

Liberty

February 2004

\$4.00

Ayn
Rand's
Homophobia

The Supreme Court Guts Free Speech

by Mark Tapscott

Searching for Lonerville

by Sandy Shaw and Durk Pearson

Viva Las Vegas!

by Richard Kostelanetz

NGO Way to Help Africa

by Bruce Ramsey

If Free Markets Give People What They Want, How Do You Explain Dan Rather?

by Robert Formaini

Also: *Bill Merritt* travels the Gobi Desert and the Himalayas, *Michael Drew* digs up graves of Amazons, *Kirby Wright* relives a bad day on the beach in Hawaii . . . plus other articles, reviews & humor.



"Be it never forgotten that the cure for evil and disorder is more liberty." — Berkman

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The 2004 ISIL World Conference is being hosted by Aristotle's Book Store and the Institute for Liberal Values www.liberalvalues.org.nz (both in Auckland and run by long-time libertarian/Objectivist activist Jim Peron). The conference site of this year's event is the picturesque seaside resort and spa of Rotorua, just south of Auckland on North Island.

We will be posting regular updates on the ISIL website – but let me tell you, you're not going to want to miss this one. The combination of spectacular scenery and an exciting conference speaker line-up will make for an unforgettable experience. And the prices are unbeatable.

A major theme will be New Zealand's radical free-market reforms and their impressive results. Major architects of those reforms are expected to speak. One speaker already confirmed is **Elbegdorj Tsakhia**, past prime minister of Mongolia and the man who engineered the end of 70 years of communist rule in his country – without a single shot being fired. (see interview with ISIL execs on-line at www.isil.org/conference). Also confirmed are **Rodney Hide**, Member of Parliament (champion perk-buster); **Roger Kerr**, Executive Director of the New Zealand Business Roundtable, **Michael Cloud** (USA) on "The Art of Political Persuasion,"



Geysers, steaming pools and volcanoes are all part of the exotic landscape in North Island, New Zealand.

Robert White (Dept. of Political Studies – Univ. Auckland) on "Ayn Rand: Her Contribution to Liberal Thought," **Len Brewster** (Zimbabwe) on "The State Refutes Itself: Lessons from Zimbabwe," **Jan Narveson** (Canada) Prof. Of Philosophy at the University of Waterloo, Canada & author of *The Libertarian Idea* – plus many more to be announced later.

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Letters

Alpine's Elitist Pariah

The state of academia has been much maligned lately, so it's nice to know that there is still a place where an elitist snob can become a tenured professor "very quickly" and be free to write about the really important stuff like "the role of privateering in naval warfare" ("A Strange Little Town in Texas," January). It's a wonder his neighbors don't make him walk the plank.

Dennis Dwinnell
Xenia, Ill.

Henry Ford: Useful Idiot

One hesitates to be critical of a fellow contributor to *Liberty*, but Bruce Ramsey's "Henry Ford: Nazi Dupe?" (November) calls for some comments. In his review of Max Wallace's *The American Axis: Henry Ford, Charles Lindbergh and the Rise of the Third Reich*, Ramsey misses an opportunity to comment on the significance of individuals Lenin referred to as "useful idiots," high-profile propagandists for dictatorships. Surely those who served the purposes of an Adolf Hitler, deserve no less attention than those whose worshipful praise helped the Communists to rally worldwide support.

Henry Ford was one of Hitler's most "useful of idiots." The fact that Ford introduced millions of Americans to the lies of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in his newspaper is completely ignored by Ramsey. Concentrating on Ford's hatred of Jewish bankers (Ramsey never mentions how the myth of "Jewish bankers" fits into the stereotypical *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* view of the world), Ramsey ignores the panoply of anti-Jewish prejudices that figured in the thinking of Henry Ford, Charles Lindbergh, Thomas Alva Edison, and sad to say, even the fair-minded Harry Truman. This is surely worthy of

notice since we know now how the film ended.

At the end of his review Ramsey adds that a book about the "useful idiots" that helped Communism would be a longer one and would elicit protests from the liberals today. He is quite right on this point. But he unfortunately fails to make the connections between the ideologues of anti-Semitic hatred and the wholesale killers of our times. The Islamists of today continue on that well-trod path and sad to say one can become an experienced anti-Semite after a short stay in any library.

Frank Fox
Merion Station, Pa.

Fulbright's Creative Federalism

Thanks for the very interesting essay about Richard Kostelanetz's Freedom of Information Act discoveries and the reprint of his well-written essay from 1966 about the deficiencies of the Fulbright scholarship program ("The State Department, Fulbright, and Me," December). Missing for me, and somehow the more glaring a lacuna given his apparent interest in history, was any examination of whether the Constitution makes any provision for scholarships or fellowships.

I've searched the Constitution and its amendments for language authorizing payments to scholars to pursue their education abroad, payments to bureau-rats for organizing gala supper parties in foreign lands, or payments to professors to lecture in other countries. Were it not for the declarations of emergency of 1861 and 1933 in effect suspending the Constitution, I doubt if any authority could be found for the entire National Endowment for the Humanities or its sister program for the Arts.

Jim Davidson
Houston, Tex.

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Ode to Apathy

Here's a little poem in response to R. W. Bradford's remark that the recent California vote showed that "Californians (and presumably other Americans) are quite satisfied with the choices that the two parties offer" (January).

Political Parties

One party, two party,
Three party, four.
Why should I care,
I'm mopping the floor.
Five party, six party,
They all say the same;
"Vote our way!
The rest are insane!"
Seven party, eight party,
Who could swallow their lies?
To care about voting,
I must fantasize.

So give me a candidate,
Handsome and strong,
Who doesn't make speeches
The whole day long.
Then maybe I'll vote,
If I've time to spare.
Two parties, ten parties,
Why should I care?
Jeri Carey
Walla Walla, Wash.

Focus on the Rothschilds

You may know of the Hindu publisher (I am sure he was not the first one) who said that all truth drops to the floor — everything else is propaganda. Never before has this been more true. You could service your readers better if you gave us the real dirt on things like:

- Who did the Dulles brothers tennis and tea with in Zurich during World War II?
- What is the true current view on the Holocaust?
- How much does Rothschild own of Arnold?
- Etc., etc.

There may be a place for many of your articles but I don't have the time.

John E. Eckland
Morgan Hill, Calif.

Focus on the War Machine

I would appreciate if you would print more articles concerning the jihad on Iraq. The war didn't make any sense. It was a dumb, poor coun-

try ringed around by the U.S. military machine. Anyway, even the weapons inspectors hemmed and hawed about whether or not there were any WMD, and in liberal newspapers at that. At any rate, I think it should be stated in writing that the U.S. war machine is the biggest source of violence in the world today.

Mark Schaffer
Middle River, Md.

Radical Militia Membership Revealed

Dave Kopel's article in the December issue reviewing past rul-

ings by the supremes surprised me ("The Second Amendment Before the Supreme Court"). I hadn't realized how often the court had considered "a well regulated militia." I had always blown this off, concentrating instead on the "shall not be infringed" portion of the Second Amendment.

I reviewed *Perpich v. Department of Defense*, 496 U.S. 334 (1990) and extracted this gem: "In 1792, [Congress] did pass a statute that purported to establish 'an Uniform Militia throughout the United States,' but its detailed command that every able-bodied male citizen between the

From the Editor . . .

As the year draws to a close, Americans are being killed almost daily in our government's attempt to install puppet governments in the countries we've conquered, the administration has gone crazy with spending, giving us the biggest budget deficits in history, and even freedom of political speech is under attack. But take heart, good reader. Saddam Hussein has been found in a hole in the ground and sentenced to death by the president, the Supreme Court has ruled that the First Amendment doesn't have much to say about free speech, after all, and America's do-gooders, snoops, meddlers, and busybodies continue their wild depredations.

In this issue, our intrepid writers examine these developments, but also consider matters far less weighty and far more relevant to our real lives.

The authors of *Liberty's Reflections* look at the declining economy and the capture of Saddam, but also offer (for example) a celebration of the egg and a good word for beer-guzzling drivers.

In our lead feature, Mark Tapscott provides a disquieting analysis of the Supreme Court decision outlawing broadcast criticism of politicians who are facing the voters. Tim Sandefur follows with the story of a Florida city that wants to put an immigrant limo operator out of business because he doesn't charge enough to drive elderly and disabled people to their physicians.

Then we go to the Western deserts, where Richard Kostelanetz visits Las Vegas and discovers a continent of unforeseen delights, and Sandy Shaw and Durk Pearson find a new home — not to mention an application of advanced game theory. Bob Formaini tours another kind of desert, the Sahara of the media, while Kirby Wright, heading still further west, remembers a bad day on Moloka'i.

In our review section, Bruce Ramsey looks at Paul Theroux's discovery of the perfidy of aid workers in Africa, Leland Yeager examines the biases and the virtues of modern liberal guru Paul Krugman, Bill Merritt ponders an incredible escape from Stalin's gulag, and Michael Drew digs into feminist archeology.

"Life is a banquet," said Auntie Mame, "and most poor suckers are starving." Our authors aren't.

R. W. Bradford

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ages of 18 and 45 be enrolled therein and equip himself with appropriate weaponry" stated

That every citizen so enrolled and notified, shall, within six months thereafter, provide himself with a good musket or firelock, a sufficient bayonet and belt, two spare flints, and a knapsack, a pouch with a box therein to contain not less than twenty-four cartridges, suited to the bore of his musket or firelock, each cartridge to contain a proper quantity of powder and ball: or with a good rifle, knapsack, shot-pouch and powder-horn, twenty balls suited to the bore of his rifle, and a quarter of a pound of powder; and shall appear, so armed, accoutred and provided, when called out to exercise, or into service, except, that when called out on company days to exercise only, he may appear without a knapsack.

These weren't government arms, stored in an armory when militiamen went home, they were privately held military arms — available at a moment's notice to their owner. This was enacted shortly after the Constitution was ratified, and certainly gives a clue to the Second Amendment's intent.

Grant Janssen
Hollywood, Calif.

No Elitism Here

While it is nice to be called "lovable," it is less so when that adjective modifies "elitist." Despite being gratified by Ari Armstrong's description of my writings as a "red-pill experience," I feel compelled to correct Armstrong's depiction of me as an elitist (no matter how worthy of affection), which runs through his otherwise-unobjectionable "Friedman Rules" (December).

My argument, in brief, is that the

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public at large doesn't understand much about politics — and particularly about economics. Ignorance of politics may be a little less prevalent among political elites (who are "elite" simply by virtue of knowing relatively more than non-elites). But that hardly entitles them to rule — as their glaring ignorance of economics makes clear.

Noticing the public's ignorance, in short, does not mean blinding oneself to the slightly lesser ignorance of political elites. Moreover, the political-science literature on the subject confirms everyday experience: the slight informational advantage enjoyed by political elites is more than offset by their ideological rigidity. In fact, it is their doctrinaire adherence to ideology that makes it possible for elites to filter in relatively more information about politics than "the masses" do — but only by filtering out whatever information would undermine their ideology.

Given the Hobson's choice between rule by the ignorant populace at large and rule by slightly less ignorant, but more dogmatic, elites, I'd choose the former in a second. At least the general population is relatively open-minded.

Fortunately, there are many cases in which such a choice isn't necessary. Markets operate in a way that doesn't require their participants to be very well informed. To fix the problems with public education, for example, the public — or the elites — would have to become pedagogical experts, which is highly unrealistic (and which is why political discourse is full of silly nostrums about "what's wrong with education"). But with private schools, dissatisfied parents don't even need to know exactly what the problem is — let alone how to fix it. All they need do is try another school.

That is the beauty of markets. And it is why, starting with a recognition of public ignorance, I believe a powerful case for libertarianism can be made — a case that has nothing elitist about it.

Jeffrey Friedman
Princeton, N.J.

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Reflections

Bush the magnificent — American forces occupying Iraq captured Saddam and Americans reacted by increasing their support for President Bush. This proves that if you give a president the most powerful military force in the history of the world and a few hundred billion dollars, he can conquer a small country and capture its dictator in only eight months. He gets my vote!

— R. W. Bradford

Dispatch from the Death Star — According to an article in the *Washington Post*, the city of Washington, D.C., will soon be installing machines dispensing free condoms in public buildings in the nation's capital. "They're going to be as common as water fountains," said Ivan O. Torres, interim director of the city's HIV/AIDS Administration. Two thoughts come to mind:

1) Given how slowly the wheels of bureaucracy turn — is this a measure called for by Clinton?

2) Does Torres know how difficult it is to find a water fountain in D.C.?

— Wendy McElroy

The meaning of PATRIOTism — Did anyone else catch Attorney General John Ashcroft's comments on Saturday, Nov. 15? Our nation's top law enforcement officer informed the Federalist Society National Convention that the PATRIOT Act "honors" freedom.

Ashcroft's prepared remarks said: "The Patriot Act honors Madison's 'first principles' . . . giving each branch of government a role in ensuring both the lives and liberties of our citizens are protected. The Patriot Act grants the executive branch critical tools in the war on terrorism. It provides the legislative branch extensive oversight. It honors the judicial branch with court supervision over the Act's most important powers."

Sure, that would make a lot of sense and might even be right — that is, if we had something other than a supine Congress and a judiciary grown tolerant of encroachments on individual liberties.

— Declan McCullagh

Health Nazis storm the beaches — Solana Beach in California became the first in the nation to ban smoking. Beaches are the new target for the tobacco Nazis; there has been talk about banning smoking here, on Chicago beaches, as well. The rationale for the bans is litter control. Forty percent of all litter is cigarettes, which implies that 60% of trash is non tobacco related, and most probably food and food wrapping. If the real motivation is eliminating litter, why don't the authorities ban eating at the beach?

I suspect that, at least for the time being, eating is politically correct. Right now, smokers will just avoid Solana Beach. As the trend becomes more popular, it will become difficult to find smoking beaches. I wonder whether there will be crowds of people standing in the parking lots — those who had to leave the beach for a cigarette break.

— Tim Slagle



Howard Dean's way with Saddam — The Hon. Joseph Lieberman reacted to the news of Saddam's capture with an interesting observation about one of his competitors for the Democratic presidential nomination. "If Howard Dean had his way," Lieberman intoned, "Saddam Hussein would still be in power today and not in prison."

Lieberman's right, of course: one way the world would be different if George Bush hadn't decided to conquer Iraq is that Saddam Hussein would still be in power. Lieberman failed to observe some other ways the world would be different. What Lieberman didn't bother to mention is that 458 young Americans killed in Iraq would still be alive if Bush hadn't chosen war. Or that 10,000 Americans wouldn't have been wounded. Or that Americans would have \$150 billion dollars more wealth. Or that American soldiers wouldn't be facing hostile fire every day in a far-off land. Or that Americans who travel

in Islamic countries wouldn't be hated so much. Or that thousands of Iraqi people now dead would still be alive. Or that the United States wouldn't be suffering from its most gigantic budget deficit in history. Our government would be less powerful and our people more free. Yup, Joseph Lieberman was right: if Howard Dean had had his way, there'd be one more petty dictator who doesn't threaten the U.S. in power, and one fewer former dictator held by the American military.

I'm glad Saddam was caught. He is a very bad man, and his capture may mean fewer dead Americans and fewer dead Iraqis. But I have to admit that Howard Dean is looking better and better to me. — R. W. Bradford

Modern Malthusians — On Dec. 9, the United Nations released a projection of world population growth. The U.N. experts are not modest — they predicted numbers for the year 2300, a mere 300 years out. If this sounds absurd, it is. Imagine experts a century before Malthus, predicting what the world's population would be in 2003.

And it's not that they haven't been warned by their own past failures — in offering predictions for just 50 years from now. As *USA Today* noted, "The United Nations' latest forecast of the world's population in 2050 is half a billion people lower than the U.N. estimated just two years ago." Half a billion. Would you trust someone who was that wrong, that recently? But "expertise" is apparently immune to skeptical doubts. The *USA Today* story continued: "Though it's hard to be accurate in long-term forecasts [I'll say!], the U.N. reports are widely considered the 'gold standard' by demographers." "Paper standard" would be more accurate, whatever their demographic colleagues think.

Well, bad money drives out good. That's one cliché that comes to mind. The other is Jesus' remark about prophets

not being without honor, save in their home country. But all the world is home to the U.N. experts, and it's obvious that they are honored throughout it. Does that mean that they're not really prophets? — Stephen Cox

¡Ay caramba, that's authentic! — The hepatitis outbreak in Beaver County, Pa., has been traced to a Chi Chi's restaurant, where scallions imported from Mexico were found to be the source of the virus. Strange. The most authentically Mexican item Chi Chi's has ever served turns out to be hepatitis. — Tim Slagle

Give him a fair trial and hang him — The "just trial" for Saddam promised by the Bush administration is a fiasco before it begins. In an interview with Diane Sawyer, Bush declared that Saddam should face the "ultimate penalty" — meaning the death penalty. How do Bush's words sound to the Arab world? Prior to trial, the head of the world's most powerful Western nation is calling for the execution of a prominent Arab leader. This same Western leader simultaneously assures the Arab world that Saddam will receive a fair trial . . . presumably, prior to executing him. Only a fool would believe that Bush's statements would not influence the Bush-dependent Iraqi Governing Council which will be ultimately (though indirectly) responsible for any trial conducted in Iraq. Is Bush trying to make a martyr out of the man? Even some Westerners are feeling sympathy for the Beast of Baghdad because of the humiliating footage of his "medical" exam for lice, etc. Cardinal Renato Martino, a leading critic of the war in Iraq and president of the Vatican Council for Justice and Peace, said he was moved to compassion as he saw "this man destroyed, being treated like a cow as they [the U.S. military] checked his teeth." The media and military treatment of Saddam looks

like vengeance, not justice, and this could turn Saddam into an object of pity for some, a rallying point for others. Bush may yet snatch defeat from the jaws of victory.

And why did Bush mention the death penalty? It was akin to throwing gas on a raging fire for the joy of making sparks. As the U.K. *Independent* noted, "the death penalty issue could cause friction between the United States and Europe. All 15 member nations of the European Union have abolished capital punishment, and they often encourage other countries — most notably the United States — to abolish it. U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan also has said the world body would not support bringing Saddam before a tribunal that might sentence him to death." Ever the faithful lapdog, Tony Blair courageously stated that, although Britain opposed the death penalty, it would have to accept an Iraqi deci-



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

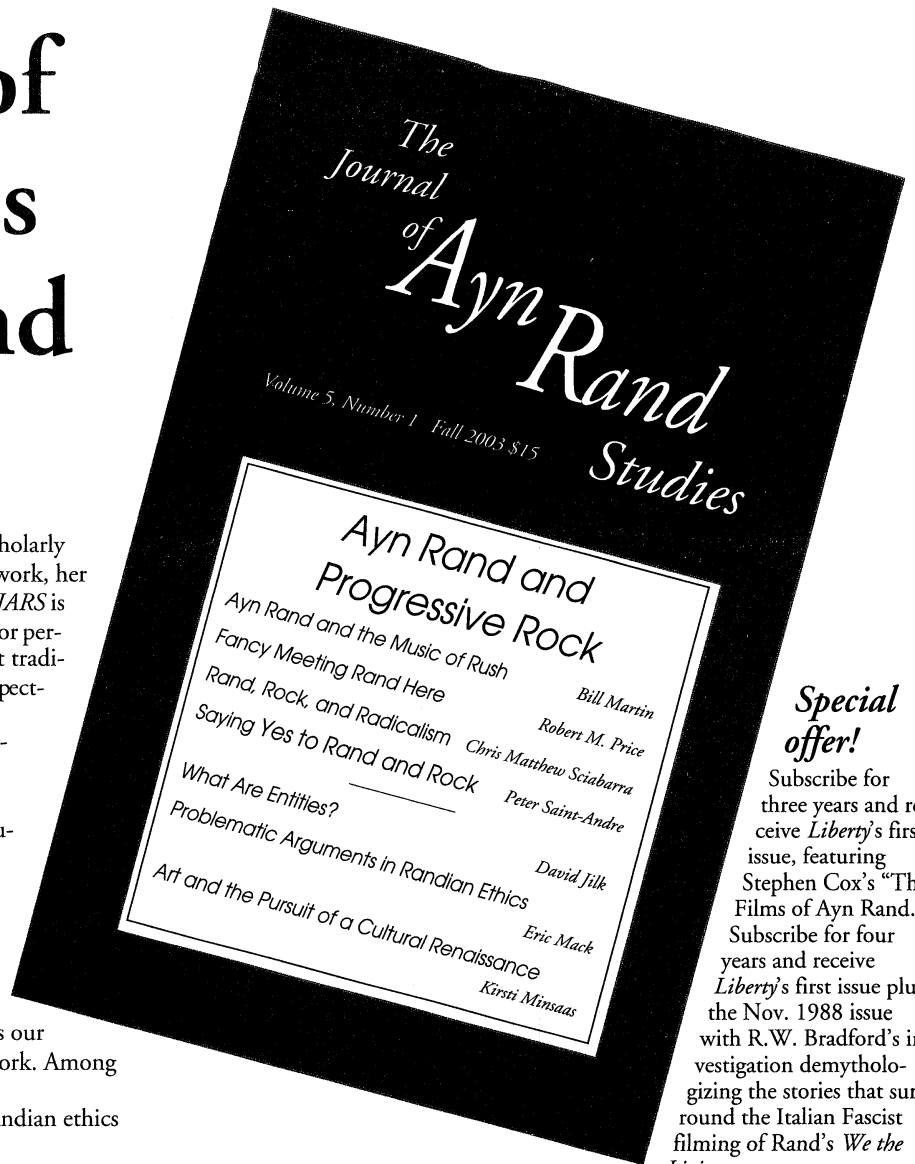
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sion to execute. My point: why even raise the issue of executing Saddam — and so prominently? It is as though Bush sat down and pondered, “How can I possibly make the situation worse?” The answer is obvious, of course. He doesn’t care how his statements impact the world as long as they please the American electorate. — Wendy McElroy

The Egg and I — The Atkins diet is presently quite popular in America. Atkins is a high-protein, low-carbohydrate diet that encourages eating meat, cheese, and eggs, and severely limits grain intake. It is becoming so popular that it is starting to affect food prices. Grain prices are down, and egg prices are up. Market forces will now compel farmers to use the back forty to build a henhouse rather than plant corn in the spring. Were the Department of Agriculture in total control, it would take several years for them to adjust. By that time the fad will have passed, and low cholesterol will probably be back in fashion. Or perhaps the food bureaucrats, who have always opposed the Atkins diet on a nutritional basis, will work to keep the shortage of eggs in place, to encourage people to follow the food pyramid — those Department-of-Agriculture-funded guidelines we all have been ignoring for the past ten years.

