my goal is not to defend an unknown radiologist whose report and whose images I haven't seen. But I do know it is typical for radiologists, on finding an anatomic abnormality, to urge clinical correlation, to say something like, "The L4-5 disc herniates into the exiting L5 nerve root. Please check and see if the patient has a pain along the dorsum of the foot extending to the big toe." Maybe "should have back pain" was meant in the context

of "patients with this anatomic abnormality commonly have back pain. Please check clinically for back pain before operating on this potentially asymptomatic finding." In other words, "should have back pain" (if the report said this; Kostelanetz doesn't quote the report directly) needn't mean "must have back pain."

Or maybe Kostelanetz's MRI was interpreted by someone not so good. Our payment mechanisms in medicine are such that poor quality interpretations pay as well as good quality interpretations, so radiologists (and other

doctors) have little incentive to arrange work flow so that the best people for a particular study are the ones providing the interpretation

In any case, I think Kostelanetz, whom I'm happy to hear has no back pain, may be making more out of a common request by radiologists for clinical correlation than is warranted. I suspect most radiologists wouldn't make the mistake he is attributing to them. The average IQ of physicians, after all, is 120.

Ross Levatter
Phoenix, Ariz.

Spokane, Wash.

Along the highways and byways of the Evergreen State, from the *Spokane Spokesman-Review*:

State trooper Mark Haas was so flustered by the sight of two women's exposed breasts that he let an unlicensed and legally drunk driver and her passenger leave without a citation or an arrest, his superiors say.

"Unfortunately, breasts and a vagina were exposed, but it's unclear why that happened," said Capt. Jeff DeVere. "What is clear is that when that did occur, trooper Haas did not react appropriately."

Berlin

Testament to the power of nostalgia, reported in the *St. Petersburg (Russia) Times*:

Berlin's new budget hotel Ostel offers a renewed whiff of life in the former German Democratic Republic, welcoming travelers with portraits of communist leaders adorning the walls. There are rooms that replicate bedrooms from typical East German apartments, from about \$50. At the other end of the scale, \$12-per-bed Pioneer Camp dorm rooms feature two bunk beds and spartan living conditions evocative of the summer camps of the Free German Youth, the party youth organization.

Ostel employee Liliana Lehmann, 25, said the hotel was a break from the bustle of today's capitalist capital. "We try to create a community feeling," she said. "It's a contrast to today's dog-eat-dog world."

Hässleholm, Sweden

The Swedish answer to Horatio Alger, from *The Local*:

A Swedish heavy metal fan has had his musical preferences officially classified as a disability.

Roger Tullgren, 42, claims to have attended almost three hundred shows last year, often skipping work in the process. Eventually his last employer tired of his absences and Tullgren was left jobless and reliant on welfare handouts.

But his sessions with the occupational psychologists led to a solution of sorts.

"I signed a form saying: 'Roger feels compelled to show his heavy metal style. This puts him in a difficult situation on the labour market. Therefore he needs extra financial help.' So now I can turn up at a job interview dressed in my normal clothes and just hand the interviewers this piece of paper."

Orlando

Timely reminder for those who protect our skies, from the *Orlando Sentinel*:

Homeland Security officials are being warned not to toss secret documents that could compromise transportation security into the ordinary trash after a teenager found hundreds of such papers marked "sensitive" in a city trash container near the Orlando International Airport.

"When in doubt — do not throw it out," a recent TSA newsletter said.

Ashland, Ore.

Aesthetic ambiguity in Ecotopia, reported in the *Tacoma News-Tribune*:

An art project in a university courtyard was destroyed by people who said they thought the exhibit was a work of vandalism.

The artist, Paul Messenger, said the piece, which consisted of 36,000 feet of red tape, was a commentary on society's apathy to its problems.

Southampton, England

Normalization of diplomatic relations, from the *Daily Mail*:

One English landlord claims to have found a loophole to fight an impending nationwide ban on smoking in pubs: declaring his to be part of a different country. The Wellington Arms is set to transform itself from a public house into the official embassy for a tiny Caribbean island.

The pub has already been named as the official consulate in Britain for the island of Redonda, which lies 35 miles southwest of Antigua in the Caribbean. Landlord Bob Beech is now making plans to have it classified as "foreign soil," exempt from the ban.

Lake City, Wash.

Entertaining in the modern age, from the *Seattle Times*:

Police will likely not seek charges against a man who waited three days before calling police after a prostitute died in his apartment.

The man told police he reacted to finding her body by jumping out a window and digging a hole in the side alley, to bury it. But he changed his mind. Conflicted, he poured cold water over the corpse so it wouldn't decompose. For the next three days, the man sat in his apartment "drinking and contemplating" before finally notifying authorities.

Pittsburgh

Daring exercise in rebranding, spotted by the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*:

The Pittsburgh Public Schools will drop "public" from its name and adopt a new, standardized way of referring to its schools as part of a campaign to brighten and strengthen the district's image. By dropping "public," school board representative Randall Taylor said, the district might be able to avoid the negative attitude often associated with public schools.

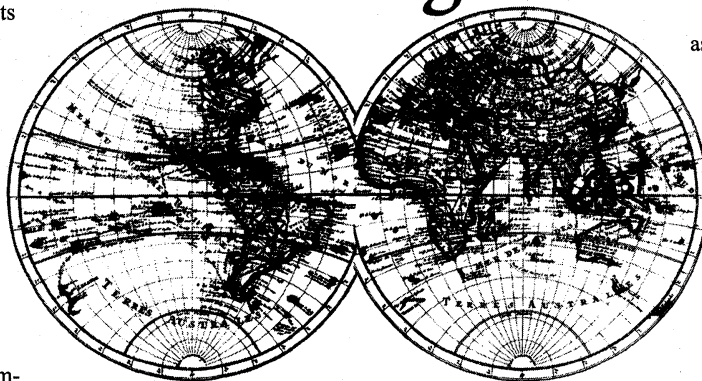
Palestine

A saga ends with the death of an icon, from the *Lebanon Daily Star*:

Hamas TV has axed Mickey Mouse lookalike Farfour, who made worldwide headlines for preaching Islamic domination and armed struggle to youngsters. In the final skit, Farfour was beaten to death by an actor posing as an Israeli official trying to buy Farfour's land.

Farfour's show will be replaced with a new show starring his "cousin," a bee named Nahoul.

Terra Incognita



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

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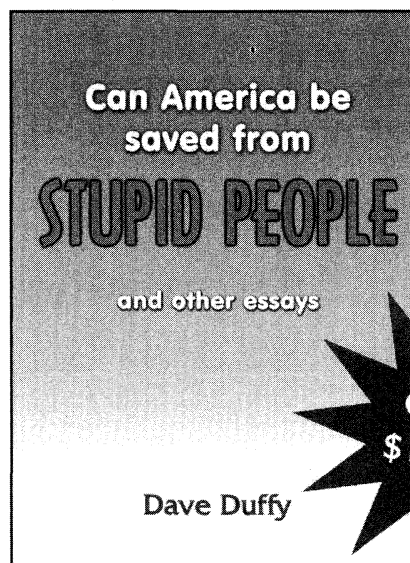
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"...As it has always done, somehow Government, like some monster from the past, has again outwitted the freedom-loving masses and has convinced them that they don't need protection from Government, but from everything else. And so the age-old beast 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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But the City of Seattle used a senseless law to try to shut us down.

We fought back to vindicate our right to earn
an honest living, and we won.

*Blayne and Julie McAferty
Seattle, Washington*

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