Even with the cost increase, the price of eggs is extremely reasonable. Once considered a luxury, an egg contains 10 percent of a day’s worth of protein for about 15 cents. Even the poorest laborer (\$6.00/hr) can now fulfill

his entire daily dietary requirement of protein (ten eggs) with only fifteen minutes of work. Compare this to the first pioneers who tilled the soil from sunup to sundown just to sustain themselves, sometimes unsuccessfully, and you will realize how wealthy modern Americans really are.

— Tim Slagle

Outposturing Hillary — On Thanksgiving, few people realized that Hillary Rodham Clinton, along with fellow Democratic Senator Jack Reed (R.I.), ate dinner with American troops at the military base in Bagram, Afghanistan. Why? Because their visit was trumped by Bush’s surprise arrival in Baghdad, which was played by every major news station in what seemed to be an endless loop. So where was the footage of Hillary on what might well be the biggest TV-watching day of the year? Nowhere.

It wasn’t until the day after Thanksgiving that I saw some real coverage of Hillary’s trip and an announcement that she (and Reed) were proceeding to Iraq. Now, however, she was following in Bush’s footsteps rather than breaking new ground. No PR she secured can have possibly competed with the image of Bush stepping out from behind the curtain to deliver a Thanksgiving address in person, with tears in his eyes. The BBC’s coverage of Hillary’s trip echoed a familiar theme. It opened with the words, “Hot on the heels of George W. Bush, former first lady Hillary Clinton flew into Iraq to meet U.S. troops.” The headline in the Minneapolis *Star Tribune* read, “Day after Bush visit, Hillary Clinton asks new U.N. role.” *China Daily’s* headline: “Hillary Clinton arrives in Baghdad hot on heels of Bush.” She must have been fuming. Meanwhile, the Bush administration carefully and repeatedly claimed that the trip was planned in early October . . . which may be true. Arriving on the Thursday before Hillary’s weekend visit might not have been a deliberate, coldly calculated upstaging. At this point, however, I simply assume everything I hear from the Bush administration is a lie. It saves time.

— Wendy McElroy

News You May Have Missed

Trial Lawyers Face Lawsuit

EAGLE PASS, Tex. — In a shocking turn of events, a multibillion-dollar class-action lawsuit has been filed against the Trial Lawyers Association by a group of lawyers representing a group of lawyers. Some of the lawyers involved claim that the devastating legal action, which could put the lobbying behemoth out of business, was just an accident. “Look, accidents happen,” one attorney confided. “We were just going about our business, and the TLA stepped right in front of us. Tough luck if they get run over. It’s a dangerous world out there. Just because something goes wrong, that doesn’t mean someone has to be responsible for it.”

But other lawyers, speaking off the record, said that the incident, far from being an accident, was definitely an intentional, if desperate, measure. “Frankly, the TLA was the only deep-pockets defendant left that we hadn’t sued yet,” one plaintiff said. “They’re loaded. So we had to go after them,

even though they’re us.”

The suit alleges gross negligence and knowing deception as well as product liability, arguing that the TLA’s signature brand, Frivolous Litigation, has long been known to have serious side effects, including closed playgrounds and parks, curtailed medical research and services, inflated consumer-goods prices, and annoying, ludicrous warnings on everything, like “CAUTION: Contents May Be Extremely Hot” on takeout coffee containers, “WARNING: Do Not Place Hand or Head or Posterior in Blade Area While Starting Engine” on power lawn mowers, and “Remove Capsules from Bottle Before Swallowing” on over-the-counter medications.

“The good news,” said one of the lawyers, “is that if we win we’ll collect not only our standard 30 percent contingency fee but the whole shebang. The bad news is that if we win we’ll lose our shirts.” — Eric Kenning

Hernando and the anarchists

— I was listening to Hernando de Soto, the Peruvian economist, and it struck me that his life’s work is a standing refutation of libertarian anarchism.

I have never been attracted to anarchism, because I could never make sense of it; but I gather it to be a doctrine that property rights arise naturally from the facts of human existence, and do not need the protection of a state. The anarchists contrast their view with the idea that property is an artifice of the state, which they ascribe to believers in government.

De Soto has studied what happens to property rights where the state absents

itself. In the countries he speaks of — Peru, Egypt, Indonesia — the state does not define or protect the property of the poor. The poor have to do it themselves — and they do. Government officials may not know where the property lines are, but the people do. Even the dogs do: in Bali, de Soto says, one dog stops barking and another starts when an intruder crosses an invisible line.

To that degree, the anarchists are right. In any human society above the level of hunter-gatherers, property arises naturally.

But this informal property operates at a low level of energy. José in the shantytowns of Lima knows what he owns. His neighbors know. But the bank cannot know, so José cannot pledge his property for a loan. He may not even have an address. As a man, he may be as trustworthy as anyone, but if he dies, his debts die with him. Outside of an explicit system of property rights, he cannot back up his commitments with his property.

“Without law,” says de Soto, “you can’t trust people you have never met.”

In the 18th and 19th centuries America had some of the same problems with undefined property rights that poor countries have today. De Soto, who researched this, says Thomas Jefferson and others responded with a series of reforms that formalized and regularized the informal property that already was.

“That’s what you did to become prosperous,” de Soto says. “You just forgot about it.”

A market may exist without formal law. But it will be a poor market. A farmer’s market, where the farmer squats in front of his own vegetables, may exist, but not a futures market in Maine potatoes. A high-energy economy requires that people deal with strangers, and trust them over time and distance. That means standard proof of the identity of people (passports, drivers’ licenses, and bank cards) and of their property (title deeds and conveyance records). And for that, you need law and the institutions to implement law.

Which is to say, you need the state.

For capitalism to work in places like Peru, Egypt, and Indonesia, the state needs to define and protect formally the property that exists informally. Formalizing it creates billions of dollars of wealth, all owned by poor people. That is de Soto’s great insight — and a practical refutation to the theories of private-property anarchism.

— Bruce Ramsey

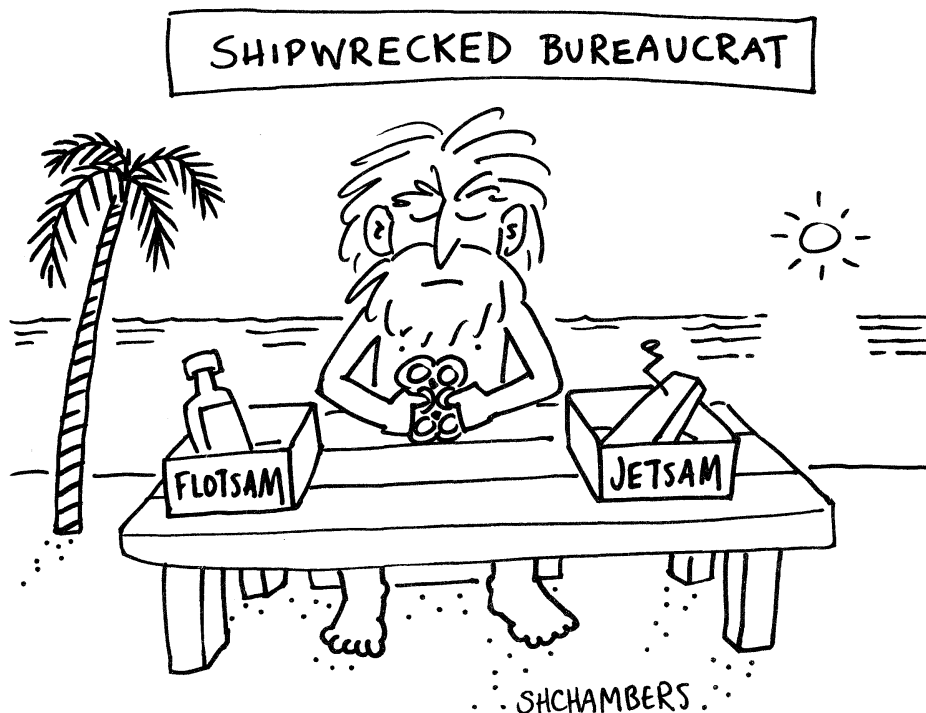
Gun ban creates idiots — Once gun control is adopted, ammo-phobia sets in, and the eventual result is firearms ignorance. The longer a region has the laws in place, the more ignorant the residents become. Places that pioneered gun control, like New York City, become great enclaves of firearms ignorance. The best example here is the recent attempted suicide by former Staten Island Ferry Captain, Richard Smith. Capt. Smith ran the ferry into a dock, causing mass casualties. He was so distraught that he went home and tried to kill himself with a *pellet* gun. Anyone familiar with guns will tell you a pellet gun simply doesn’t have the muzzle velocity needed to kill a person. I wonder how many times he pulled that trigger before he realized it was going to take a lot more time and patience to complete the deed than he had to offer.

He’s lucky he didn’t put an eye out.

— Tim Slagle

My obsession with MADD — I’m scared to death of the lady in front of me. She’s driving a 4,300 pound vehicle and she’s weaving and bobbing. She’s trying to travel in all three lanes at once. You gotta be a heluva driver to manage that. And she’s on her cell phone, too. Listen, I don’t mean to be judgmental, but I am an honest, plain-spoken guy and I’m afraid I have to say that women judge distances a lot worse than men — a key talent when it comes to avoiding collision with other cars. I know guys who can drive better with three beers sloshing in their tummy and a case on the seat beside them than my sister-in-law can drunk with her own words on the cell phone.

Don’t misunderstand; women do a lotta things better than we hairless apes called males. They are much better at nurturing, inside their own bodies, the future inhabitants



of our planet, which somehow makes them far more appreciative of life's basic values. But this lady on the phone is scaring the you-know-what outa me. I'm only sipping a light beer, which is around 3 percent alcohol, but still obviously illegal as white lightning. But she's probably talking to her boyfriend about his choice of entertainment that night. A riveting topic that has driven her attention from the world beyond her windshield to realms far, far away. I can tell because she's veering onto the median that separates us from the oncoming cement mixers, dynamite trucks, and various armored vehicles that are rushing toward us. But it's me who has broken the law with my watery beer?

Where are Mothers Against Cell Phones when I need them?

Full disclosure: I must admit a slight prejudice against MADD. It's not that I'm tolerant of beer-sipping drivers, it's just that I'm less tolerant of child murderers, kidnapers, and burglars.

If MADD devoted half its energy to the eradication of murder instead of stoppering the imbibement of 3.2 percent beer in a moving vehicle — well, we'd live in a much safer world. It's all a question of priorities.

Yes, I know it's blasphemous to pick at MADD. Yes, I know that drunk drivers are no joke, especially to those they kill and maim. But a lobby dedicated to the eradication of this single peccadillo is bizarre. Why not Mothers Against Taxation — now there's a cause for you. Then there's Mothers Against Lying or Mothers Against Murder. (Of course then they wouldn't be MADD. They'd be MAM.) You'd think that if mothers as a class were energized into a lobby they'd target some overwhelming ill that physically or emotionally threatens their kids. We'd see Mothers Against Lousy Schools. Or Mothers Against TV, the worst enemy that kids ever had. Or Mothers

Against Drugs. (Ah, there's that great acronym MAD again.) The point is that from a mother's viewpoint, targets are everywhere. Why aim at a beer bottle on a fence post? The number of kids injured by drunk drivers is a fuzzy one — say several thousand — but it's dwarfed by the number of kids plagued by the mental pollution that spills out of that glittering boob box.

Don't get me wrong, gentle feminine reader. Women do a lot of things, besides nurturing embryonic humans, better than men. Women are the poetic, imaginative, creative side of humanity. Before Eve came along, Adam spent his days on Eden's meadows running with the leopards, eating raw meat, and scratching his fleas. Only when Eve showed up with an orchid in her hair did he explore the gardens of Eden and notice the sunset and the rainbow-crowned waterfalls. Men are from Pittsburgh — women are from Fantasy Island.

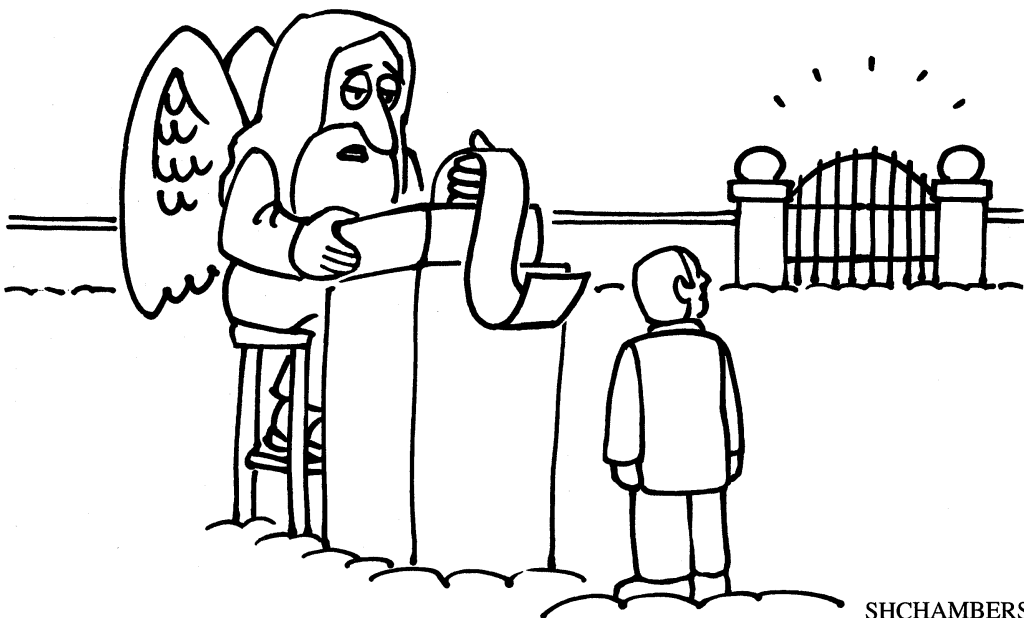
But there's still something about Mothers Against Drunk Driving that bothers me.

— Ted Roberts

Fajita-flingin' warmonger Yankees —

Although it has received little play in the American media, the British and independent presses have given wide coverage to just how regrettable Bush's recent three-day sleep over at Buckingham Palace was. Although Buck House has hosted over 30,000 visitors, it took the Bushes only three days to destroy the gardens. Parts of the garden that date back to Victoria's time — as well as exotic plants and rose bushes planted by the queen and the late Queen Mom — were destroyed by Marine One and other helicopters as they landed on the large Hs the Bush people put in the lawn. The British taxpayer will have to pay for much of the damage, a prospect that prompted the *Sacramento Bee* to suggest Bush send a check. The queen's prized flock of flamingoes may be beyond the power of money to "solve," however. Because they could have flown into the rotors, the birds were removed and apparently so traumatized in the process that there is some question as to whether they will return.

Bush's personal boorishness as a house guest also made a deep impression on the queen, who was reportedly silent during much of his visit. Silence is Liz's renowned manner of expressing disapproval; the more silent she is, the more trouble you're in. One can imagine the quiet that surrounded her guest's request to replace the window panes at the palace . . . the



"I'M SORRY, BUT WITH NO POINTS FOR RACE OR GENDER, YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO GO TO HELL."

ones that made it through the Battle of Britain but not through what the British press called "the battle of the Bushes."

Utter stillness probably greeted the fact that Bush brought five chefs of his own into Buck House — The *Telegraph* dubbed them the "five Yankee fajita-fillers." I guess Bush had been warned about British cuisine. (Of course, the personal chefs sort of undercut Bush's cultivated man-of-the-people image, complete with a much-publicized lunch of fish and chips with fellow man-of-the-people Blair at Dun Cow Inn in the town of Sedgfield.)

As a final insult, the royals couldn't get a decent TV picture and missed their regular shows because of the Secret Service's installation of the mass gadgetry needed for certain security equipment.

What are the odds that Liz and Phil will want to hang with the Bushes again? — Wendy McElroy

Turn on, tune in, tax out —

The United Nations' first attempt at an Internet power grab came in 1999, when a U.N. agency concocted the brilliant idea of taxing email. A report from the United Nations Development Program predicted a tax of one cent on every 100 email messages would be a fabulous way to forcibly transfer about \$70 billion a year from taxpayers in richer countries to less affluent ones.

That idea fizzled, but the taxocrats bode their time. In December, the U.N. convened a "World Summit on the Information Society" in Geneva to discuss a Digital Solidarity Agenda. The U.N.'s International Telecommunications Union says 12,922 people registered, including 900 journalists. (*Forbes* reported that about 60 second-tier heads of state, including Fidel Castro, showed up too.)

Much of the Solidarity Agenda is vague, predictable, and apparently crafted to justify taxpayer-subsidized expense account junkets to Geneva. It calls for more taxes and spending on politically favored information technology programs, the protection of indigenous peoples' cultural heritage, outlawing so-called hate speech, and so on. There's the obligatory crypto-censorial suggestion that governments must take

News You May Have Missed

Celebrity Walkout Continues

HOLLYWOOD — The crippling nationwide strike by celebrities has now reached its sixth week, and it is still not clear when they are going to return to leading empty lives and doing stupid things. President Bush has ordered the National Guard to major celebrity population centers like Beverly Hills, Malibu, and Manhattan, where the troops have been getting down on their knees and begging striking gossip producers to go back to shoplifting, overdosing on drugs, insider trading, making pornographic home videos, murdering spouses, forcing sex on young persons, having fits, and other activities deemed vital to the nation's communications network.

But Paris Hilton, now working as a scholar of late medieval Latin devotional literature, and Michael Jackson, now an assistant bank manager in Sandusky, Ohio, said in a press release sent out by Local 203 of the Celebrities Union that they and their colleagues would not resume their regular reckless and short-sighted activities until the rest of humanity met all their contract demands, including reduced overtime, more sick days, and the establishment of celebrity-worship as the official state religion.

The celebrities did drop several of their demands, such as instant acquittal at murder trials, fawning interviews by fatuous journalists, and late-career elevation to high political office, when it was pointed out that those demands had been met a long time ago. But they continued to insist that until Ashton Kutcher's birthday is made into a sacred national holiday comparable to Super Bowl Sunday, temples and roadside shrines dedicated to Pamela Anderson are erected across America, and "In Barbara Walters We Trust" appears on coins and currency, there could be no settlement.

The losses to the nation's economy have been estimated at \$840 billion so far, with the media, plas-

tic surgery, fundraising concert, defense attorney, blackmail, and hush money sectors particularly hard hit. Many major magazines have already been forced to suspend publication because of the sudden celebrity void, including *People*, *Us*, *InStyle*, *Vanity Fair*, and *The Journal of Psychosexual Disorders*. *Entertainment Weekly*, no longer able to provide awe-struck coverage of conceited twits appearing in numbing movies and TV shows, has restyled itself *Inner Torment Weekly* and now offers readers an inside spin on existential angst and introspective brooding, while *The National Enquirer*, the *Star*, the *Globe*, and *The New York Times* are facing the stark choice of either transforming themselves into comprehensive and objective news sources or risking their credibility by just making stories up. In another measure of the strike's devastating impact, the 24-hour cable news stations CNN, MSNBC, and Fox are now on just four hours a day, displaying a blank screen the rest of the time, after a brief attempt to cover breaking stories in foreign areas where there are no celebrities, like Paraguay, Sri Lanka, Russia, and New Jersey, had to be cut short when ratings actually dropped below zero (this can happen when people set fire to their TV sets).

Although most observers believe that the celebrity strike spells the end of civilization as we know it, others aren't so optimistic. "Let's face it, it's business as usual," said Michael Eisner, an unemployed man searching for a job among the smoldering, deserted ruins once known as Hollywood, California. "Celebrities have just found a new way of messing up. Eventually it'll dawn on them that not doing things bad for their careers is bad for their careers, and they'll go right back to being the fascinating self-centered, self-destructive pretentious airheads we've all come to know and love."

— Eric Kenning

Word Watch

by Stephen Cox

This column — I'm not sure why — is usually about what's wrong with the words people use. But that's only 99% of the story of language. It's the remaining 1% that makes the rest worthwhile. Today I want to talk about things that go right.

Part of writing well is knowing what your audience expects of you, then frustrating that expectation. Here's John Adams, beginning a letter to Thomas Jefferson: "I cannot be serious! I am about to write you the most frivolous letter you ever read." It's a great opening, but its effect depends on the reader's knowledge that the letter was written by a former president of the United States, age 80, to another former president of the United States, age almost that much, and that it's a letter about God. You wouldn't predict anything fresh and surprising, but then you don't know John Adams, because that's what he gives you. He defines God as a being "familiar with all possible or imaginable Sections of the Cone." Admit it: you never considered that view of the subject.

Another part of writing well, or speaking well, is fully exploiting your occasion. Henry Morton Stanley, American journalist, searching for David Livingstone, AWOL British missionary, endured incredible hardships before he arrived in an African village and saw a lone white man standing in an ocean of blacks. He doffed his hat and inquired, "Dr. Livingstone, I presume?" (He had wanted to give Livingstone a great big hug but was embarrassed to do so, not knowing how an Englishman might take it.)

One of my favorite examples of words well suited to their occasion is Oliver Cromwell's little speech to Parliament on the occasion of a visit in 1653. He listened to the speeches for a while; then he got up and said, "Come, come! I will put an end to your prating. You are no Parliament. I say you are no Parliament." Then his troops kicked everybody out of the building. Once you've started down the right track, you should go as far as you can.

To cite another application of that premise: why do people still get a kick out of the title of Charles Mackay's famous book, *Memoirs of Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds* (1841)? It's because Mackay went all the way. Mention "extraordinary popular delusions," and your audience will probably be able to figure out what you mean. But repeat the concept with an appropriate image, "*the madness of crowds*," and they'll laugh out loud. Ah yes; we know these silly crowds.

Speaking of appropriate images, there's something to be said for a seemingly inappropriate image, too. Most imagery that is memorable has something inappropriate about it; otherwise it wouldn't grab your nerve ends. Discussing the "tulipomania," the craze for tulips, that swept Holland in the 17th century, Mackay quotes the poet Abraham Cowley: "The tulip next appeared, all over gay, / But wanton, full of pride, and full of play." To Cowley, the tulip was a sexy young lord. Now that you know that, you'll never take tulips for granted again, although your interest in sexy young lords may have come down a notch.

Images may be inappropriate . . . but never merely senseless. (If it weren't for that small but significant limitation, every politician would be a better literary artist than Homer and Shakespeare.) John

Betjeman, in his great poem "The Conversion of St. Paul," solemnly lists the evils of the universe, then adds the climactic example: "Creatures like centipedes, and worse." And worse! First one pictures the awful many-footed bug, looming up like a diesel locomotive. Then one tries to picture something even more hideous. But "creatures like hyacinths, and worse," just wouldn't work, even if you detest hyacinths. There's no sense to that image. Someone (please tell me if you know who it was, because I can't find the source) called the Midwest "a vast parking lot for human Fords." I'm from the Midwest, and I don't think that image is entirely fair and appropriate, but there's enough truth in it to make it stick.

Other things being equal, writing is good if it's brief. Isabel Paterson, who worked as a critic for a New York paper and gave notices to hundreds of books a year, encountered a publishing firm that was particularly obnoxious in pushing one of its new releases. "I have a book," she told them. One longs for the days when politicians could speak with becoming brevity: "I do not choose to run" (Coolidge). "If nominated, I will not run; if elected, I will not serve" (Sherman). Actually, one simply longs for the days when politicians declined to run.

But I used the phrase "other things being equal." Something can still be said for the value of a good long list, a list that suggests the fullness and richness of the world. Remember *Double Indemnity*? Edward G. Robinson plays an insurance man with poetry in his soul. In one scene, he argues with his boss about whether a policy holder committed suicide by jumping off a train. He refers to the actuarial tables:

Why, we've got ten volumes on suicide alone. Suicide by race, by color, by occupation, by sex, by season of the year, by time of day. Suicide, how committed: by poison, by firearms, by drowning, by leaps. Suicide by poison, subdivided by types of poison, such as corrosive, irritant, systemic, gaseous, narcotic, alkaloid, protein, and so forth. Suicide by leaps, subdivided by leaps from high places, under the wheels of trains, under the wheels of trucks, under the feet of horses, from *steamboats*! But Mr. Norton, of all the cases on record, there's not one *single* case of suicide by leap from the rear end of a moving train!

Now that's a soul-satisfying list. Satisfying, at least, to the speaker; I don't think Mr. Norton got much out of it. But despite everything I've suggested about the importance of affecting the audience, there are times when you just have to do what's right, no matter what the audience thinks. A cheerful contempt has its own attractions. In his song "Friendship," Irving Berlin expresses the kindly but limited devotion that the author should feel toward the reader:

If they ever
Shoot you in the brain —
I'll complain.

You may be insulted, but you can't deny that the right words were chosen.

“appropriate measures” to combat “illegal and harmful content in media content,” whatever that means.

Some of the more incendiary stuff is buried in section D2, which says the U.S. government should take “concrete efforts” toward expropriating \$97 billion a year from American taxpayers and funneling the cash to Third-World nations to be spent on some ill-defined technology programs. I’m not sure how much non-military foreign aid the U.S. hands out today, but in 1997 U.S. taxpayers coughed up around \$7 billion. Because we have around 130 million U.S. taxpayers, without adjusting for income disparities, the extra \$90 billion amounts to an average tax increase of \$692 per taxpayer. What a bargain!

About the only other concrete proposal is an attempt to wrest control of Internet governance (think domain names and addresses) from a U.S. non-profit corporation created in 1998 as part of a privatization process. Since then, we’ve learned that the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) is quite flawed, but it’s probably still a heck of a lot better than giving the U.N. the key to the shop.

For once, we can’t blame the Democrats or Republicans for devising this bit of lunacy. In fact, the Bush administration seems entirely cool to the whole Solidarity Agenda. The responsible parties are entitlement-happy countries like Brazil, Senegal (which demands a “global digital solidarity fund”), and most of the rest of Africa. Perhaps Senegal and its African cohorts could better spend their diplomats’ time by drafting an Email Recipient Solidarity Agenda to punish Nigerian spammers instead?

— Declan McCullagh

Putting the “Living Constitution” to death

— Constitutional amendments are readily proposed these days to settle disputes over prayer in schools, religious symbols on government property, and the federalization of primary and secondary education and marriage. But such an approach tends to treat the U.S. Constitution as a document to be altered lightly and frequently. It treats symptoms one by one. It implies that the aberrations addressed had indeed been legitimate and could be reversed only by constitutional amendment.

Yet the symptoms are mere examples of an overarching disregard of the Constitution. The remedy should be a single amendment, along the following lines, to reaffirm what the Constitution already says.

Not only judges but also all other persons applying or enacting laws are bound by the actual text of this Constitution, which institutionalizes the separation and limitation of government powers and delegates only specified powers to the central government. No court decision discordant with this Constitution shall have any status as

precedent in other cases. This Constitution may be amended only as specified in Article V and not by stretched or cleverly innovative interpretation or by the accumulation of supposed precedents. Article IV, Section 1, shall not be interpreted to give a law or administrative or court decision in any state the effect of imposing a change in the basic domestic institutions of any other state.

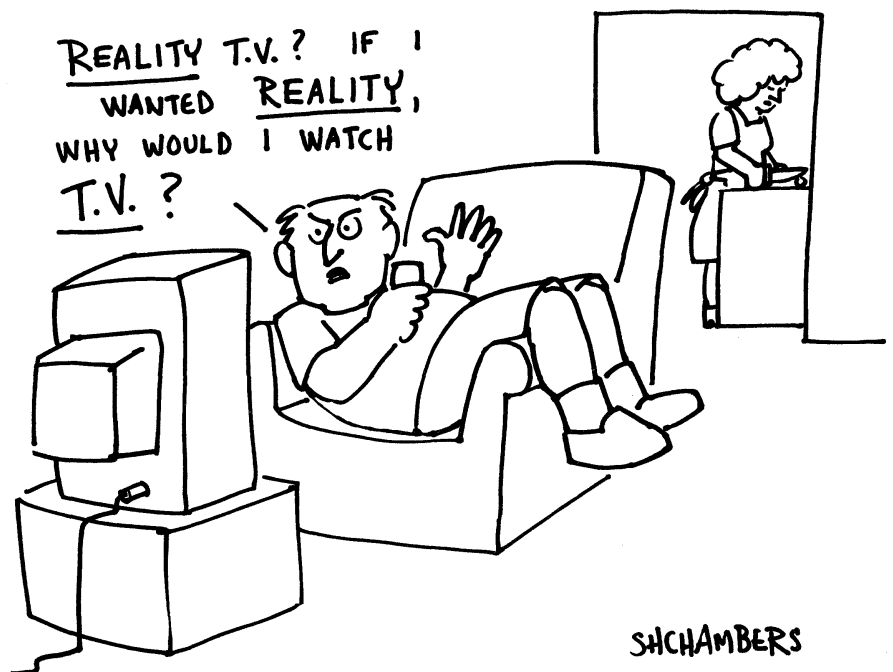
Some might object that the proposed amendment is naive and radical and would create chaos. Objections, spelled out, would usefully reveal attitudes on whether the Constitution is indeed, as its Article VI states, “the supreme Law of the Land.” Discussion of the amendment’s rationale would be healthy, and more precise wording might be found. Its purpose is to confront pervasive disregard of the Constitution rather than tinker with violations case by case.

— Leland B. Yeager

Rolling back the Nanny State — California has recently repealed a law that requires people to wear custom-fit ear plugs while riding motorcycles. Effective January 1, 2004, motorcyclists in the Golden State can operate their vehicles while wearing over-the-counter, non custom earplugs.

— R. W. Bradford

Kill them all, let Gaia sort them out — According to Bill Ruddiman, professor emeritus at the University of Virginia, in a paper published in the December issue of the journal *Climatic Change*, man-made global warming is a prehistoric event, and first began occurring around 8,000 years ago, not coincidentally, about the same time man began clearing forests for agriculture. This explains why ancient pockets of air trapped beneath Antarctic ice have higher levels of carbon dioxide than climatologists have been predicting. From this we can deduce three things: A) Global warming is a natural phenomenon, because even human beings in their purest, primitive, and most politically correct state will still cause



it to occur. Just as coral will build a reef, and alter the ocean's ecosystem, humans will always create a bubble of warmth around themselves. B) Global treaties and alternative fuels are futile. The only way to stop global warming is to call for mandatory extinction of the entire human species. C) Climatologists are all self-loathing whack-jobs, who blame human activity for everything bad.

— Tim Slagle

Inflation nation — I don't believe we are on the road to economic recovery as every TV broadcaster announces at every upward bump in the Dow: I believe the so-called "jobless recovery" we are witnessing (shades of Daddy Bush) is an inflation-driven bubble that will burst. People on the street already know there is no recovery. How? Because, as the *Salt Lake Tribune* comments, "most people get their income from the labor market, not the stock market. The Dow is up 15 percent for the year, but unemployment is unchanged and wages are stagnant."

The real danger is that the U.S. dollar is still greatly overvalued. When the Bush administration and every level of government — state, county, city — responded to 9/11 by spending like drunken sailors, the money came mostly from hyperactive printing presses. (Actually, "drunken sailors" is a poor comparison: there are too few sailors and not enough booze in the world to capture a sense of the government's reckless spending.) The first beneficiaries of inflation are governments and their contractors, employees, and creditors who receive the increased volume of money without the market reaction of increased prices. Inflation takes a long time to trickle down through the

economy to the poor 9-to-5 schlubs who make an honest buck.

I'm seeing the evidence of the trickle down every few months when I visit the States; the change in the buying power of the U.S. dollar has been remarkable. Last year, about this time, the Canadian dollar was worth .63 cents American. Today, the exchange rate is hovering about .76 cents despite the Canadian government's attempts to keep the value of its dollar down; the last thing Canada wants is for U.S. business investment to flee and exports to dry up. (The euro has also risen about 13 percent in the last year and continues to do so.)

About twelve months ago, I began to witness a strange phenomenon: the prices of food in restaurants — from the fancy to the fast food — became almost identical in both the States and Canada: that is, a burger would be priced at, say, \$5.99 in unadjusted dollars on both menus. The same was true of items in grocery stores and pharmacies. On my last trip (two months ago), the prices in unadjusted dollars were higher in the States than Canada. Inflation has started to trickle down to burger stands and food on the grocery shelf.

— Wendy McElroy

The enemy of my enemy is not necessarily my friend — Reading Tim Slagle's account, in the Jan. *Liberty*, of the abusive arrogance of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) bureaucrats who goaded him into dropping his pants was disturbing but understandable in the present environment of hysteria over airborne terrorism. As disturbing as the incident itself

was Slagle's parcelling out blame only to the terrorists for opening the "lion's cage" of government. There is plenty of blame to go around but most of it lies with the administration of George W. Bush. Although the word "freedom" comes out Bush's mouth about a thousand times a day, the president hasn't shown much respect for it as a concept. James Bovard's excellent new book, *Terrorism and Tyranny*, shows in great detail how the Bush administration has repeatedly trampled over freedom, the Constitution, and common sense to erect the draconian security regime that left Slagle standing in his boxers in the airport because of an errant dime.

Looking at previous issues of *Liberty*, I understand why Slagle made such an omission. He almost always directs his formidable ire at the Left — feminists, environmentalists, hippies, Billary, Al Franken, etc. He even mocked Robert Byrd (about the only senator worthy of a shred of respect) for criticizing Bush's stupid and embarrassing carrier stunt (oh, and by the way, Bush just rode on

News You May Have Missed

Earth Liberation Front Fires Cars

PORTLAND, Ore. — In a shocking new development, members of a Portland cell of the radical environmentalist organization Earth Liberation Front (ELF) set fire to their own cars, making it impossible for them to drive out to a suburban automobile dealership where they had been planning to torch all the vehicles in the franchise's parking lot as a protest against human reliance on unnecessary technology. In an email communicate sent to local newspapers and TV stations, the group stated, "Oops! Are we ever embarrassed! We just saw all these monstrous technological fetishes sitting there in someone's driveway and we decided to destroy them before they further destroyed the planet. Turned out they were our own damn cars.

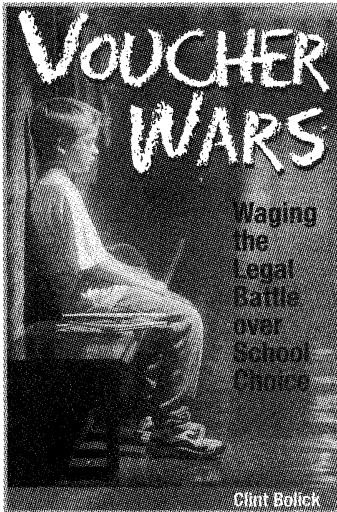
Now we're, like, grounded. Anybody out there who can give us a lift?"

Meanwhile, in San Diego, there was an even more shocking development: 14 militant activists belonging to ELF's sister organization ALF (the Animal Liberation Front) were reported missing after apparently breaking into the zoo late one night to "liberate" (as a note they left behind put it) three tigers, two lions, five crocodiles, and four giant pythons from their cages. The animals were found by zookeepers the next morning back in their still-open cages, where they appeared sleepy but exceptionally contented, refusing all food for several days after the incident. There were no signs of the missing animal-rights activists. — Eric Kenning



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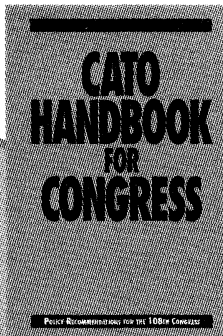
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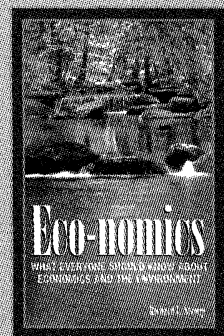
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the Goddamned plane — he didn't land it). Which is all fair enough. The Left has a lot of fat targets. But they are out of power, politically at least (the cultural is another matter). They did not spawn the TSA or the Department of Homeland Security. They did not lie the United States into war (the current one at least). They do not entertain fantasies about the ability of a corrupt, decaying republic to plant liberal democracy in the arid soil of an ersatz country such as Iraq. Anyone who sees enemies only on the Left needs to remove his blinders. — Clark Stooksbury

To the victors goes the pork — The Bush administration decided that only coalition partners in the war on Iraq would be allowed to bid on major reconstruction projects. "Our people risked their lives," Bush explained, according to the *Seattle Times*. "Friendly coalition folks risked their lives, and therefore the contracting is going to reflect that and that's what the U.S. taxpayers expect."

I don't know about other U.S. taxpayers, but this taxpayer expects his taxes to be used for essential government services. I didn't want my taxes being used to kill innocent people, to piss off fundamentalist terrorists, to strip my fellow citizens of their civil liberties, or even to stage a dramatic landing on an aircraft carrier.

Those bother me much more than letting peaceful "folks" in on the "contracting." — Patrick Quealy

Me and Paris — All the buzz around Paris Hilton (the celebrity, not the hotel) has made me reconsider some of my most cherished personal beliefs. I believe in property rights, and think the right of inheritance is one of the extensions of those rights. In regard to dispensation of his property, the will of the deceased should always be honored, and it is the duty of a civilized society to insure that it is. Inheritance taxes are really legalized grave robbing. Recently though, I found out that Paris Hilton is in line to inherit a fortune presently worth \$360 million. Only in a monarchy could such a value be attached to a human being so apparently worthless. I trust God and all the saints of liberty will forgive me, but right now, every fiber of my being wants to see that vacuous, bulimic, bratty little snip of peroxide arrogance left penniless. — Tim Slagle

CNN's new math — CNN's estimate on the number of participants in the main anti-war, anti-Bush protest in London on Nov. 20 was strange. Estimates of almost every march varied widely. Protest organizers have a vested interest in portraying their event as a success and, so, often provide a high figure. Police have a vested interest in downplaying the extent of public unrest and rebellion against laws and policies and, so, usually give a low figure. These two estimates set the extremes; the truth lies somewhere between.

On the London march, the organizers claimed 200,000 participants; Scotland Yard placed the number at 70,000. Following the logic of "truth in the middle" — and, perhaps, their own eyeballing — many U.K. papers, like the

Telegraph, estimated the crowd at about 150,000.

CNN, on the other hand, reported the turnout as 50,000. And CNN was not alone; much of the U.S. media seems to be stuck on that figure, which makes me wonder whether there was a White House press release that provided the estimate. U.S. reporters don't usually take the time to check "facts" disseminated by administration releases. But it would be difficult for a large news organization, like CNN, which has reporters in London, to be unaware of a blatantly self-serving discrepancy from a blatantly self-interested source — if, indeed, such a press release was issued.

And, while I'm on the topic of low-balling figures, why did CNN report that "hundreds" of protesters assembled in Miami to oppose globalization? It seems clear that there were thousands and thousands of protesters. The *Palm Beach Post*, a local Florida newspaper, reported: "Following a morning of tense police standoffs with protesters at the Free Trade Area of Americas summit in downtown Miami, a large union-sponsored march of about 10,000 people Thursday went off peacefully in the afternoon." That's the same figure used by *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, a prestigious and credible newspaper published in CNN World Headquarters' backyard (so to speak). The *Northwest Indiana Times* ran a piece on union participation in the protest and stated of one union alone, "The USWA, 2,000 strong, led Thursday's peaceful protest march. . . ." Where did CNN come up with the vague but incredibly misleading figure of "hundreds"?

— Wendy McElroy

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Court Guts First Amendment

by Mark Tapscott

The Supreme Court has let politicians outlaw criticism from their opponents.

President Reagan probably thought the most significant aspect of his appointment of Sandra Day O'Connor to the U.S. Supreme Court in 1981 was her status as the first woman to sit in judgment as a member of the nation's highest court. Little did Reagan know she would two decades hence strike a grievous blow against the First Amendment.

But that is what O'Connor did Dec. 10 by joining two other justices appointed by Republican presidents — George Bush's David Souter and Gerald Ford's John Paul Stevens — and a pair of Bill Clinton appointees — Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Stephen Breyer — in upholding the constitutionality of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002, AKA McCain-Feingold.

The decision came as a shock to many, though perhaps none more so than President George W. Bush, who reportedly signed McCain-Feingold last year despite having serious reservations, confident that the Court would at least strike down the new law's provisions banning "soft money" contributions to political parties and "issue ads" bought by public interest advocacy groups on radio and TV during congressional campaigns.

Dissenting Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia called Dec. 10 "a sad day for freedom of speech." And so it was, because the Court's decision upholding the McCain-Feingold campaign finance reform presages more assaults on our First Amendment rights. There is always a price to be paid by the body politic when expedience overrules principle, as happened when Bush decided to sign the bill, but never before in American history has that cost been extracted so directly from the fundamentals of constitutional liberty.

That is why it is vital that we be clear about what the O'Connor majority of the nation's highest tribunal approved: the Constitution says "*Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech,*" but Justices Stevens, O'Connor, Souter, Ginsburg, and Breyer say Congress can legally ban citizen contributions to political bodies like the Republican and Democratic national committees for activities like "get-out-the-vote" campaigns and silence political speech expressed in radio and TV "issue ads" beginning 60 days before a general election and 30 days before a primary.

Avoiding the "appearance of a corrupting influence" of money in politics is more important to the justices than preserving our unabridged right to speak our minds about a democracy's most important political issue: who should represent us. These five justices have effectively insulated congressional incumbents from criticism in radio and TV ads for two months before an election.

It ought to be noted, as it was by *Washington Post* columnist Robert Samuelson, that the Court's concern that allegedly excessive influence of money allows the rich and powerful to buy excessive access to policymakers and thereby inordinately shape policy outcomes in Congress and the executive branch is confounded by the facts of government spending. The top 10 percent of American taxpayers

account for slightly more than half of taxes paid. One might think political operatives with such power would contrive to bear somewhat less of the tax burden.

"Meanwhile, most spending goes to the poor and middle class," Samuelson noted. "In fiscal 2003, federal spending, excluding defense and interest payments, totaled \$1.6 tril-

McConnell, United States Senator, et al. v. Federal Election Commission, et al. ranks with such previous infamous decisions as Dred Scott, upholding slavery in 1858, and Plessy v. Ferguson's 1896 approval of separate-but-equal access to public facilities like trains and schools.

lion. Of that, 81 percent went to social programs, including \$475 billion to 47 million Social Security beneficiaries, \$249 billion for 41 million Medicare recipients, \$161 billion for 40 million Medicaid beneficiaries and \$25 billion for 21 million food stamp recipients."

Regardless, because it abridges a fundamental constitutional right, *McConnell, United States Senator, et al. v. Federal Election Commission, et al.* ranks with such previous infamous decisions as *Dred Scott*, upholding slavery in 1858, and *Plessy v. Ferguson's* 1896 approval of separate-but-equal access to public facilities like trains and schools.

There are four particularly disturbing implications of *McConnell v. FEC*. First, it encourages elected officials, bureaucrats, and judges at all levels of government to seek more curbs on political speech. The decision's logic is compelling: political speech that is "bad" two months prior to an election must also be corrupting two months and a day before the vote.

Does anyone seriously doubt that after the 2004 elections there will be efforts to lengthen the ban from 60 days to 90 days or even 120 days? Why stop there? The nature of government is to seek to expand its power, and as government regulation of political speech increases, our freedom is decreased.

Second, the same logic will be applied sooner or later to political ads appearing in other media before an election. The message contained in a corrupting TV spot must also be corrupting when it appears in your daily newspaper, on talk radio, or on the Internet. As Justice Thomas noted: "The chilling endpoint of the Court's reasoning is not difficult to see: outright regulation of the press."

So, not only is the stage thus set for a vast expansion of the FEC — more regulation always means more bureaucrats — but the range of media in which government silences political speech will grow. Today TV, tomorrow the Internet? The present decision's potential harm to the First Amendment dwarfs the abuses sanctioned by the infamous Alien and Sedition Acts that forever marred John Adams' White House years.

Third, not only is the right of all citizens to express political views fundamentally compromised, but their right to

receive information that is critical to their ability to form political opinion is severely injured. Under McCain-Feingold, public interest groups — which are nothing more than individual citizens joining together in a collective expression of political opinion and activity — are barred from informing voters about the stands being taken by candidates on the most important issues of the day.

As a result, Congressman X may be suspected of favoring repeal of the Clean Air Act, but groups like the Sierra Club and the Environmental Defense Fund cannot voice their concerns via radio or TV spots for two full months before election day. For the same reason, pro-lifers are forced into silence on the radio and TV advertising front, as are pro-choicers, pro-gun righters and handgun ban advocates, and proponents and opponents of nationalized health care. There is no comfort in knowing the Supreme Court is an equal-opportunity silencer of objectionable political speech.

Fourth, entirely apart from the urgency of political speech associated with a campaign, incumbent congressmen often find it most difficult to campaign for re-election during the September-October months of an election year because those are the months when Congress is typically wrapping up its work on the most controversial issues.

Under the Court-blessed McCain-Feingold, senators and representatives who might prefer to cast potentially unpopular votes on critical legislative proposals no longer need worry about facing a barrage of radio and TV ads from citizen groups advising them how constituents want them to vote and threatening to remember whether their advice was heeded come election day.

Put another way, incumbents will thus be freed of a significant portion of the burden of listening to constituents before deciding how to vote on legislation those same constituents may care about deeply. Reformers may claim such a situation empowers conscience in Congress but the truth is that the Court has thus pushed America a large step away

"The chilling endpoint of the Court's reasoning is not difficult to see: outright regulation of the press."

from its founding ideal of representative government and toward rule by a tenured, unaccountable aristocracy.

No wonder James Bopp Jr., general counsel of the James Madison Center for Free Speech, said the Court has "gutted" the First Amendment. "The Court's affirmation of [McCain-Feingold] severely damages citizen participation in the American system of government and fundamentally alters American political discourse without any constitutional warrant and in direct contravention of constitutional mandate."

There is hope if the politicians and activists who opposed McCain-Feingold — mostly, but not all, conservatives and libertarians — and the news media that now face the real

continued on page 22

“Heady but good stuff.”

— JAMES M. BUCHANAN, Nobel laureate in economics

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prospect of effective prior restraint on publication of political views can get together to lead a new coalition to defy the Court and challenge the law at every turn in the 2004 campaign.

TV news directors, for example, could invite advocacy groups and supporters of congressional challengers against

The present decision's potential harm to the First Amendment dwarfs the abuses sanctioned by the infamous Alien and Sedition Acts that forever marred John Adams' White House years.

incumbents of both parties who voted for McCain-Feingold to read their issue ads' texts during newscasts throughout the final two months before the election.

Similarly, newspaper editors should publish such texts, talk radio hosts discuss them, and online journalists saturate cyberspace with them. Soon, the futility of banning political speech will be clear even to Congress, and the offending provision of McCain-Feingold will be repealed.

But don't hold your breath waiting for such a coalition! Among the most dispiriting aspects of the McCain-Feingold debacle is the fact that journalists are largely applauding a decision that sooner or later will restrict their right to report and opine as they think proper.

Other than the *Washington Times* (full disclosure: my career as a newspaper journalist includes four years at the *Times*), which has often lambasted McCain-Feingold for its injurious impact on the First Amendment, it has been difficult since Dec. 10 to find a major newspaper editorial criticizing the Supreme Court decision.

One newspaper that did was the *Omaha World-Herald*, which observed:

Say this for Wednesday's U.S. Supreme Court ruling on campaign finance regulation: It was broad. It swallowed the McCain-Feingold law nearly whole. This should be seen as a troubling outcome, chiefly because it is at odds with the First Amendment. The law's most disturbing provision is that it all but prohibits advocacy groups from mentioning or even depicting a candidate in a federal election . . . If the First Amendment doesn't (or should we say didn't?) exist to protect that, then what other forms of expression may next be in danger?

The *World-Herald* was a lone ranger on the issue, however. Both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* were ecstatic that the Court upheld a law both had vigorously supported. The *Times* called the decision a "triumph," while the *Post* noted: "The decision, the critical portion of which was written by Justices Sandra Day O'Connor and John Paul Stevens, is a watershed among the court's campaign finance cases for its frank realism about political practice."

Quite simply, the *Post* editorialist declared, the decision represented the laudable culmination of "years of Supreme Court precedent" and guarantees that "American democracy is not defenseless and that purchased access to the powerful

is not protected by the right of free speech."

Similar comments dominated the editorial pages of America's great dailies, with many encouraging Congress and the federal courts to look for new ways of expanding regulation of political speech in the interest of preventing the appearance of an alleged evil. The decision, claimed the *Los Angeles Times*, "signals an overdue recognition of the power and the danger big money poses in federal elections and public policy . . . the high court's clear affirmation of the measure, shifting the balance a bit away from free-speech absolutism, should provide the momentum for further reform."

Meanwhile, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* called the decision "surprising, momentous and welcome," and cheered that "the court's ringing opinion, with its strong, pragmatic language about money's real-world corrupting impact, and its impatience with the theory that any restriction on the flow of money to politics is a restriction of political speech erects a strong platform for further reform."

The *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* said the decision "cracked open the door for potentially more important and far-reaching reforms in the future" and contended that "while money may be speech, too much money is a bribe."

The *Baltimore Sun* hailed the decision as "a victory for Arizona Sen. John McCain and his bipartisan band of renegades" but cautioned that "it just opened a door." It is a door the *Sun* wants Congress and the federal courts to walk through as quickly as possible because "schemes aplenty are already in place to evade the ban on unlimited 'soft money' donations to political parties and unregulated spending on last minute 'issue' ads that are the central features" of McCain-Feingold.

Such commentary no doubt would sadden journalists of another era like the *Chicago Tribune's* bigger-than-life publisher, Col. Robert McCormick, who recognized that an independent press would be forever lost without preservation of the constitutional safeguards established by the First Amendment. McCormick put his considerable money and influence on the line in taking a case critical to the preservation of a free press all the way to the Supreme Court.

As a result, in 1931, the Court struck down Minnesota's Public Nuisance Law, which allowed prosecution of journalists publishing any information arrogant public officials judged defamatory. That decision, which effectively ended legalized prior restraint of the press in America, was the culmination of an expensive legal and media campaign financed by McCormick, the rock-ribbed conservative isolationist who absolutely delighted in publishing a truly independent newspaper, even one that mistakenly proclaimed Tom Dewey the winner of the 1948 presidential election.

"The control of the press is not given to the legislature but is reserved to the people. If there is an abuse of the liberty, it is for the people to decide so in the persons of the jurymen, not for the legislature to restrain it in advance," argued McCormick's attorney, Weymouth Kirkland. McCormick was heavily involved in writing Kirkland's briefs, according to the publisher's biographer, Richard Norton Smith.

Will the modern Col. McCormick please stand up?

Let 'em Walk to the Clinic!

by Timothy Sandefur

Charging too little to drive the elderly and disabled to the doctor is against the law in Tampa.

Five years ago, Daniel Steiner went into the limousine business. Today, his company, DSL Transport, operates five Lincoln Town Cars, and employs six people in the Tampa area. Until recently, DSL was a respectable company, transporting its elderly and disabled patients to their doctor appointments. But then, authorities say, he began breaking the law. In October, after a lengthy investigation by Hillsborough County's Public Transportation Commission, authorities declared that the unassuming, hard-working Brazilian immigrant was *charging too little*.

Hillsborough County's regulations of taxis and limousines may seem like a strange place to look for an education in political philosophy. But they are an object lesson in the way government intervention in the market handicaps entrepreneurs — usually lower-class workers and immigrants — to benefit politically powerful interest groups.

Long before James Buchanan and Gordon Tullock published their classic *Calculus of Consent*, American political thinkers were familiar with the problem of "faction": groups seeking economic and political power would invest time and energy into gaining control over the government. The more power they could get by gaining such control, the more intense their efforts. This was one reason that early libertarians fought against government's power to grant monopolies: such monopolies benefited politically powerful groups by preventing others, hard-working, but politically unpopular, from earning an honest living. Fortunately, for much of early American history — with some major exceptions — courts held that the United States Constitution prohibited government from giving such

"naked preferences."

In the 1932 case of *New State Ice Co. v. Leibmann*, for example, the Supreme Court struck down an Oklahoma law which prohibited anyone from entering the ice business without first proving to the state's Corporation Commission that a new ice business was "necessary." Of course, this presented three obvious problems. First, it meant that existing ice businesses were protected from competition from upstart entrepreneurs. This meant that the existing businesses could confidently raise prices and provide poor service — the classic abuses of monopoly. Since the commission was made up of already-existing ice businesses, the conflict of interest was obvious. Second, even if the commission had been perfectly unbiased, the Oklahoma law required new ice companies to do the impossible: prove a negative. Rather than the state having to give a good reason for prohibiting the business, the newcomer to the ice market was forced to prove that he ought to be free from regulation. As Anthony de Jasay writes, proving that one ought to be free from regulation "is a needle-in-the-haystack type of task, very difficult and costly if the set of potential objections is large, and logically impossible if the set is not finite." Finally, proving that a new ice business was *necessary* — as opposed to convenient, or ben-

eficial to society in some way — is an extremely difficult, if not impossible, burden. This is even more true since businessmen like Earnest Leibmann weren't allowed to try the experiment first.

The Supreme Court struck down the Oklahoma law in *Leibmann*. The Constitution, it held, protects the right to earn a living, and prohibits monopolies that merely protect some economic interest group against competition. "The practical tendency of the restriction," wrote Justice Sutherland, "is to shut out new enterprises, and thus create and foster monopoly in the hands of existing establishments, against, rather than in aid of, the interest of the consuming public. . . . There is no difference in principle between this case and the attempt of the dairyman under state authority to prevent another from keeping cows and selling milk on the ground that there are enough dairymen in the business. . . ."

In retrospect it's ironic that Sutherland used dairies as an example. A mere two years later, *Leibmann* was overruled in *Nebbia v. New York*, a case which heralded the rise of a new Constitutional law.

Since at least the 1920s, judges like Oliver Wendell Holmes and Louis Brandeis had argued that the Constitution should be reinterpreted to suit newly evolving political theories. One contemporary admirer of Justice Holmes explained that "Justice Holmes came to the bench in 1882, when the transition from individualism to collectivism in England was in progress. [He realized] . . . that the socialistic trend in American political thought would finally demand extensive paternal legislation. . . . [T]he necessity for the establishment of a benevolent attitude towards social reform was apparent. . . . [But] no further [constitutional amendment] might be looked for. . . . Next to amendment of the Constitution, the most feasible means of giving validity to new principles was to change the interpretation of the provisions [of] . . . the 5th and 14th Amendments."

In *Nebbia*, the Court signaled this change by upholding a New York law which set a minimum price for milk. The state argued that the law was necessary to prevent dairies from going out of business: competition, the law's defenders argued, would drive profits down so low that compa-

One reason that early libertarians fought against government's power to grant monopolies was that such monopolies prevented politically unpopular groups from earning an honest living.

nies would simply get out of the milk business entirely. Competition from new milk companies, wrote the Court, "produce[d] waste harmful to the public, threaten[ed] ultimately to cut off the supply of a commodity needed by the public, or portend[ed] the destruction of the industry itself. . . ." Therefore, minimum price laws had to be set to protect existing milk companies against competition.

Today, most American cities regulate public transporta-

tion in the way that Oklahoma tried to regulate ice companies. In Denver, for instance, city laws require any new taxi company to obtain a "certificate of necessity" by proving that current taxi services don't serve existing demand. Just as with the Oklahoma law, this places an impossible burden on entrepreneurs, who must prove the need for their services even before offering their services to the public.

Authorities declared that the unassuming, hardworking Brazilian immigrant was charging too little to drive senior citizens to their physicians.

But every business owner knows the truth of the old adage "supply creates its own demand": it's not possible to prove that the public wants a new service until it's offered.

Many cities micromanage their public transportation services in order to achieve a "balance" between suppliers, in the same way that New York tried to "balance" existing milk producers through price regulation. Hillsborough County's limousine regulations, for instance, require all limousine services to charge at least \$40 per hour. Asked why consumers need protection from low prices, Gregory Cox, director of the County Public Transportation Commission, explained that the rule is intended to "keep a balance between the taxi industry and the limousine industry so that both remain solvent." In other words — to ensure that taxi companies don't have to be competitive with limousine services.

Daniel Steiner ran up against the rule this summer when he began offering transportation to medical clinics. The clinics pay Steiner's company directly, every month — the passengers pay nothing — and the rate always exceeds \$40 per hour. But this wasn't enough for the commission, which declared that its rules *really* mean \$40 per person, per ride. At a hearing in October, the commission brushed aside the pleas of several of Steiner's passengers, and placed his business license on probation. Represented by the Pacific Legal Foundation, Steiner is appealing.

Whenever government has the power to give people economic benefits, that power becomes a prize in a political competition. That is the central insight of public choice economists like Buchanan and Tullock. The taxi market is a prime example: taxi companies use government licensing rules to prevent fair competition and, in essence, to get rich by making it illegal for customers to shop elsewhere. But preventing these sorts of unfair preferences is one reason that the Constitution was written: as a federal appeals court recently held, "protecting discrete interest groups from economic competition is not a legitimate governmental purpose." But so long as decisions like *Nebbia* remain on the books, the courts will have a hard time protecting hardworking entrepreneurs like Daniel Steiner against the protectionist laws that benefit the economic and bureaucratic establishment. □

If Free Markets Give People What They Want, How Do You Explain Dan Rather?

by Robert Formaini

“A group of liberal venture capitalists are getting together to start their own liberal radio network to counter conservative radio hosts like Rush Limbaugh. They feel the liberal viewpoint is not being heard — except on TV, in the movies, by comedians, on the radio. Other than that, the message just isn’t getting out.”

— Jay Leno

Economic theory teaches that consumers are sovereign. Individuals, through the market process, allocate resources in such a way that they maximize the satisfaction of consumer wants. Yet the national media produce a great deal of product that a great number of consumers don’t seem to want. Either, it would seem, the product the media puts out is just what we want, or there’s something amiss with economic theory.

Belying the fantasy of broad satisfaction with media output, resenting media bias has become a favorite bipartisan pastime. While conservatives have always seen a liberal media allied against them, liberals perceive a “right-wing” conspiracy stopping them from getting their message out — that is, if such people as Hillary Clinton, Al Gore, and Tom Daschle are to be believed. The media themselves have often used the existence of this alleged bipartisan loathing of their so-called “objective” output as an inoculation against the charge that they are, in fact, biased. That’s when they aren’t themselves admitting they are biased, while explaining to the rest of us just why this is trivially true but, of course, quite harmless. Confused yet?

In a trivial sense, all media are biased. By trivial, I mean that our personal biases seep into our work regardless of who we are or what we are doing. Bias influences the choices we make at every stage of any investigation or storytelling. But it is not *trivial* bias that people are pointing to when they claim a *general* media bias exists. It is *systematic* bias that leads to the distorted reporting of news and cur-

rent events, as well as the insertion into popular entertainment — television shows and movies — of ideological propaganda. It is the kind of bias of which Lichter, Stein, Efron, Coulter, and Goldberg have written even as their counterparts — Postman, FAIR, Alterman, and even Al Gore — echo these sentiments from the Left. Does this bias — from the Right or Left — really exist? I am convinced that it does.

There simply is an overwhelming, Left-oriented bias in the output of mainstream Hollywood and the older major news networks, including but not limited to ABC, CBS, NBC, PBS, NPR, and CNN. People who claim otherwise are wrong, arguing either mendaciously, or — in some cases — from the misapplication of economic theory to large media (arguing that no general media bias can exist while consumer demand shapes the supply of media content). But such an application of the microeconomic theory of the firm — even in its oligopoly incantation — is not relevant here. Public affairs and news shows are not revenue generators and their “owners” are utility — not profit — maximizers.

Evidence of this leftward bias is abundant. I could cite

the example of the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* calling the January 2003 anti-war demonstration in D.C. an event organized and attended by "mainstream America" — when in fact it was a Communist-led and funded operation from beginning to end. (Of course, they inflated the number of people who attended the event as well.) I could provide, should I wish to spend a lifetime doing it, thousands more such examples. But why bother with all that after Peter Arnett's amazingly candid interview, given while still employed by NBC, from Iraq's Information Ministry? To his candid utterances ("[I]t is clear that within the United States there is growing challenge to President Bush about the conduct of the war and also opposition to the war") and the pathetic attempt, at least at first, by his employer to defend him, let me add the following — admittedly rhetorical — questions:

1) Which news anchors, producers, news shows, or writers for the aforementioned networks are demonstrably non-liberal? Yes, there's John Stossel at ABC. And after noting him, who else? Anyone?

2) How many films or TV shows can you name where a character was a conservative politician and was portrayed favorably? Or where lines of dialogue praised conservatives or their policy positions? There are none of which I am aware.

3) What major American newspapers are non-liberal? Yes, there's the *Wall Street Journal*, a fine paper whose editorial page is conservative. But after this exception has been noted?

4) What issues do the news media, through reporting, stories, political action, and personal belief, support that are non-liberal? None. Not a single one.

5) What writers, artists, etc. do the news media trumpet who are non-liberals, excluding outright Communists who are, of course, routinely not just trumpeted, but actually worshipped in film and in alleged documentaries? There must be at least one . . . right?

6) What other result would one expect from an industry principally housed in America's two most liberal states, and three liberal cities — New York, Los Angeles, and

Which news anchors, producers, news shows, or writers for the aforementioned networks are demonstrably non-liberal? Yes, there's John Stossel at ABC. But is there anyone else?

Washington, D.C.? The geography allows members of the media to believe they are in touch because so many of their fellows mirror their own biases. A look at the national election map shows quite conclusively that they are completely out of touch with just about everyone else, but they never seem to get that message. They prefer to concoct bizarre theories about how such elections are possible. Voters fell for propaganda, they claim, or didn't really understand the liberal message, and so on. Embarrassing nonsense, of course,

but widely believed by media types nonetheless, some of whom are, no doubt, at some conference spouting them right now.

7) Or, if you prefer mind experiments, ask yourself whether the media treatment of Clara Harris would have been different if her husband had run *her* down with the family car, or whether the media would treat Tiger Woods trying to enter LPGA events with the same slant they have treated Anika Sorenstam's effort to play in the Colonial. To

Cronkite, Murrow, Collinswood, Daly, Severeid: we remember many names from television news' alleged Golden Years, but have forgotten that only one ideology was allowed in those network newsrooms: liberalism.

think about this is to see instantly that the media are indeed biased, and further, to see exactly *how* they are biased.

8) And finally, is there an American anywhere who hasn't wanted to smash many reporters in their faces as they babble their insipid, biased, contempt-dripping questions during wartime press conferences? (Not to say that the military ought not to be questioned.)

What can account for this bias? Two things: tradition and media culture. The first — tradition — has its origins in World War II and its aftermath, when emerging televised news was dominated by voices that people had relied on during and immediately after the war. Cronkite, Murrow, Collinswood, Daly, Severeid: we remember many names from television news' alleged Golden Years, but have forgotten that only one ideology was allowed in those network newsrooms: liberalism. It is precisely this inherited homogeneity of opinion that allows Dan Rather to call the *New York Times* "politically moderate." To Rather, one supposes it is, even after drifting further toward the hard Left with each passing day under its new editor, Howell Raines, since deposed.

Famous media news people have been united by their love for FDR, Truman, and JFK, and united as well by their mutual detestation for Nixon, Goldwater, or anyone else they perceived to be on the Right side of the political spectrum, including the current president. The traditions in network news and public affairs programming are steeped in post-World War II liberalism as percolated through the 1960s. And tradition matters, even though the media are now more post-Vietnam than post-WWII. Left-liberals understand tradition very well, which is why they seek to undermine it almost everywhere else in society where they encounter it. But at least we can, today, look back with nostalgia for a time when reporters and Hollywood were, during a major war, actually on our side.

No longer. Many are fairly open in their contempt for current war policies and the people carrying them out. Some are, no doubt, secretly hoping for American defeat in Iraq or anywhere else the great, "imperialist empire" they call

America chooses to exert itself.

The left-liberal tradition in the media is reinforced by a broad and deep culture of leftism. Long ago, the major journalism schools became left-liberal, by which I mean departments such as Columbia, Northwestern, USC, Berkeley, and Missouri. The canons of the field have been, and continue to be, written by left-liberal practitioners and, of course, by liberal federal judges whose importance — as in the *New York Times Co. v. Sullivan* decision (the foundation of modern libel law) — ought never be underestimated. The cultural milieu in which modern journalism is done is dominated by liberal concerns and ideology, and has been during my lifetime.

Moreover, the borders between news, entertainment, and opinion have been blurred beyond recognition. Twenty-five years ago, the media used the “some say this, others say that” method of injecting editorial content into alleged news stories; today, they use the device of quoting carefully chosen “critics.” Many headlines simply echo what these so-called critics believe, as if that constituted some sort of news, while these same so-called news stories routinely offer the quotations and opinions of those who disagree with whatever the story is purporting to report. There is no difference any longer between news stories and editorials in most papers, and it’s past time that they admitted it and cancelled their op-ed pages — or their news pages — and started calling everything they do “editorialized entertainment.” After all, “serious” journalism is no different really from talk radio, which leftists claim to hate for its alleged “superficiality.”

What, to use a recent example, is the difference between the *New York Times’* editorials on the Augusta National Country Club and The Masters golf tournament, and its so-called news stories on the same topic? All 55 of them, including one with the screaming headline “Ku Klux Klan Supports All Male Augusta National Club,” were based on the request by one disgruntled, former Klan member for a protest permit. Naturally, the *Times* treated the story as if it were an international problem of immense significance on the order of, say, a new Gulf War. The difference between these news stories and the *Times’* editorials on the same topic? There just plain *isn’t* any difference. When two *Times* reporters offered a different view, it was not printed.

I can attest to the old liberal bias personally as I recall how thrilled I used to be when the finale from Aaron Copeland’s *Appalachian Spring* led to another dramatic CBS *Reports* exposé of what the evil conservatives around us were up to, whether they were busy “Selling the Pentagon” and, hence, creating the evil military-industrial complex, or causing and then perpetuating “Hunger in America,” first by mistreating all those migrant workers (“Harvest of Shame”) and then by denying adequate welfare payments to those starving among us. Remember that amazing opening scene from CBS’s “Hunger in America” with its solemn narration that “This baby has just died of hunger — right here in America.” Riveting stuff. So what if some of us found out later that that particular baby had not died of hunger. We all just knew that thousands and thousands did die every year because the tightwad conservatives and outright racists in our Congress and state governments denied them adequate

welfare and food payments. Or at least, we knew it after the program had “explained” it to us.

And right-thinking — which at that time meant all *liberal* — people watched and nodded with approval as CBS showed us our country as it really was: provincial, small-minded, selfish, stupid, and just plain racist, a rogue, international outlaw kind of place, so culturally and intellectually inferior to our older, wiser European friends who, after all, had long ago enacted socialized medicine and month-long vacations for their workers.

Come to think of it — not much has changed, has it? Anyway: we liberals — for I really was one of them way back then — lapped up every second of these types of broadcasts, every night, every weekend — getting almost all of our information from television, condescendingly shredding our poor, outflanked verbal opponents who did not spend their time watching these completely truthful, enlightened offerings. To us, the liberal viewpoint was clearly right, and events daily seemed to prove them so: evil, right-wing Dallas shooting the great liberal president, JFK; the Chicago “police riot” that masqueraded as the 1968 Democratic convention; MLK’s assassination at the hands of just another, random, typical Southern racist nut case (those last four words forming a tautology for liberal media types); and the largest crystallizing event of all — Vietnam, prosecuted by the “war criminals” Nixon and Kissinger, aided and abetted by a fanatical, even coup-intent, military-industrial complex determined to funnel as much money as possible to companies like Raytheon, General Dynamics, and Bell Helicopter even as the draft was covertly used to eliminate America’s minorities via “draft genocide.” America — what a complete hell hole! And nothing, for left-liberals, has changed. (In fact, one could have been entertained throughout last year’s television season by the intricate, sophisticated reprise of this very paranoid conspiracy theory on Fox’s hit show *24*, where an Islamic terrorist attack was hatched and executed not by all of those innocent Arab Islamic fanatics but, of course, from within the American government itself. Fox — you know — that conservative place on the television dial!)

But though left-liberals like to believe and behave as though nothing has changed and the media still cater to their fantasies, the world has moved on. The comfort of those halcyon days — when everything was so simple, so black and white, so perfectly clear to all right thinkers — is gone now, replaced by complexities and competitive pressures that neither the networks, nor their complacent yet also disgruntled viewers, saw coming.



“Well, kids — I guess it all started to fall apart when they canceled *Seinfeld*.”

So how is it possible, then, that these dinosaurs from the recent, liberal-dominated past can still wreak such ideological havoc if that's not precisely what current media consumers want? It's really not a mystery, any apparent contradiction to economic theory notwithstanding.

The development of our media was controlled, indirectly, by powerful political and wealthy corporate interests. Federal regulations ensured that television, and then radio, would develop exactly as they have, despite the

The market is working in telecommunications, slowly and inevitably, although there is a long way to go before we undo the horrible regulations that have crippled its growth and ability to foster real competition.

resurgence of AM radio as an outpost of contrary thinking. Now that the old television oligopoly is crumbling, which began with Ted Turner — God bless his limousine liberal heart! — people are dumping the established networks in droves for newer sources of information that are not as ideologically monolithic in their coverage. But even so, Fox draws about 850 thousand households per night, versus the old establishment's 33 million. There is a long, long way to go, and yet the dominant oligopoly is already panicked and spewing negative hyperbole at all of their new rivals.

The same is true for television shows, although since most of these are produced in the same Hollywood factories, change there is less pronounced. Nothing, it seems, is as ideologically set in stone as Hollywood's incurable, insipid, infantile leftism, dating as it does from Tinseltown's very founding. It reached its apogee in Hollywood's version of the crucifixion — the HUAC "Hollywood Ten" hearings — flowered massively in the late 1960s as American youth started to live Hollywood's daily routine of random sex and drug use, and manifests itself today in the sophomoric, loony political activities of so-called "stars." Many of these stars become more shrill as their careers decline, until their constant liberal bleatings appear as little but publicity stunts. Yet all of this is, in a fashion, actually progress. These people used to wreck every Academy Awards program during Vietnam with their silly pronouncements and faux-dangerous rhetorical broadsides.

Is this view of Hollywood itself a contradiction of economic theory? No, because people simply want to be entertained, not to be politically educated. They allow Hollywood a great deal of slack for its political biases because they frankly don't care about the politics in Hollywood. And most Americans cannot grasp the left-wing subtleties of a film such as *High Noon* and never realized that the scriptwriter thought he was making some kind of liberal political statement. In fact, if told, most people would deny he succeeded! Certainly, they would be con-

fused completely by film professors who teach that the scientist in Howard Hawks' classic *The Thing From Outer Space* was supposed to be Lenin, or that the original *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* was yet another anti-McCarthyism effort despite the non-liberal politics of its director, or that *King Kong* represents the plight of the black male in racist America, or that *Spartacus* is really about the struggle against fascist control of society by democratic, peasant-loving elements in a Rome beset by Marxist class warfare! (A friend once remarked to me that the only cliché line missing from *Spartacus* was Kirk Douglas looking down from his cross and saying "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!") Given Hollywood's political naivete and ideological predilections, perhaps we can all give thanks for the average person's attitudes and their reasons for going to see movies.

The market is working in telecommunications, slowly and inevitably, although there is a long way to go before we undo the horrible regulations that have crippled its growth and ability to foster real competition. For example, despite the outright hostility of the major news establishment — and its unceasing ridicule of competitors as its own information monopoly slowly crumbles — Matt Drudge's website hit one billion hits last November. People want information, and while *misinformation* is sometimes the result of their search, at least they can access more information now that technological changes are busting up the old media neighborhood.

This is all to the good. I see absolutely no downside to allowing the strongest possible competition — whether through talk radio, or the Internet, or competing cable and satellite networks — to emerge and engage the old, New York-centered media oligopoly and, of course, Washington's media Frankenstein — PBS, which should be abolished, or at the least, shorn of its tax subsidies, both explicit and implicit. In many rural areas where competition is scarce, public radio still commands an audience well

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out of proportion to the value of what it provides owing to its incredibly bloated national infrastructure. No private network has as many broadcasting affiliates as PBS, with the sole exception of Cox radio.

Does a theory of media bias contradict economic theory, specifically the idea of consumer sovereignty? No, it clearly doesn't. Media bias is a *fact*, and economic theory — tautologically — remains not fact, but theory; and theory — despite the protestations of economist practitioners — gen-

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Searching for Lonerville

by Sandy Shaw and Durk Pearson

New evidence challenges the notion that free riders undermine the provision of public goods — as people in the desert town of Lonerville, Nevada, have long known.

Public goods are goods that are shared by everybody regardless of whether any specific individual made any contribution to produce them. For example, the benefits of national defense are available to everyone in a country, whether they pay to support it or not. Similarly, court litigation that protects constitutional rights gives the same benefits to all, whether they helped pay for the litigation or not. Scientists investigate how public goods can be optimized by constructing public goods games, experimental models in which actual human participants contribute (or not) to a pool that is then divided (the payoff) to both those who contributed (Cooperators) and those who did not (the Defectors). In public goods theory and experiment, it requires a very highly valued outcome to overcome the incentive to defect and collect all the public goods generated by others.

Remarkably, recent theoretical and experimental studies^{1,2} by two entirely different groups of scientists studying cooperation by humans in collective enterprises provide substantial evidence to support the idea that being able to opt out of public goods games maintains a higher percentage of cooperation (people willing to support the collective enterprise), while not being able to opt out leads to much lower levels of cooperation along with a rise in the number of defectors (who contribute nothing but take the benefits of the collective enterprise).

The latest work on this development appeared in the Sept. 25, 2003 *Nature*.² The authors introduced their paper by explaining that in public goods experiments, initial cooperation usually drops quickly almost to zero.

Mechanisms used to maintain “cooperation” include punishing defectors (Communist/Nazi punishment society model or the regulatory state or, at a local level, boycotting or shunning) or the need to maintain good reputation. As the authors note, these mechanisms require that defectors be identified. (Defectors are also likely to attempt to deceive others in an attempt to establish a phony “good” reputation, making it more difficult to distinguish the real good reputations.³) Theorists have proposed a different mechanism for maintaining cooperation that works under conditions of anonymity.

The proposed mechanism is to allow optional participation in the public goods game; that is, to allow people to choose not to participate in the game. Those people are called “loners.” The authors staged experiments in which participants could be either cooperators, defectors, or loners, and show that on average, cooperation is maintained at a substantial level. The “return” to each individual in the cooperators and defectors groups is calculated based upon the amount of money the cooperators pay into the public goods pool (where multiples of the money contributed by cooperators is added to the pool by the experimenters) divided by the number of individuals in the game, includ-

ing defectors.

The authors displayed the group decisions (cooperator, defector, or loner) of the group (without identifying who made what decisions). The "decisions" were faked for seven rounds so as to test the predictions of the theory, e.g., how the players would respond to the different levels of cooperators, defectors, and loners. In the eighth round, the prediction was that if you started the round with mostly loners, you would then see more cooperators; if you started

A proposed mechanism to maintain cooperation is to allow optional participation in the public goods game.

the round with mostly defectors, you would see more loners; if you started the round with mostly cooperators, you would see more defectors. This is what the authors call rock-paper-scissors dynamics. They then ran 50 rounds without manipulation to see what sort of oscillations would appear among the three groups.

They found that the predicted strategy was followed significantly more often than the alternative strategy ($p < 0.001$, $n = 20$, paired t -test, $t = 6.588$, two-tailed). The authors state: "As the model predicts, after loners have the highest frequency, cooperators become most frequent, thereafter defectors, and then loners again. After a prevalence of cooperators, defectors become most frequent, followed by loners, and then cooperators again." An excellent example of this dynamic is how de Tocqueville marvelled at what he saw as an America dominated by cooperators. Most of the people arriving in America were opting out of collective impositions in European countries and, hence, were loners. The prediction is that when loners are most frequent, a prevalence of cooperators follows. Moreover, most Americans lived at that time in rural areas and in small towns, which is conducive to cooperation.

The authors stated:

We found that volunteering (the option to choose between joining the public goods group and taking the loner strategy) indeed protected cooperation in the public goods game by inducing small group sizes [that remain in the game]. On average, there was a rather stable frequency of cooperators that was higher than what is usually found in public goods games after several rounds. . . . It is not just the fact that volunteering is possible that induces cooperation, but rather that volunteering reduces public goods groups to small sizes for which the individual cost-to-benefit ratio becomes more favorable. . . . Even though defectors are still better off than are cooperators in each group, cooperators do better when averaged over small groups according to Simpson's paradox.

The earlier paper on the same subject¹ used a mathematical model of interacting cooperators, defectors, and loners. The researchers made certain assumptions based upon r , the payoff to society (of the public goods); the individual payoff is the societal payoff divided by the number of individuals in the society. The individual investment is normalized to 1 and multiplied by a factor r (an arbitrary number

set by the researchers to represent, in theory, the collective benefit of the public good in question if everybody cooperates). In fact, most public goods have an r of less than 1, meaning that it is in the interest of all the players to defect. However, the researchers found that adding an opt-out option (loners) changes the results dramatically. In a game of cooperators and defectors (no loners permitted), the r must be quite large to support cooperation (cooperation increases rapidly from nearly zero at $r =$ about 4). In the cooperators/defectors/loners game, cooperators emerge from nearly zero at about $r = 2$, persist at 35–40% of the group to about $r = 3.90$, and then rapidly increase at higher r . In fact, the authors report, at $r = 4.17$ and above, it is not profitable to choose to be a loner and loners essentially go extinct.

A finding from the earlier paper¹ is that cooperation is higher in small, local groups than in non-local (what they call "well mixed") groups. Not only are the benefits of cooperation higher in a small group, but reputation is more easily discerned.

A good concrete example of how reducing the size of the group results in more benefits to cooperators is how the two of us, living in a small rural town in Nevada, have become involved in much public goods activity by volunteering our time to advisory groups and committees overseeing various public projects. This is something that we never did when living in the Los Angeles beach community from which we escaped twelve years ago; it would have been a total waste of our time. Here, our participation allows us to help steer public activities toward more freedom, the "right" direction from our point of view.

When we decided that we had to get out of, not only the community where we lived, but California itself, we engaged in a systematic search for a place in the United States where property rights and personal freedom were valued highly, and regulation and taxation were low. We considered a number of states, such as Wyoming, Washington, and Texas, but Nevada, with no state income tax and, in the rural areas, low population density,⁴ was also very convenient for moving our many tons of possessions because of its relative nearness to Los Angeles.

Durk made telephone calls to several Nevada counties. His opening question was, "Can I speak to someone in the land use planning department please?" When a courthouse employee in one county answered, "We don't do that here," Durk asked, "Well, then can I speak with someone in the zoning department?" The woman replied, "We don't do that here, either." Durk continued, "Then can I speak to someone in the building permit department?" She answered, "Young man, before you waste any more of my time, we don't do that here. You're supposed to build according to the Uniform Commercial Building Code, but if you don't and it falls on your head and kills you, that's your funeral because we don't do building inspections either!" "Wow," Durk said, "that sounds like our kind of place." "Well," she replied, "if that is your kind of place, we'd love to have you up here."

Lonerville is a place where there aren't many public

goods foisted upon residents, so people don't have to (often) play the game. We drove through the different towns in the winning county, looking for clues telling us that we had reached Lonerville. As we entered the town that is now home, we saw several large piles of rusting junk in people's yards (right on the main thoroughfare through town and directly across the street from the county courthouse). It could have been trash or it could have been potentially useful pieces of scrap, but it was definitely messy. Sandy said, "Wow, this looks like our kind of place!" A town that doesn't try to stop people from keeping whatever they like on their own property is a property respecting town that is unlikely to have many rules and regulations. Yes, we found Lonerville and are doing our very best to keep it that way, even though the best way to do that is sometimes to be cooperators.

For example, we are working with county commissioners and local residents to stop the Bureau of Land Management from closing a public right of way created under the Mining Act of 1866 and since preserved under the terms of the 1976 Federal Land Planning and Management Act. We have special expertise in this area which includes legal and constitutional knowledge that has enabled us to fight the illegal closing of similar rights of way which we use. Attending meetings and writing up closely reasoned arguments is, of course, a certain amount of work, but our efforts are multiplied by getting others involved, and making sure that their actions are legally sound and effective.

The published studies and experiments suggest strongly that if we are to avoid being taken over by defectors (as is surely happening now), opting out is a practical solution. "All" that needs to be done now is to remove the criminal defector class from control of the political process by introducing "opting out." The establishment of convincing evidence that permitting opting-out leads to more voluntary

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cooperation (and, though not mentioned in the paper, less of the highly dangerous war of all against all) is a very important first step.

Vernon Smith won the Nobel Prize for his development of just such game theory experiments as were done in this study. Hence, it is not too much to expect that recognition for these results favoring voluntarism to maintain social cooperation will eventually take place. Just the fact that the two papers on the rock-paper-scissors dynamics cited below appeared in *Science* and *Nature* is evidence enough of the acceptance of these findings as solid scientific contributions. (Considering how left-wing these journals are, especially *Science*, we wonder how well they understand the

implications of these studies.)

Of course, these experiments are simplified from reality by the fact that, for one thing, they involve a single public good over which people are choosing to cooperate, defect, or (if allowed) opt out. In the real political world, each indi-

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vidual who can make a choice has to consider huge numbers of different public goods, where some will provide gain and others loss. Reflecting the studies, people are not pure cooperators, defectors, or loners, but change from one to another in various situations in response to what other people do (or what they believe other people do).

We note that deriving libertarianism from game theory experiments is a totally different approach than that of deriving libertarianism from a non-coercion moral principle. Though the fraction of the population for whom a morality of non-coercion or even personal freedom is at the top or near the top of their values is probably fairly small, the number of people who are fearful of societal breakdown because of increasing defectors and decreasing cooperators (and more "command and control" by governments) is probably a good deal larger. Open borders are incompatible with a continuing (and growing) welfare state or progressive taxation, but both have very powerful political support. Allowing loners to opt out of both the costs and benefits may be the most practical way of preventing the rapidly progressing collapse of social cooperation into a Hobbesian war of all against all. The open borders, welfare state conundrum may ultimately make the future brighter for liberty. (That is one reason why it is advisable to extend your life span, because this may take quite some time; still, when the tide turns against the public goods games dominated by defectors, it is likely to happen fast.)

Notes

1. Hauert et al., "Volunteering as red queen mechanism for cooperation in public goods games," *Science* 296:1129-1132 (2002)
2. Semmann et al., "Volunteering leads to rock-paper-scissors dynamics in a public goods game," *Nature* 425:390-393 (2003)
3. See, for example, Fehr & Fischbacher, "The nature of human altruism," *Nature* 425:785-791 (2003)
4. In fact, where we live in Nevada, the population density still meets the U.S. Census Bureau's definition of frontier (less than 1 person per square mile). Opting out, until the "close" of the Western frontier in America, was relatively simple but not without costs. Moving to Nevada cost us a lot, but we saved most of the costs in the first year by escaping California's state income tax.

Letters, from page 6

Rand Reborn

When I read Ari Armstrong's effusive paean to Jeffrey Friedman ("Friedman Rules," December), there was something familiar about Friedman's profound discoveries that Armstrong praises.

Citing Richard Cornuelle's 1991 article, "The Power and Poverty of Libertarian Thought," Friedman notes the debate libertarians face today is not one between outright socialism and capitalism (such as Mises and Hayek faced), but rather one over modest economic interventions in the context of a largely free market.

This seemed like a pretty familiar argument to me, one I've read many places, including at least one published well before Friedman or Cornuelle, namely in the January 1990 *Liberty* ("Now the Real Struggle Begins").

Another of Friedman's achievements Armstrong cites is his discovery of the "libertarian straddle," which is Friedman's name for the way many libertarians, when pressured, shift from a priori arguments for liberty to a posteriori arguments. This too seems rather old hat: I recall Ethan O. Waters making virtually the same point in *Liberty* years earlier.

I was intrigued by Armstrong reporting that "there is even a *Critical Review* Alumni Association." This struck me as a bit odd, as I don't think of magazines or scholarly journals as having graduates, which seems to me to be a prerequisite of being "alumni."

I hunted it up on the net, and found lots of wonderful testimonials about how Jeff Friedman "inspired" the graduates of his seminars, including one student who wrote, "I find myself to be the most profound thinker in the classroom (including the law professor) — all thanks to Jeff Friedman!" Wow, after reading Armstrong's effusive praise and the testimonials on the "Alumni Association" website, I think I have a pretty good idea about who would like to take Rand's and Rothbard's place as cult-leading libertarians!

E. M. Taylor
Los Angeles, Calif.

Sometimes You Feel Like a Nut

I read with bafflement David Ramsay Steele's article "The Mob, the CIA, LBJ, and Castro: Wasn't It a Little Crowded on that Grassy Knoll?" (November).

Mr. Steele's grasp of the era seems tenuous. I don't know how old Mr. Steele may be, but it seems clear he was not alive or at least not aware in 1960–63 nor has he delved deeply into the period, let alone properly researched and organized his article. He asks a load of rhetorical questions in preference to developing a sound argument.

I certainly don't know who organized the assassination of John Kennedy but I am certain that more people were involved than Lee Oswald.

In fact, there was no surprise at the time that Kennedy was shot in Dallas. For months prior to his trip to Dallas there were rumors that "somebody was going to shoot him." There was a tone to these rumors that implied that they were not idle grousing. There were a great many people at the time who had the feeling that Kennedy was a disaster. Not that he wasn't so beloved that he could have lost the election; there was no chance he could not have been re-elected in '64. The majority of the people loved the JFK Camelot legend, while his opposition in '64 would have been Barry Goldwater. The latter lost big to Johnson and he would have lost bigger to Kennedy.

While inspiring an irrational love in the people Kennedy aroused a very rational fear in people not blinded by the glamor.

An assassination was publicly carried out on TV and, if I'm not mistaken, in *Time* magazine. It was known that if Kennedy went to Dallas he would return to D.C. in a pine box. Jackie begged him not to go, publicly. "Cancel," she said. Kennedy knew he had to show for his possible execution or lose his authority. He went. More credit to him.

On Nov. 22, 1963 I walked around all day waiting for the news, expecting it to happen. It did. The reaction in the news reporting was not one of total grief. It seemed that there were elements of exaltation.

In a box on page 36 your magazine states quite positively: "Kennedy was

not a wild radical and was not a threat to any major interest. His policies did not mark a sharp break from those of Eisenhower."

One would have to ignore an awful lot for that to be a true statement.

Whether Kennedy was a "wild radical" or not, he was a most inept bungler from the start, and gaining momentum as he went on. From the relative tranquillity achieved by Eisenhower, Kennedy plunged us into a three-year period of constant terror that was only relieved by Johnson.

The Eisenhower Administration had Indo-China under precarious control. Had the torch been passed to Nixon, Eisenhower's astute policies would have been continued. For all his faults Nixon understood the situation. Under Kennedy, who didn't even listen to Eisenhower's briefing, Indo-China unraveled within months into Vietnam.

Kennedy bungled Cuba and Castro. He bungled the missile crisis. Khrushchev ate that "3 a.m. donut" alive while Jack just called for wilder prostitutes and faster women.

Jack, Frank, and Sam shared the same women. The president of the United States and two heads of the Chicago Outfit. Think of that! Do you imagine that responsible citizens weren't grinding their teeth?

There was no motive? There were dozens. One assumes that the Outfit wanted him, the CIA wanted him and Castro wanted him, for starters. Remember Castro, who said (or something to this effect): "Kennedy may learn that he is not the only one capable of assassination."

Now to Oswald. Remember when he was in the police station surrounded by that gabbling horde? Do you imagine there weren't those of us thinking: "Man, that's pretty loose. Everything the cops did was loose. Okay, there wasn't any dress rehearsal, but cops are supposed to be trained for these emergencies."

The cops must have cleared a spot for the cameraman who must have been eight feet away or so with a clear lane to Oswald. Facing the cameraman, manacled as he was, Oswald raised his right arm, dragging his left up with it in the crooked-arm Communist salute with a smug smile of satisfaction on his

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Viva Las Vegas!

by Richard Kostelanetz

Like those millions of other so-called human beings who find relief for their woes, each and every year, at Coney Island, [this writer] occupies these miraculous premises with purely personal intentions — or, more explicitly, in order to have a good time. And a good time he has. Only when his last spendable dime has irretrievably disappeared and his face sadly turned toward his dilatory domicile, does it so much as occur to your humble servant to plumb the significances of his recent experiences.

— E. E. Cummings
“Coney Island” (1926)

It is common to speak of Las Vegas as a one-industry town, but that industry is not just legalized gambling, which is part of the whole. Nor is the principal industry tourism, though the airport that is remarkably close to the city reportedly ranks tenth in the world in gross passenger traffic. No, the principal business of Las Vegas is simply, shamelessly, and amicably separating outsiders from their money. Enter the airport terminal, as we did, and the first thing you notice right in front of you is a bank of slot machines; the next thing you notice is that many people are actually playing them, even though everyone knows — not thinks, but *knows* — that the one-armed bandits, as they are correctly called, are calibrated to favor not the bettors but the machine’s owners. The truth, acknowledged with your first steps, is that people come to Vegas expecting to lose money, lots of it.

Some of the costs of visiting Vegas are low, as “loss leaders,” to use the American merchandising term. America West charged me only \$307.50 per person for a “package” that included a round-trip, five-hour flight from New York, two nights in the architecturally spectacular Luxor Hotel, and transportation from the airport and back. Since I could have purchased the same package at a lesser hotel for much less money (and other airlines offered competitive bargains), my suspicion is that the airline was being subsidized for delivering live customers. The airport-hotel transport was probably a pure promotion, given free to the airline in exchange for getting us tourists to use those services, because, in fact, the transport company had a flier offering tours of the Grand Canyon.

You cannot possibly believe Las Vegas architecture until you experience it close up. Photographs are simply inadequate for conveying essentially sculptural qualities and thus visceral experience, not to mention their proximity to one another. (The same limitation applies to photographs of the Grand Canyon.) The Luxor resembles an Egyptian pyramid, down to mammoth cats at the entranceway and an awesomely huge interior space. Next to it is the Excalibur, which resembles a medieval English castle; on the other side of a street is New York, New York, whose entire ground floor is a witty collage of bits and pieces of my hometown. The entrance to Bally’s at night is a sequence of colored neon loops over a pathway so long it has a moving floor for those in a hurry to get inside. At one hotel, I’m

told, the ceiling changes color from time to time. The staff's costumes at some hotels reflect their architectural theme, so that those working at Caesar's Palace, for instance, look like they've walked out of ancient Rome, or at least out of an MGM movie about ancient Rome. My favorite is the Venetian, which has a replica of Venice's Grand Canal, down

This is corporate folk art at its best, each participant trying as hard as possible to top everyone else.

to gondolas and uniformed gondoliers, on the second floor (because the ground floor is wholly a casino). At the end of the ersatz Grand Canal is a palazzo whose ceiling looks so much like the sky that for a moment I felt like I was outdoors.

Nowhere in the world known to me are so many people simply walking up and down the main drag during the evenings — the sidewalk isn't wide enough to accommodate the crowds — because the initial exhilaration of Las Vegas comes from being there. There's no need for the walkers to worry about relieving themselves, because all the casino-hotel doors are open to strangers.

Some hotels offer street displays that are free for all. Directly on the main drag, the fountains in front of the Mirage hotel explode every 15 minutes to resemble a volcano, with red smoke billowing in the air and fire burning on the water; at Treasure Island next door, a battle between a pirate ship and a British frigate is reenacted every 90 minutes throughout the evening. After the pirates' boat takes a hit that sets it afire (with flames that can be smelled), the British ship is sunk, its sailors jumping into the water, its captain going down with his ship, to the cheers of the spectators. Like so much else in Las Vegas, this is a fake that knows itself fake. So thick is the self-conscious deception, as well as your experience of deception, that if you drive four hours to visit the Grand Canyon, as we did, your first thought is that the scene before you might be elaborate papier-mâché.

Walk or ride along the four-mile "Strip," as Las Vegas Boulevard is commonly called, and you see the most intricate flashing signs ever, dwarfing those at Times Square, each kinetic message machine offering entertainment or gambling attractions unavailable elsewhere. This is corporate folk art at its best, each participant trying as hard as possible to top everyone else. Within the hotels are restaurants, whose food is either remarkably cheap (as in all-you-can-eat buffets for less than \$15 — another loss leader), or very expensive, and shops offering things that can be stuffed easily into suitcases, such as clothes and trinkets but not, say, hardbound books or home appliances. You can't move anywhere in Las Vegas without confronting some enticement to spend your money.

Between the Mirage and Treasure Island, both owned by the same company, is a monorail, free of course, whose loudspeakers broadcast for the duration of the ride the chief executive's pitch for, if I understood it correctly, photographs of yourself against a variety of computer-generated background scenes. In the mammoth gambling halls that dwarf those I'd seen before in Puerto Rico are not only banks of slot machines

but formally dressed croupiers offering to take bets. Many are Asian, there to cater to Japanese and Chinese bettors in their own language — eliminating linguistic alienation. At least one hotel offers free gaming lessons in Japanese.

Few Las Vegas laws get in the way of its primary business. The casinos need not close. Indeed, most lack visible clocks, so that you needn't feel the pressure of time. No one prohibits smoking, not even of cigars, not even in elevators. Even though municipalities in the U.S.A. (and indeed the world), not to mention Native American reservations, have casinos nowadays, they finally can't compete, lacking many of the elements contributing to Las Vegas' success. For instance, most of the Las Vegas hotels have gigantic self-park buildings, which are free, in addition to "valet parking," for which the attendant should be tipped. This means that in going from one venue to another no one needs to waste much time between gambling and spending sprees.

Precisely by making gambling legal (or refusing to make it illegal), the state of Nevada created economic opportunity, incidentally epitomizing the American genius for mass-merchandising something that Europeans thought strictly for the very rich — the pleasure of casino gambling. Through this egalitarian openness, Las Vegas has become a thousand times larger than Monte Carlo. Some of the original Las Vegas entrepreneurs were criminals who had previously fulfilled the American appetite for alcohol during Prohibition and later became experienced at running illegal games of chance. As Las Vegas expanded, they were replaced by businessmen with clean records — initially Howard Hughes, then the executives of public corporations — an interesting case of honest people taking over a mob business, rather than vice versa. The best line in Robert Lacey's biography of Meyer Lansky has Lucky Luciano just before his 1962 death telling a reporter, "These days, you apply for a license to steal from the public. If I had my time again, I'd make sure I got that license first." In Las Vegas, such a license is easy to get.

One result of such libertarian freedom is a continually expanding economy and low crime (which is surprising or unnecessary, given all the amicable fleecing). Migrants continue to come to work in Las Vegas. One statistic tallies 10,000 newcomers every month versus 4,000 emigrants, which

The companies that own casino corporations have become modern Medicis in keeping alive certain arts that might otherwise disappear.

means a net growth of 72,000 per year — or an increase of Las Vegas' 1.25 million population by 7 percent every year.

In the garden of the Hilton Flamingo is a small statue remembering Benjamin "Bugsy" Segal, who, opening an early hotel in the 1940s, realized the possibilities of a resort in a place so dry it was bare of trees. Since some of the recent hotels have thousands of rooms (the MGM Grand has 5,005), it is amusing to read that Segal's original Flamingo had only 77 rooms! Segal knew what could be done here, but did not

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Encounter at Puko'o

by Kirby Wright

*Everything
felt wrong
about the day
and there was
no going back
to make it
right.*

My big brother Ben said the summers our family spent at Hale Kia, our grandmother's Moloka'i ranch, had ruined his social life by preventing him from going to "righteous parties" in Honolulu. The summer before our senior year at Punahou School, Ben only stayed two weeks before returning home. He took a job with Mahuka Roofing because he wanted to earn money for a sports car. Roofing was a great reason for Ben to return to Honolulu because my father wanted Ben to experience the agony of manual labor. But, besides the excuse of making money, I couldn't help but wonder if Ben needed a vacation from me. He'd always considered me competition for our parents' love and it was getting harder and harder for him to fake brotherly affection. His true feelings surfaced the day he slammed my fingers in the lanai door — as my mother rushed me to Queen's Hospital, Ben was more concerned about his punishment than whether or not my fingers would be saved.

Gramma missed Ben. Whenever she cooked venison or another one of his favorite meals, she'd tell me it felt funny not having Ben with us. She framed a picture of him posing with his .270 rifle and she imagined him in commercials. "Isn't that Mista Ben?" she'd ask as she squinted at the tube. If she was watching on her black-and-white set, she'd rush to turn it on in color. One night she convinced herself that Ben had a guest role on *Mannix*.

With Ben gone and my mother visiting her relatives in Boston, it was up to me to keep my father company on Moloka'i. It was early August when I accompanied him to the Puko'o Fishpond. He'd purchased the ten acre site for \$5,000 at an auction on foreclosed properties; his purchase came at the peak of the building craze sweeping the islands. He wanted to turn the fishpond into a resort so he hired Sam Fong Construction to knock down the fishpond walls and fill in everything with sand and coral dredged from the ocean. He believed tourists would come in droves.

I sat in the suicide seat of Gramma's World War II jeep while my father sped west toward the fishpond. He wore a striped shirt, khaki shorts, leather sandals,

and a lauhala cowboy hat. A knotted shoelace secured the hat to his chin. Rust had eaten holes in the jeep's hood and fenders, and it seemed like the only thing holding it together was the red paint. A hole in the muffler delivered a sporadic ratta-tat-tat. My father was a demon on the highway. He drove in the middle of the road, cut turns too sharp, and grazed the roadside brush. There was no pause in him, just push, push, push. He zipped by a station

My father was a demon on the highway. He drove in the middle of the road, cut turns too sharp, and grazed the roadside brush. There was no pause in him, just push, push, push.

wagon with its headlights on. "Fool doesn't know day from night," my father said. He believed 95 percent of people were "just plain stupid" and he considered me part of that percentage. He was great at plucking numbers out of thin air, as if his casual observations and theories were documented at MIT. I think surviving battles in the South Pacific combined with making it through Harvard gave him super-human confidence, swelling his brain to godlike proportions. He believed he knew almost everything about every subject. He knew more about psychology than psychiatrists, more about medicine than doctors, more about stocks than brokers, and more about running the country than presidents. When I asked him if he believed in God, he said no, but that religion was beneficial to mankind because it saved husbands the cost of sending their wives to shrinks.

"What's the most important thing in life?" I once asked him.

"Security," he replied.

At first, I thought that was a pretty good answer. But then I realized he'd avoided "love." Love was something he couldn't trust because he couldn't see it, something he couldn't put on paper like a bank account, something he couldn't track like a stock or a bond. This distrust bred pessimism in his soul, a negativity that marked him a cynic. The cup was half empty. If anything could go wrong it would, so he was constantly preparing himself for the worst-case scenario. Because he was always preparing for the worst, his spontaneity and sense of humor vanished.

"Now, Jeffrey," my father said as we drove west, "I want you to take more of an interest in Puko'o."

"I'm interested," I said.

"Not like your brother."

He swerved to the right to avoid a rock in the road. Ilima branches swept across the paint and whipped my jeans.

"Ben really cares," my father said.

"Ben hates Puko'o."

"Why does he ask so many questions?"

"To butter you up."

"It shows he's concerned. It's like pulling teeth getting you to come along."

"I'm here, aren't I?"

"I can tell you don't wanna be." He braked hard for the

curve at Buchanan Fishpond and the jeep squealed like a pig. The fishpond was originally a bay that had been sealed off from the ocean by a wall of stones. The Hawaiians thought of fishponds the way we think of banks, only instead of holding money their banks held fish. The ponds were places of refuge for fish small enough to squeeze through the sluice gates built in the walls. Those fish grew in the safe confines of the ponds and got too big to return to the ocean through the narrow bars in the gates.

I saw horseshoe crabs scuttling on the bottom of Buchanan Fishpond and ducks waddling over the mud banks. It was here that Gramma had seen the Squid Lady, a beautiful woman with the body of a squid, running across the road. Before the Squid Lady dove into the pond, she gave Gramma the evil eye. Then Gramma had a dream of riding a swimming horse out into Puko'o Harbor and having the Squid Lady surface; the Squid Lady entwined Gramma in her tentacles. Just before the Squid Lady pulled her off the horse, Gramma reached for her cane knife and chopped off her tentacles.

My father looked over at the pond and the jeep drifted across the yellow line. A truck barreled straight at us.

"Cheesus!" my father said as he cranked the wheel.

The truck swerved and I heard shouts but my father kept going. "Damn these trucks," he said, pushing his glasses back with his thumb. "This road's too damn narrow for all these big trucks."

We entered a dark stretch where the kiawe trees grew so close their trunks touched. This was the grove where the kahuna Lanikaula had been buried. A branch dragged along the jeep and a thorn stabbed my thigh. I watched a dot of blood soak up through the denim and expand.

"You and Ben," my father said, "you both have your mother's brains."

"She's smarter than you think."

"Punahou sent me your IQ scores. You and Ben are way below average."

"Dean McQueen said we couldn't study for it."

"I'll bet neither of you has the brains for law school."

"Who says we wanna go?"

"Go ahead, be a ditch digger."

"Digging ditches isn't all there is."

"That's right," he said, "you'd make a great clerk."

"What's your IQ?"

He adjusted his sideview mirror. "In the 150s."

"Is that genius?"

"Practically."

He told me that my low IQ, combined with my lazy streak, was a surefire formula for disaster. By the time we reached the outskirts of Puko'o, the future seemed dark and bleak. It had become commonplace for my father to search out weaknesses in Ben and me, and make us aware of our shortcomings. He said he couldn't be proud of us because we did nothing to earn his pride. He said we lacked drive and ambition because he'd spoiled us by giving us everything he never had as a boy.

We veered off the public road and, after a dip, the tires grumbled over a coral driveway. He braked hard in front of a gate and plucked a wire loop of keys off the shifter.

"Open it," he said, handing me the loop. "Use the big

brass key."

I got out and unlocked the aluminum gate. The chain fell in the coral. Behind the gate, bulldozers, end loaders, and dump trucks surrounded a Quonset hut. The hut was used by the construction boss, but nobody worked on Sundays. It was a ghost camp. There were barrels of oil stacked beside the hut. One of the barrels had its top cut off and was stuffed with bottles and cans. I swung open the gate and scolded myself for not sneaking out of Gramma's house early to go fishing past the point. I missed not having Ben on Moloka'i because at least I had someone to talk to whenever my father was in a bad mood.

"Lock it behind you," my father said as he drove by. The tires kicked coral dust into my eyes.

I pulled up the chain and fumbled with the padlock. The aluminum gate felt flimsy compared to the gates on Hale Kia's mountain. My father glared in the sideview mirror. When I finished, I strolled back to the jeep. The heat made me angry.

"Something wrong?" he asked.

I slid into the jeep and dropped the loop over the shifter. "No."

"You're like a slow motion person."

"So how come I keep beating you at swimming?"

"Next time we're racing," he said, "let me in on it."

We drove through the mounds of coral and sand dredged out of the ocean for use as landfill. Weeds and lantana covered the mounds and there was the scent of blooming lantana. The mounds gave way to a coral desert bleached bone-white from the sun. Nothing lived in the desert, not even weeds. The trade wind lifted up the coral dust and blew it toward the papaya plantation across the road.

We drove beside a canal used for runoff. My father didn't want water spilling over the banks and flooding the public road because, if there was an accident, he might get sued. The canal was low and choked with algae. A bald tire stuck out and polliwogs swam in schools. Dragonflies hovered over the brackish water, stinging its surface. When my father

The Hawaiians thought of fishponds the way we think of banks, only instead of holding money their banks held fish.

and his brother Tommy were boys, they'd helped Gramma drag a hukilau net from one end of the pond to the other. They'd caught hundreds of mullet and weke and they had a luau on the beach at Puko'o. Everyone on the east end had been invited.

"This canal stinks," I told my father.

"It'll be buried," my father replied.

We turned back and headed for the ocean, where blue lagoons glowed beyond the coral. A wall flanked the middle lagoon. My father had used the bigger stones from the original fishpond to build the wall. He planned to pump in sea water and send it cascading down the wall to flush out the lagoons. "It'll work just like a toilet," he'd said, "keep things fresh."

My father parked the jeep next to the wall and we climbed out. He pointed to an oblong boulder propped on top of the wall. "That big boulder up there," he said, "know what it looks like?"

"King Kamehameha?"

"Don't be a wise guy," he said. "It's a you-know-what."

"What's that?"

"A penis," he laughed, "a big fat penis." He marched over and started arranging loose stones at the base of the wall.

The boulder that was supposed to be a penis stood guard over three lagoons. The lagoons formed a cloverleaf marina. It had taken three sets of steel teeth from a dredge to carve

Something inside me said to run but I couldn't stand seeing what he'd done to my father. "Right now," I said and held up my fists.

them out of the fringing reef because the teeth kept breaking. Gramma'd said a kahuna must have cursed the project.

The shores of the lagoons were powdered with golden sand and I walked the beach while my father worked. It was best to leave him alone because there was no pleasing him if you tried to help. The only time anything got done right was when he did it. Nothing had come easy for him and he continued pushing himself because he wasn't about to jeopardize how far he'd come in life by slowing down.

I walked along the man-made beach and dug a heel in to feel the sharp coral foundation. I remembered Silva, the Portuguese trucker with the bum leg who'd hauled in sand from the west end. Ben and I had helped Silva by climbing his rig and rolling back the tarp before he dumped his load. Silva had rewarded Ben and me with "hamburga sandwiches" he'd bought at Dairy Queen. When my father'd found out the sand had been stolen from a public beach on the west end, he washed his hands of the matter. "None of my business," he'd said, "I'm the innocent buyer."

The stealing of sand had occurred the previous summer, when my father had us building ripraps for the lagoons and raking coral off the man-made beaches. Ben had complained about not getting paid. The stones for the ripraps had come from the walls the Ancients had built. My father had instructed the workers to stack the round stones from the walls in a special pile in the middle of the coral desert.

I continued walking along the beach until I heard a motor. I looked south toward Maui and saw a boat gliding toward the lagoons. It floated low in the water. "Daddy!" I called.

My father was still placing stones. "What?"

"Someone's coming."

Two men were in the boat. Fiberglass poles were mounted on either side. The man up front looked Hawaiian and the driver was Japanese. They were drinking Primo beer in cans and they both had long hair. Their poles flexed as they trolled the banks of the lagoon.

"Who in hell?" my father said when he reached the shore.

He waded out until the water reached the bottom of his khaki shorts. The brim of his hat bent back in the breeze. "Kapu," he said as his shadow spilled back on the beach, "private property!"

The man up front brushed the hair away from one side of his head and cupped a hand to his ear.

"Can't hear you," I said.

My father took off his hat and waved it like he was shooin' away flies. "No trespassing!"

The man turned and said something to the driver. The driver shifted gears on the outboard and the boat idled. The man reeled in the lines and the engine belched exhaust.

My father put his hat back on. "Kapu," he continued, "get out!"

The driver said something to the man up front. The man nodded. The waves edged the boat closer and I saw the red fuel tank and the black line that fed the outboard. The boat was less than 20 yards offshore.

"What?" the man asked my father from the bow.

"You're trespassing!"

The man stood with his beer. He wore a Ski Hawaii shirt and his trunks went below his knees. I could tell he had some haole (white) blood. "Like one good whippin'?" he asked my father.

"This is private property."

The man crushed his Primo can and threw it in the lagoon. It bobbed like a float. The tide worked the hull against the coral and there was a scraping sound. The impact caused the man to lose his balance and he sat back down.

"I'll call the cops," my father threatened.

The man swung one leg over and he was in the water and wading for shore.

My father stepped back as the man approached. "Now, look here," he said, "I don't want any trouble."

"Ya got one big mouth," the man said.

"And you're breaking the law."

"Billy," the driver called.

The man looked back. "What?"

"Leave dat punk alone."

"Why?"

"He one lawya. He make sue job."

It was only when the man stopped a few feet away from my father that I realized he was Billy Duva. Years had passed since he'd slaughtered a spike in the ocean in front of Gramma's beach house and, besides growing his hair long, he'd gained some weight. But his arms were even more muscular. I remembered Ben's fantasy about gunning Billy

down on Main Street. Billy's hand came up and he struck my father in the face. My father's hat came off and his glasses went flying.

"Fuckin' lawya," Billy said, "dis Hawaiian land."

My father held one hand over his cheek. He dropped to his knees and picked up his hat. He put the hat back on his head and started digging through the sand searching for his glasses.

My father sat in the driver's seat. I knew he didn't feel good about himself because he avoided eye contact. "Let's get the hell outta here," he said.

I approached Billy from behind.

The Japanese man on the boat whistled.

Billy spun around and faced me. "What?" he asked.

"Like beef?"

Something inside me said to run but I couldn't stand seeing what he'd done to my father. "Right now," I said and held up my fists.

Billy chuckled and kept his hands low. He was only a few inches taller than me but he was heavy with muscle and fat. I knew he was waiting for me to lead so he could counterpunch. I threw a right at his jaw but he dodged it easily. I came in closer and threw a combination — my right missed again but the left struck him just below the throat. Billy gagged for a second before rushing me. He rammed his body into me like a linebacker and I fell to the sand. Billy grabbed me by the neck, lifted me up, and tossed me out into the water. He stood on the beach with a snarl on his face and his hands clenched.

"Next time," Billy told me, "ya go hospital, punk." He waded back out, placed both hands on the hull, and pushed the boat free. He lifted himself over the side and the boat returned to the harbor. They kept their lines in and floated out into the ocean.

"Jeffrey," my father called, "help Daddy find his glasses."

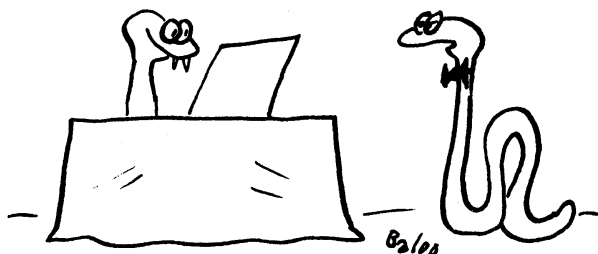
I got out of the water and helped my father search the sand. My jeans were soaked. I kept an eye on the lagoon but the boat was long gone. I found the glasses between two stones in the wall. A lens had cracked. I handed them to my father.

"Christ," he said. He put on the cracked glasses and walked back to the jeep.

"I'm sorry," I said.

He sat in the driver's seat. I knew he didn't feel good about himself because he avoided eye contact. "Let's get the hell outta here," he said as he adjusted the rearview mirror. A welt had surfaced on his face.

We followed the tire tracks through the coral desert. Heat waves shimmered over the project. When we reached the landfill, I opened the gate and we headed home. Everything felt wrong about the day and there was no going



"Very good, sir — will that be dead mice or live mice?"

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Reviews

Dark Star Safari: Overland from Cairo to Cape Town, by Paul Theroux. Houghton Mifflin, 2003, 472 pages.

NGO Way to Help Africa

Bruce Ramsey

Lacking a plot, a travel book yearns for a unifying idea. In several of Paul Theroux's books it was trains. Trains are good places to meet people, and it is the people who enliven the account. And trains are often colorful relics. I saw the Guatemalan train Theroux took for *The Old Patagonian Express*, and it was a rolling ruin. But "trains" is not a theme; it is a kind of gimmick.

In his latest book, *Dark Star Safari*, Theroux descends into Africa by trains, buses, taxis, a lake steamer, and a dugout canoe, always trying to cross borders by land and stay away from tourists. It is an episodic account much like his other books, with Theroux's Huck-Finn longing for the outland, his distaste for ugliness, and his knack for finding smart conversation. But this book also has a theme, an attack on the do-gooders who infest Africa.

Theroux knows Africa. He began his career in the 1960s as a Peace Corps volunteer in Malawi. Later he was an academic in Uganda, where he got to know some of the Ugandans who now run the country. He wrote *Fong and the Indians*, a none-too-serious novel of a Chinese man in East Africa. Theroux loves the continent, but at 60 — Africans consider him an old man — he is unwilling to accept

any more soft-headed thinking about it.

One example is the common assumptions of why Africa is poor. Many say it is colonialism. Theroux lived there right after the colonial powers left, and though Africa was poor, it was on the way up. Things were orderly: the school where he taught in Malawi was well maintained. Its library had books.

That was then. Now the school is a shambles; the books have been looted. In his view Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Malawi have suffered much the same general decline. Mozambique has fallen to the absolute bottom.

So what has happened to billions of dollars of gifts these countries have been presented with for 40 years?

"A road, a dorm, a school, a bank, a bridge, a cultural center, a dispen-

"That was to be fairly typical of my experience with aid workers in rural Africa: they were, in general, oafish, self-dramatizing prigs, and often complete bastards."

sary — all were accepted," he writes. "But acceptance did not mean the things were needed, nor that they

would be used or kept in repair." Instead, he writes, "They were like inspired Christmas presents, the things that stop running when the batteries die. . . . The projects would become wrecks, every one of them. . . . And when they stopped running no one would be sorry."

Running it all were the NGOs, the non-governmental organizations whose people tool around in new white Land Rovers playing CD music. The reader first meets these virtue-crats at the Kenya-Ethiopia frontier, where Theroux asks for a lift across no man's land.

"This isn't a taxi," the driver says.

Theroux says he just wants to get across the border and find a guesthouse.

"We don't run a guesthouse."

Theroux writes, "They drove away, leaving me by the side of the road. That was to be fairly typical of my experience with aid workers in rural Africa: they were, in general, oafish, self-dramatizing prigs, and often complete bastards."

And where there are aid workers, he observes, there are prostitutes.

Later he has a dialog with an aid worker on a "feeding program," a term that reminds him of farm animals. He says to her, "We used to say, 'Give people seeds and let them grow their own food.'"

"The rains have been unreliable,"

she says. Indeed: in some places it hasn't rained in three years.

"Maybe they should relocate," he replies. "If they relocate, they might find work, and they might plant gardens if you weren't feeding them."

"We save lives, not livelihoods," she says.

Theroux's observation is confirmed by another travel book published in 2003, *Adventure Capitalist*, by global investor Jim Rogers. In Ethiopia, Rogers says, "An entire generation of Ethiopians has grown up without learning how to farm. Instead . . . they go to town every month, park the donkey, and collect grain. Some recipients, the day we were in Lalibela, carried their ration of wheat directly over to the town market and started selling it. And so . . . there is a generation of farmers who have simply stopped farming because . . . there is no way to compete with free grain."

I expected that message from Rogers, the capitalist. But it is coming also from Theroux, the literary figure. Theroux refers to the aid workers as "a maintenance crew on a power trip, who had turned Malawians into beggars and whiners."

An old friend remarks how well Theroux's sons are doing in the West, and suggests that one of them come to work in Africa as Theroux did.

But you've had plenty of Westerners, Theroux says. "Years and years."

"I want your son," the man says.

And Theroux thinks, in effect: why waste my son?

The most fascinating dialog is over the subject of Indian merchants, who

were kicked out of Uganda, Malawi, and other places for dominating retail business. After a quarter-century, a few of their shops have been made into bars, but most are empty. Some have African women squatting outside selling vegetables on the ground.

Theroux speaks to a group of educated Africans about this. One mocks the Indian shopkeepers. He says they were everlastingly writing down lists of merchandise and adding up the figures, one, two, three, one, two, three.

"But that's how a shop is run," Theroux says. "That's normal business. You make a list of what you've sold, so you know what stuff to reorder."

"Indians know no other life!" the African replies. "Just this rather secluded life — all numbers and money and goods on shelves. One, two, three."

They have to count the inventory, Theroux says. "The profit margins are so small."

"But we Africans are not raised in this way," the African says. "What do we care about shops and counting? . . . Selling is not our heritage. We are not business people."

Another African, a former ambassador who had been listening in, says: "When Africans run businesses, their families come in and stay with them and eat all their food — just live off them. As soon as an African succeeds in something, he has his family cadging off him. Not so?"

"That is true, brother," one says.

"And we are not cut out for this shopkeeping and bookkeeping and"

— the former ambassador winks at Theroux — "this number crunching."

"I had never heard such bullshit," Theroux writes. "Well, perhaps I had and not recognized it. The man was saying: This is all too much for us. We cannot learn how to do business. We must be given money, we must be given sin-

ecures, because we don't know how to make a profit."

I have heard similar things myself. Once I had a Tibetan tour guide who complained about all the Chinese who

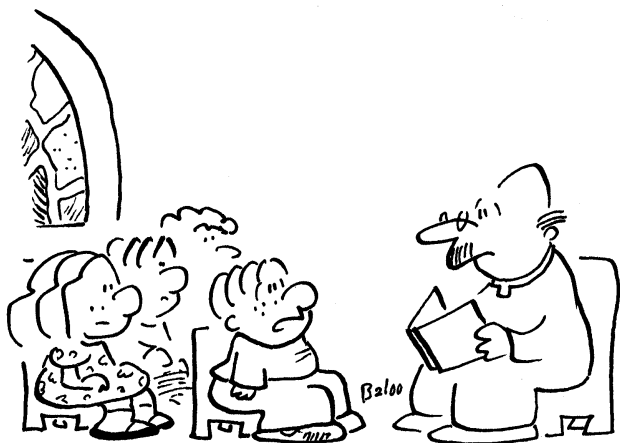
"Only Africans were capable of making a difference in Africa. Everyone else, donors and volunteers and bankers however idealistic, were simply agents of subversion."

had moved to the Tibetan capital city, Lhasa. The Chinese had started little businesses — karaoke bars, beauty shops, and the like. They were business-oriented. If you gave a Chinese 100 yuan, my guide said, the Chinese would put it in the bank and invest it in his business. "If I had 100 yuan," he said, "I would go drinking with my friends, and by morning the 100 yuan would be gone. But we would have good fellowship."

The African's observation about sponging relatives reminded me of my Filipino maid when I lived in Hong Kong. She had arrived in Hong Kong with a small bag, but to go home a year later she packed a one cubic meter box full of gifts. When Filipinos came back from a foreign job they had to bring nice things, and if someone admired one of those things, they had to give it to him.

"I have to," my maid said.

This 22-year-old woman was essentially doing the same thing in Hong Kong that I was, earning a nest egg abroad. She had saved several thousands of dollars that she might use to start a business or to pay for education. This box of gifts amounted to a substantial tax on that, in addition to the other taxes she would have to pay. But think if she had brought her extended family with her, and had



"You mean Adam and Eve were streakers?"

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had to feed them the entire year. That is what the African described.

We wonder why some peoples succeed and some do not. Part of it is whether they have a free market — but not all of it. It is also whether they have the values that the market requires. The dominant values in a culture can change if it pays to change them. Giving people aid allows them to keep certain values that ought to be

changed — and to change certain others that ought to be kept.

Theroux's epiphany came after he visited his ruined school in Malawi. He decided, "Only Africans were capable of making a difference in Africa. Everyone else, donors and volunteers and bankers however idealistic, were simply agents of subversion."

Here is a travel book worth reading. □

The Great Unraveling: Losing Our Way in the New Century, by Paul Krugman. Norton, 2003, xxix + 426 pages.

Good Economics, Bad Politics

Leland Yeager

Unraveling under "incredibly bad leadership" is "the fabric of our economy — and perhaps of our political system and our society." The bad leadership comes from the current administration. Paul Krugman quotes White House correspondent Helen Thomas as calling George W. Bush "the worst president in all of American history." Krugman is not quite sure; competition for that title has been stiff. "But the really terrible presidents of the past led a nation in which presidential incompetence and malfeasance mattered far less . . . than it does today" (p. xvi). (Note, by the way, Krugman's sloppy voguish use of "incredibly." If our leadership is so bad that an account of it just cannot be believed, then why should anyone believe his account in particular?)

Focus on the Bush administration is understandable in a reprinting mostly of *New York Times* columns written in and since 2000 (but with a few earlier pieces from *Fortune* and *Slate*). Despite new introductions to the collection and to columns grouped

by topic, short popular pieces are not the best format for presenting evidence and analysis in depth.

Although a self-acknowledged "soggy liberal" (400), Krugman has proved himself a fine economist both in academic writings and in popular books. His *Peddling Prosperity* (reviewed in *Liberty*, Sept. 1994) trashed quack economist policy-promoters of both Left and Right with refreshing even-handedness. The present book contains some, though not much, criticism of Democrats, or leftists. Senate Democrats were the "lead villains" in pushing a "grotesque farm bill" (177–178). Ralph Nader draws sharp criticism (373–375).

Krugman diagnoses groupthink among the Washington-based commentariat. Before Sept. 11, "Bush was dumb but honest"; then he became "a tough-minded hero, all determination and moral clarity." Among liberal journalists, "there are some things that you're not supposed to say, precisely because they're so clearly true." A professor, Krugman is isolated from such pressures. Working almost entirely from numbers and analyses

found in the public domain, he need not show the deference that many journalists show to avoid being frozen out of access to inside information (xxvii, 281).

Mendacious Revolutionaries

What does Krugman have against Bush? He is "an affable fellow from a famous family who has led a charmed business and political life thanks to his insider advantage." He "sees nothing wrong in seeking partisan advantage from a national crisis, even going so far as to declare that members of the other party don't care about the nation's security" (265; cf. 291–292). His administration displays "outrageous dishonesty," "outrageous mendacity," and "world-class mendacity." On the budget and Social Security, Bush and his people "were simply lying about all the important numbers" (xxviii). In the 2000 campaign, Bush offered tax and Social Security plans "that were obviously, blatantly based on bogus arithmetic" (xxiv). Bush offers tax relief for a wide variety of problems; for him it is "The Universal Elixir" (to use the title of one of the reprinted columns). Bush sold his tax cuts first to deal with surpluses, then, when the surpluses turned to deficits, to stimulate the economy out of recession, even though the kinds of cuts offered were scarcely suitable for that purpose. (Krugman, 166, prefers *temporary* tax cuts for fiscal stimulus, as opposed to

The United States is being set up for a Latin-American-style fiscal crisis in which interest rates will soar on fears that the government will try to inflate away its debt.

Bush's permanent cuts, apparently forgetting the import of Milton Friedman's permanent-income hypothesis.)

Deficits and debt, fraudulent proposals for Social Security and Medicare reform, the pileup of incon-

sistent promises to beneficiaries — all of such is setting the United States up for a Latin-American-style fiscal crisis in which interest rates will soar on fears that the government will try to inflate away its debt (134–136). Bush’s “willingness to trust in the public’s innumeracy continues to boggle the mind” (142).

Although inclined to agree about mendacity, I wonder whether Bush is outstandingly worse than most politicians. Krugman does mention “incredibly blatant lies” (134); but more examples, and more specific ones, would have been instructive. A distinction holds, furthermore, between deliberate lying and coming sincerely to believe what it is convenient for oneself to believe, thanks partly to having surrounded oneself with “obsequious courtiers” (405) who mistake convenience for truth.

Krugman finds the Bush crowd bent on a right-wing revolution aiming at redistribution in favor of the rich. “The right’s fanatical distrust of government is the central fact of American politics” (234). Henry Kissinger’s doctoral dissertation on early-19th-century diplomatic history was chillingly correct in its diagnosis of a “revolutionary power,” one that rejects the legitimacy of the existing system (5). The Heritage Foundation is supposedly driving the Bush administration’s economic ideology and promoting a very radical agenda (6). (The libertarian Cato Institute gets better treatment: Krugman mentions it twice, once favorably, once neutrally.)

Economics and Economists

“[T]here’s a lot less disagreement among economists than legend would have it” (295), even among economists with divergent political views. As already implied, Krugman supports a welfare state and worries about great inequality in income distribution. A champion of capitalism can indeed reasonably worry about abuses. Even such a free-market stalwart as the London *Economist*, in its “survey of capitalism and democracy” (June 28, 2003), worries about circumstances that have raised executive pay to huge multiples of the pay of ordinary workers. “Greed is bad” when it means fabricating the appearance of success to boost stock prices and thus fatten exec-

utive pay packages. “Unless you go to jail — and does anyone think any of our modern malefactors of great wealth will actually do time? — dishonesty is, hands down, the best policy” (Krugman, 110–115). The “aggressive accounting” practiced by Enron and other companies is “the art form formerly known as fraud” (104). The California energy crisis traces mainly to opportunities left by flawed deregulation for suppliers to create artificial shortages and boost prices (299–325).

Krugman does appreciate the market and private enterprise. A good education is a key to upward mobility, and “ambitious parents feel that a public school education is a dead end” — correctly so, he implies (223). He rejects the most common complaints about globalization and the World Trade Organization. He recognizes that every successful example of economic development in this past century has featured producing for the world market rather than aiming at self-sufficiency. He says of the antiglobalist Turning Point Project that although its spokesmen “talk of freedom and democracy, their key demand is that individuals be prevented from getting what they want — that governments be free, nay encouraged, to deny individuals the right to drive cars, work in offices, eat cheeseburgers, and watch satellite TV.” Presumably those antiglobalists think that people will be happier retaining traditional language, dress, and values. But foreigners, like Americans, have the right to choose modernity (368–372).

Occasionally, however, Krugman seems to criticize free markets. He blames Argentina’s crisis of 2001–2002 largely on the country’s having followed free-market advice pressed on it by the International Monetary Fund and the United States. Only incidentally, probably in not enough detail for readers to get the point, does he recognize that Argentina’s macroeconomic troubles traced largely to policy defects that are not inherently part of the free-market position, and in particular to bad monetary policy.

Monetary policy enters into an example of Krugman’s rather weak grasp of some details in the history of economic thought. In a eulogy, he says that James Tobin rejected the monetar-

Krugman mentions a few other economists. His column on “The Two Larrys” contrasts Lawrence Summers, Clinton’s last Treasury Secretary and now president of Harvard, with Lawrence Lindsey. Bush’s choosing the latter as his lead economic adviser dur-

Krugman comes across to conservatives and partisans of the Bush administration as partisan and unfair. Maybe so, but he is right about much of what obsesses him in this book.

ist doctrine of Milton Friedman and was his “best-known intellectual opponent.” “Mr. Friedman’s insistence that changes in the money supply explain all of the economy’s ups and downs has not stood the test of time; Mr. Tobin’s focus on asset prices as the driving force behind economic fluctuations has never looked better.” Friedman is “a great economist; but his reputation now rests on other work” (407). Yet Friedman did *not* maintain that money explains all fluctuations; rather, money matters *most* in macroeconomic phenomena. Furthermore, Krugman, to his credit, seems to be something of a monetarist himself. He blames Japan’s deflationary troubles on an insufficiently bold monetary policy (65). He says that the Federal Reserve “can easily cure” a recession (62). Unlike the recession of 2001, the “standard postwar recession [was] engineered by the Federal Reserve to fight inflation . . . and [is] easily reversed when the Fed loosens the reins” (97). Krugman, like Friedman, recognizes lags in the economy’s response to monetary policy (61).

Another example of questionable intellectual history is crediting Robert Mundell (who won the Nobel prize in economics in 1999 mostly for his writings of the early 1960s) with the insight that a country cannot have all three of “free capital movements, a fixed exchange rate, and an effective monetary policy” (397). But this impossibility was already widely if not generally understood by 1952, when I was writing a dissertation on exchange rates.

ing the 2000 campaign illustrates his valuing loyalty above expertise. A third Larry, Kudlow, the quasi-economist TV pundit, is mentioned for advocating invasion of Iraq to boost the stock market (88). Looking up the article cited, I found Krugman's indeed a plausible reading of what Kudlow wrote.

The Political System

Krugman makes a few contributions to understanding our political system. A short time horizon is built into it. Even politicians trying to be responsible, like Al Gore, resort to half-truths (141–142). Krugman wonders whether the term “responsible politicians” is an oxymoron (160). Without his share of cynical political operators, “even the best man has no chance of achieving high office” (217).

Nevertheless, personalities and motives get too much emphasis, the system itself not enough. Rather than treat Bush and crowd as an understandable though regrettable product of the system, Krugman treats them as a grievous aberration. “[T]his administration seems to have nothing but cynical political operators, who use national tragedy for political gain, don't even try to come to grips with real problems, and figure that someone else will clean up the mess they leave behind” (217). These words could be said of almost any administration.

As for various conflicts of interest involving members of the Bush administration, “none of this is clearly illegal — it just stinks to high heaven” (103). I scarcely doubt that Bush has been exploiting Iraq and other situations for his own personal political advantage. The kind of conflict of interest that politicians routinely face is massive compared to the conflict faced by some judge who may hold a couple of hundred shares in some corporation that might be mildly affected by his decision; yet conflict of interest is considered normal for politicians and generally escapes comment.

On blaming individuals or blaming the system, we should remember Thomas Jefferson's advice in the Kentucky Resolutions of 1798: “In questions of power, then, let no more be heard of confidence in man, but bind him down from mischief by the chains of the Constitution.” Bush him-

self has been notoriously complicit in further smashing those chains.

As I read history, the system has cast more and more sweeping and incomprehensible responsibilities onto the Federal government despite and partly in consequence of the rational ignorance — not a sneering term — of the ordinary voter or non-voter. The government has its fingers into so many pies that not even our legislators and officials, let alone the average voter, can achieve a broad understanding of what it is doing. Members of Congress can scarcely even read the bills they vote on, bills often drafted by staffers and lobbyists. Correspondingly great influence accrues to special-interest minorities. The characteristics of a successful candidate and of a wise and patriotic statesman have diverged widely (in part probably because of what television and air travel have

done to the viability of various sorts of candidates). The combination of wisdom and moral character of U.S. presidents has been on a downtrend since George Washington, of course with fluctuations around the trend.

Why, then, be surprised at George W. Bush, who happens to be “a master of photo-op populism” (258)? The point of putting him in context is not to excuse him but to try to salvage lessons from sad experience.

Krugman will come across to many readers, especially conservatives and partisans of the Bush administration, as partisan and unfair. Maybe so, but he is right about much of what obsesses him in this book. Freemarketeers must be cautious about whom they accept as allies. The distinction between classical liberalism and various kinds of conservatism is becoming ever clearer. □

The Long Walk: The True Story of a Trek to Freedom, by Slavomir Rawicz. The Lyons Press, 1997, 256 pages.

Incredible Journey

William Merritt

I first heard of Slavomir Rawicz in an anthropology class at Duke University. At the time, he was the only Westerner to have written about parts of Asia that, by 1965, had been closed to outsiders, and anthropologists studied his book for clues to life in Mongolia, Western China, and Tibet. The thing that made Rawicz stick in my mind, though, was that he was not an anthropologist, and *The Long Walk* was not an account of an ethnographic expedition. He was a 26-year-old Polish cavalry officer. And the book was the story of his escape from a Soviet labor camp near the Arctic

Circle in far-eastern Siberia.

The Long Walk had quite a bit of play in the early '50s but, by the time I learned of it, it had been out of print for years. When I finally located and read a copy in, of all places, the army hospital at Fort Ord, Calif., the book took an almost mythological position in my memory — not just for the extraordinary story of the 4000-mile hike to freedom across some of the worst terrain on the planet, but for the fact that, no matter how many times I mentioned the book, I never found anybody else who had heard of it. To my amazement, I came across a copy at Borders a few weeks ago and discovered that not only has the book been

reissued, but that Rawicz is still alive and has written a new introduction. It was as if I had blundered on a copy of the *Odyssey* with a new introduction by the author, and a note that he could be contacted in England.

The Long Walk has got to be one of the most astonishing stories of human grit and will and defiance ever written. It is certainly the most astonishing I have ever read. In 1939, Rawicz was a 25-year-old reserve officer in the Polish cavalry who was called up, during his wedding, to defend his country against the simultaneous attacks of Stalin and Hitler. He witnessed what was probably the last cavalry charge in history, was wounded fighting the Nazis, captured by the Russians, sent to Lubyanka Prison, and tortured by the KGB. And when I say tortured, I mean tortured. Everything you imagined about Lubyanka Prison, and a lot of things that would never have crossed your mind, were done to Rawicz.

After a year of this, he was convicted in a bullshit Soviet trial for the crime of speaking Russian, sentenced to 25 years in the Gulag, and crammed with 5,000 other prisoners into a string of unheated cattle cars for a month of rolling eastward on the Trans-Siberian Railroad, to be dumped in the snow near Lake Baikal

The Long Walk has got to be one of the most astonishing stories of human grit and will and defiance ever written.

in December. The prisoners were chained together in groups of a hundred, marched 800 miles north through the Siberian winter until they were near the Arctic Circle, then left in a clearing to chop down trees and build their own prison camp.

Because Rawicz was the only prisoner in the entire place who was willing to admit he knew how to repair a radio, he became friends with the camp commandant's wife, and she helped organize his escape. One mid-

night during an April blizzard Rawicz, three Poles, two other Central Europeans, and a mysterious American who claimed to have been an engineer working on the Moscow subway, and would only identify himself as "Mr. Smith," slipped under the wire — and the real story begins.

The seven spent the rest of the long winter heading south through the snow at the rate of 20 to 30 miles a day. Spring found them back at Lake Baikal where they met a 17-year-old Polish girl named Kristina who had escaped from a women's work farm. Together, they worked their way around the lake, then crossed into Mongolia as summer hit. At every point that a bit of good sense or survival craft was needed, Mr. Smith turned out to be the one with the skills or knowledge to get them through.

They crossed the Gobi during the summer without water, supplies, or even decent directions. Kristina, along with one of the Poles, died in the desert. The rest made it to Tibet, where another Pole died. Fall turned to winter. They crossed the Himalayas in March, had almost made it to India when the way was blocked by a pair of eight-foot tall, shaggy, bipedal creatures, and they had to look for another route. The third Pole died, and the four survivors straggled into the Ganges Valley. Rawicz and the two other Central Europeans were taken to a hospital in Calcutta while Mr. Smith disappeared about his own business. Rawicz recovered, joined a free Polish unit, and was sent to the Middle East.

The Long Walk pushes all my buttons. From the murderous way the Communists treated their prisoners, the trial, the 25-year sentence to the Gulag, the solitary decency of the camp commandant's wife, the escape, the fortitude, the raw determination, and the ultimate survival of individual people, all of it is the way I see the world. And the way I want to see the world. And that makes it very easy for me to gloss over parts of the story that might not be quite as easy to gloss over if I had different buttons. A few weeks after rereading *The Long*

Walk, I can't help but suspect I might be like all those Democrats who ignore the howlers in *West Wing* because they want to tell themselves

He witnessed what was probably the last cavalry charge in history, was wounded fighting the Nazis, captured by the Russians, sent to Lubyanka Prison, and tortured by the KGB.

the show *could* be true, if only things were different.

Taken cold, some of the details Rawicz serves up are pretty hard to swallow. It's difficult to see why a camp commandant's wife would want prisoners to escape and, if this one did, why anybody who had survived a year of torture at the hands of the KGB would ever have opened up enough to let her help. It's hard to see how any band of men who were as used up as these guys must have been before they even set out could dead-head 30 miles a day through a late Siberian winter with no food, minimal clothing, and no snowshoes. It's hard to see how anybody without climbing experience, food, or the most minimal equipment could cross the Himalayas in the winter. And, it's damn near impossible to see how anybody could survive twelve days in the Gobi Desert in July without water.

More than that, there's a 1950s Hollywood feel to the story that doesn't ring true. Being called up to fight during a wedding sounds as much like hack writing as truth. Encountering a charming Polish girl freshly escaped from a work farm sounds even more Hollywoodish. As does the pretty way she died. As does the encounter with the Yeti.

And it seems very convenient that all the other Poles died so that, by the time Rawicz came to write his story, the survivors had scattered and nobody was left to confirm what they had gone through.

Still, one of the things that often

happens to people who survive unbelievable ordeals is that other people refuse to believe them. One commentator claims to have tracked down a British officer who met a group of men who escaped over the Himalayas into India from a Soviet labor camp. And Rawicz's story is so Homeric, and some of the details are so convincing, that you can't help think there is something to them. When you put your mind to it, the individual quibbles are easy enough to rationalize.

The camp commandant's wife was from an old Czarist military family. Her brother and her father had both died fighting the Bolsheviks and she might well have been sympathetic to the prisoners. And, she might have had another agenda. She timed the escape to take place while her husband was away and his rival, the political colonel, was in charge — and available to be embarrassed — by what happened.

Kristina could well have been real, too. Plenty of other people just like her certainly were. Stalin deported hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of Poles to Siberia.

The escapees weren't trying to climb the Himalayas. They were trying to avoid climbing the Himalayas. So, if there is any reasonable way through, they would have taken it. Even the encounter with the Yeti could have been true, if there were such things as Yetis.

As for day-to-day survival — the details of how they coped with food and clothing and shelter — there's plenty Rawicz left out of the book. He says so himself in the introduction. As for the material he left out — well these were tough guys, and they may have done some things that didn't make the final cut into the story. It happened often enough with other World War II survival tales.

Even the not dying of thirst is plausible if you tell yourself that, 1) maybe they just skirted along next to the Gobi instead of punching through the middle like they thought. It wasn't exactly as if there were road signs out there, or 2) they were so out of their heads with thirst, they really didn't count the days very accurately, or 3) Rawicz spoke very poor English and

Ronald Downing, the writer who ghosted the book, just got the number of days wrong, or 4) Downing is a hack and embellished everything he thought he could get away with embellishing because he wanted to sell more copies. When you think

They crossed the Gobi during the summer without water, supplies, or even decent directions.

about it, suppositions about Downing can paper over a lot of suspicions about this book.

Downing is a major wild card because, if there is one thing we know about Ronald Downing, it's that he doesn't seem to have left any tracks at all. Except for ghosting *The Long Walk*, he doesn't even show up in Google. My grandfather died almost 60 years ago, yet you can still turn up his name from a single court case he argued in 1933. But you can't find anything about Downing. And writers leave

just the kind of footprints Google was made to find.

Whatever you conclude about Downing, it's easy to invent plausibilities that make the story believable. But con artists always leave it to the victim to con himself by rationalizing the parts that don't make sense. The bottom line is: I don't know. *The Long Walk* is one hell of a book, if you believe it. It's Shackleton and Krakauer and *Ghost Soldiers*, and every other survival story you ever heard, and then some. And if you don't believe it? Well, it's not the *Odyssey*. It's plainly told, and it's not going to resonate down through the ages on literary worth alone. But it's still one hell of a story.

As for me, I can't shake the thought that the answers lie in a United States government file somewhere, covered with secrecy stamps, and containing a detailed intelligence report from a "Mr. Smith" who had been assigned to do a little undercover work on the Moscow subway. □

***Warrior Women: An Archeologist's Search for History's Hidden Heroines*, by Jeannine Davis-Kimball with Mona Behan. Warner Books, 2002, 268 pages.**

Wishful Digging

Michael Drew

Having dabbled in archeology in college, I remember being curious about news stories of ancient "Amazon" warriors discovered out on the Russian steppes back in the 1990s. The *San Francisco Chronicle*, *New Scientist Magazine*, and others reported

intriguing finds of women buried with weapons, leading experts to speculate about a possible race of female combatants, perhaps even the fierce Amazons of Greek myth. The History Channel and Learning Channel also got into the act with TV specials entitled "Russian Amazons" and the like.

Archeologist Jeannine Davis-Kimball is the person perhaps most responsible for this latter-day "legend of the Amazons," and *Warrior Women* is her belated book-length treatment of the subject. Davis-Kimball is a Berkeley Ph.D. and founder of the "American-Eurasian Research Institute" and "Center for the Study of Eurasian Nomads" located in Oakland, Calif.

I must confess to some bias up front, as the idea of real-life Amazons seemed far-fetched when I first read the media accounts on the subject. Either the men must have stayed home to cook and rear children while the women went out and fought (presumably against men), or an all-women gang must have gone out kidnapping little girls to raise as warriors, or something. Yet sure enough, the outer jacket of *Warrior Women* touted "The origins of the Amazons, and a legacy of formidable, fighting women that is not myth but truth." Given the suggestive flavor of reports from other mainstream sources, I decided to plunk down my money and find out.

Drawing on her fieldwork in former Soviet central Asia, Davis-

Kimball's book uses a personal travelogue style to make the case that the "Sauromatians and Sarmatians, nomadic tribes of fierce warriors who ruled vast portions of the steppes more than two millennia ago" (p. xi), were not the stereotypical male-dominated warrior society we normally imagine. Not only were these steppe peoples more egalitarian than patriarchal in her view, they also produced powerful female warriors who achieved very high status and influence within the nomadic society.

In an evident attempt to weave together past and present, Davis-Kimball records impressions of contemporary Mongolian culture in her travels, then takes seemingly disconnected jaunts to Ireland and Norway in a sort of worldwide women's archeology tour that wanders far from her primary work.

Nevertheless, after some personal anecdotes and accounts of her dealings with the Russian authorities in the field, Davis-Kimball finally brings us out to her main dig at Pokravka in Kazakstan, (a few hundred miles due east of Volgograd, formerly Stalingrad for any World War II buffs out there). I

expected her to quickly begin knocking down the model of the stereotypical male-dominated warrior society, as promised in the introductory hype. Instead, she acknowledges early on that the largest, grandest tombs, or "kurgans," housed great male chieftains (22), as the stereotypes might suggest.

Next she shares a quantitative analysis of the burial remains of adult skeletons at Pokravka to determine their roles and social status. Maybe this would prove to be the mother lode of some elusive Amazon nation. But incredibly, "a full 94 percent of the men were entombed with the bronze and iron arrowheads, swords and daggers that indicated warrior status" (46). By contrast, for women "by far the largest group — some 75 percent — belonged to the hearth-woman category, categorized by clay spindles, bronze spiral earrings . . . a panoply of colored beads and stone and glass" (47).

But where are the "warrior women"? A smaller group of women at Pokravka was indeed found buried with an assortment of arrowheads and daggers as reported in the press.

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Several were found with their legs bent, as if to symbolize a life on horseback. The book never says exactly how big this group was, but some of the earlier articles on the same dig put the total at seven.

How does Davis-Kimball wind up interpreting this genuinely interesting

Could serious reporters and editors be gullible enough to accept the idea of a 13-year-old girl squaring off against grown men in ancient hand-to-hand combat, of which the history of the time has no record?

find, the one that caused all the hubbub? One clue might come from history. Though the Sarmatians had no writing, some of their neighbors had quite a lot. The Greeks and Romans wrote detailed descriptions of their encounters with barbarians (the usual characterization of any non-Greeks or Romans), especially military encounters. For example, we know that in A.D. 175, the Roman army hired 5,000 Sarmatian mercenaries and transported them to Britain to guard Hadrian's Wall, where they eventually retired (32). No mention is made of any warrior women, despite the Romans' known fascination with unusual barbarian customs.

Davis-Kimball concedes the absence of corroborative sources on her pet theme and quietly drops the bombshell that the lack of "contemporaneous authors reporting female warriors participating in raids or full-scale invasions [not to mention the relatively small numbers she fails to emphasize] leads me to believe that women were mainly used in defensive situations . . . and also defended their herds from predators, including foreign tribesmen" when the men were away (65), which was probably much of the time for nomadic raiders. This seems analogous to American pioneer women competently hefting a rifle when they were alone on the homestead.

So that's it? What happened to the "legions of women warriors" who "helped conquer new worlds" as celebrated throughout the book? And why did an organization like Reuters use this same body of evidence to trumpet "Evidence of Amazons found in Russian steppes," in an article that quoted Davis-Kimball saying that the burial mounds "fit the Greek legend neatly?" The essential facts, even as Davis-Kimball presents them, seem to deflate her case, but you wouldn't know it from either the way others reported the story, or from her own triumphant tone carried on in spite of the weakness of her case.

At one point, Davis-Kimball unearths the skeleton of a girl of about 13, with amulets and weapons revealing her "potent warrior prowess" (58). "A clutch of seashells marked her dual role as a priestess" (60). She speaks of other girls in their teens "wielding swords well over three feet long that increased the reach and power of the combatant," (65) even asserting that "the style of warfare practiced by ancient steppe nomads was particularly well-suited to women" (62).

Could serious reporters and editors be gullible enough to accept the idea of a 13-year-old girl squaring off against grown men in ancient hand-to-hand combat, of which the history of the time has no record? Or were they just cynically trying to sell papers while Time-Warner Books sold copies of *Warrior Women*? The answer would appear to be a mixture of capitalist sensationalism, socialist activism, and perhaps a dose of modern-day critical thinking (or lack thereof).

In support of the theory of sensationalism for profit, the "fierce Amazon tribe" hook undoubtedly grabs more headlines than the tale of "women who probably guarded the camp" while the men were away. But the same can be said for any subject, leaving this explanation wanting by itself. Why aren't there wild new accounts of the Battle of Gettysburg or other historical events out

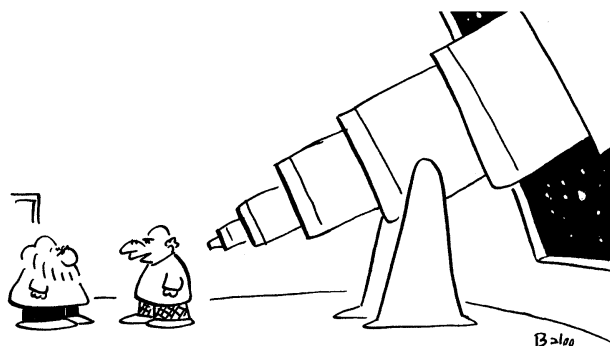
there to draw in additional readers? That's where the second, or "socialist," factor probably kicks in.

It's common to see scathing media attacks on creationism, Holocaust denial or any perceived right-wing kookiness. But when something equally wacky appears on the Left, such as the world according to Afrocentrism, one rarely hears a discouraging word, and may hear down-right praise at times. (I must say I was impressed when *Newsweek*, in the midst of a controversy over whether Cleopatra was black, got up the courage to say she was "probably" Greek — I guess the way Julius Caesar was probably Roman.)

Even more so, stories with a feminist twist tend to pass unscathed, or even amplified, through the usual censors of critical thought. For example, the Discovery Channel recently aired a show on powerful "Women Pharaohs," despite the fact that some of the Egyptian women called pharaohs in the promotional buildup — including Nefertiti and Nefertari — weren't actually pharaohs. Whether the producers of this show would even be aware of this inaccuracy is unknown given the ongoing erosion in the historical knowledge of the typical college graduate.

Either way, when a gender-bending story such as "real life Amazons" happens to coincide with the latest pop culture fantasy — the powerful legion of women warriors on TV — the temptation to stretch the truth must be irresistible. The particular way they do the stretching is also instructive.

A tactic I've noticed in feminist writings is the blatant omission of key



"Work begins here every night at sundown, Blumenkraft — never mind Daylight Savings Time!"

facts or context — usually surrounding the existence of men — to create an exaggerated impression of woman-power. Goddess civilization advocates will often report factually on goddesses such as Isis and Astarte, while conveniently failing to mention their male counterparts in the coed ancient pantheons.

Likewise, despite the preponderance of male warriors, male chiefs, and

It's common to see scathing media attacks on creationism, Holocaust denial or any perceived right-wing kookiness. But when something equally wacky appears on the Left, such as the world according to Afrocentrism, one rarely hears a discouraging word.

domestic women unearthed in Davis-Kimball's Sarmatian population, the news articles and reviews I read, including Davis-Kimball's short abstract published in *Archeology* magazine, mention only the women warriors, and nobody else. Naturally the reader takes from this an impression of a race of Amazons, without the article having actually lied about it.

Despite the barrage of supportive stories, later in her own book Davis-Kimball admits there is no evidence anywhere to support the original Amazon myth, or anything equivalent to it. But in the cleverly titled chapter "Advent of the Amazons," she complains of how "the accounts are maddeningly vague and contradictory when it comes to pinpointing their homeland" (120). Elsewhere she is "haunted by the knowledge that these representations [on Greek pottery] did not do justice to the Amazons' capabilities" (114). In short, she speaks in some places as if they existed, while conceding elsewhere they really didn't, apparently keeping the dream in play for her audience of Xena or Buffy fans while at the same time taking care not to get herself into trouble.

But beyond the question of an Amazon tribe, Davis-Kimball is still

stuck having to explain the existence of those male Sarmatian chieftains buried in the large "czar kurgans" mentioned earlier in the book. How does this jibe with her larger hypothesis of the egalitarian, non-patriarchal ancient society? Here she reaches for a standard tool of feminist researchers, the "proactive" interpretation of archeological evidence.

"As I interpreted our finds from Pokrovka, it became evident that the Sauro-Sarmatian women enjoyed a measure of power and prominence far beyond what previous researchers had ever imagined" (13). The storyline goes something like this:

A number of female skeletons were found with bronze mirrors, seashells and precious jewels. Based on Davis-Kimball's interpretation of the "magical significance" of these artifacts, these women were obviously "priestesses." In the case mentioned earlier, a seashell necklace indicated priestess status; in another it was mirrors that indicated priestess status (74); in yet another, tattoos (144).

Because there were so many "priestesses," women must have "dominated" ancient nomadic religion. (In one random group of mummies excavated by another archeologist in Tillya Tepe in Afghanistan, Davis-Kimball identifies "two priestesses, three warrior-priestesses and a male" (183).

It follows that if women dominated the religion, "Given their incredible wealth of gold and icons emblazoned with supernatural power, it takes little imagination to realize that these warrior priestesses had attained authority

on par with that of [the male] chieftains" (237).

Actually it takes an incredible imagination. But she's not finished yet; there is still that 75 percent of all females categorized earlier as "hearth women." Why similar keepers of the hearth in other cultures never achieved such power and prominence is left unanswered. Instead, Davis-Kimball emphasizes the fact that "[n]ot only were women generally buried with a wider variety of rich artifacts, they also occupied more statuses than the men" (47). But as she is surely aware, this was a common practice in other patriarchal cultures. Old Anglo-Saxon graves consistently reveal more and better goodies among the women. Davis-Kimball herself stresses the same point about Viking women's graves (216) without seeing how it undermines her argument — the Vikings were a typical male-dominated warrior society.

The funny thing is, if you tally up all "these women of power — the priestesses, warriors and high ranking hearth women" (138), the result is a preposterous social structure in which virtually all women seem to have some kind of elite status. Maybe that's the wisdom we're ultimately supposed to take out of this book.

That such shoddy scholarship should grace feminist bookshelves is not so surprising. That it may also be reported elsewhere as "news," seemingly without any rigorous appraisal in the process, is a more sobering testament to our modern age of "infotainment." □

Booknotes

Above the madness of crowds — I've always had a soft spot in my heart for Jeannette Rankin, the first woman elected to the U.S. Congress. Part of the reason is that her very first vote in Congress was against declaring war on Germany and entering the Great War. She joined 54 others in the Congress, including many who like her were removed from

office for failing to go along with the national hysteria.

In 1941, she was again elected to Congress where she again distinguished herself by voting against entry into a world war. Again, thanks to this vote, she failed to win reelection.

Until I read *Jeannette Rankin: America's Conscience*, by Norma Smith

(2002, 240 pages), most of what I knew about Rankin came from a brief mention in a high school history book, short entries in encyclopedias, and a television interview in the 1960s. But she had always struck me as an honorable person who feared no one, an ultra-rarity in American politics.

Smith met Rankin in 1963, when Rankin was in her 80s but still feisty as hell, convinced that wars could not be justified, and distrustful of most politicians. Smith interviewed her 16 times during the remaining ten years of her life and wrote a biography in the 1970s. She never found a publisher, but growing interest in feminist writing and the interest of the Montana Historical Society helped bring the book to press in 2002, the year following Smith's death.

It is a grand story. Rankin started as a suffragette and a social activist, and her entire career was generally on the political Left. She showed no evidence of being a deep thinker, but she was an astute judge of character and always seemed to know when others were lying to her or trying to manipulate her. She voted for Barry Goldwater in 1964, because he was plainly a better man than "Roosevelt's flunky" Lyndon Johnson. And she was a canny enough politician to get elected to Congress twice.

This biography was not merely published by the Montana Historical Society; it was also "edited" by the MHS, or at least so its introduction states. I suspect that it was edited by an individual or two, not by a "society." The current enthusiasm for "her-story" may explain why the book offers no evidence of how Rankin paid her bills during her long life, given that she neither inherited great wealth nor worked for a living. My guess is that her brother, a wealthy entrepreneur, supported her, and that this important detail was omitted because it might undermine the story for feminists. I wish the biography had not left this matter for readers to speculate about. But it's still an enjoyable and very readable book about a colorful and decent American political figure, and provides a vivid portrait of life and politics in the mountain West.

— R. W. Bradford

A journey for everyone —

Very few children's books are any good. Even fewer are good for adults as well as children. Holling Clancy Holling's *Paddle-to-the-Sea* (Houghton Mifflin, 64 pages) is a classic, and it's for everyone. First published in 1941, with both text and (beautiful) illustrations by the author, it's available in a good reprint edition. It's the story of an Indian boy who carves a model canoe, with a model Indian inside it, and puts it in a snowbank on a hill, knowing that when the snow melts it will fall into a stream that flows to Lake Superior, and then to the sea. He carves on the bottom: "Please Put Me Back in Water. I Am Paddle to the Sea." The little canoe traverses the Great Lakes and . . . You don't need to know how it turns out. As you go along with *Paddle-to-the-Sea*, you learn what the woods and streams and shores of northern America are like, and something about the adventure of human life. And did you ever realize that Lake Superior is shaped like a wolf's head? Well, it is. This is the book of lore.

— Stephen Cox

Thinking about capitalism —

Proponents of the market, those to whom the simplicity, efficiency, and morality of capitalism seem self-evident, have in recent times been baffled by the persistent and vehement attacks leveled against it. The anti-globalization, anti-trade, anti-industrialization juggernaut has appeared impervious to logical argument and the facts of recent history. It seems beyond question that capitalism has been a successful economic system, bringing with it peace, prosperity, and political freedom. With the utter failure of the Communist experiment, the alternative to which the window-smashing, tear-gas-breathing discontents aspire is unclear.

Jerry Z.
Muller's book,
The Mind and the Market:

Capitalism in Modern European Thought (Alfred A. Knopf, 2002, 406 pages + notes), imposes a degree of clarity on this confusing reality. Muller explores the different ways in which European intellectuals have perceived the market. He begins with Voltaire, ends with Hayek, and makes ten stops in between. He thoroughly explains each thinker's understanding of the market's place in society, and gives brief but effective historical context, demonstrating that opposition to, and praise for, the market is nothing new — indeed, the arguments have changed little.

The question is not now and has never been one of freedom, but of whose conception of freedom will prevail; not of material prosperity, but of its ramifications; not of peace, but of peace at what cost? Ultimately, the conflict can be reduced to differing moral premises, to different conceptions of human nature, to right and wrong. In this way, Hayek and Marcuse can agree that capitalism makes people work harder. One of them sees in this a great virtue, the other a great evil. Muller leaves the reader to explore the moral premises behind his own beliefs, and to look at his adversary, not as a fool, but as one whose moral premises are flawed. Muller's book reminds us that great intellectual conflicts are seldom about the mechanics of life, but about its meaning.

What was that the Bible said about bread alone . . . ? — Andrew W. Jones

The woman behind the man —

Every good magazine has an editor who makes it work. Back in the 1960s, when I was a faithful reader



"The party starts soon — you guys about done with the piñata?"

of *National Review*, I suspected that person might be Priscilla Buckley. Sure, the guiding spirit behind *NR* was her brother, William F. Buckley Jr. But he was pretty busy piloting his yacht, engaging in quixotic political campaigns, and being a celebrity. And there was the name of his sister on the masthead, right under his, as managing editor.

I just read *String of Pearls* (Thomas Dunne Books, 2001, 192 pages), Priscilla Buckley's delightful memoir of her life in journalism prior to her career at *NR*. *Pearls* begins with young Miss Buckley in 1944, fresh out of Smith College, taking a job with the United Press in New York. She may have been the daughter of the wealthy and distinguished Buckley clan, but to her boss at UP, she was just another "collichgirl" he was forced to hire because of the wartime manpower shortage. She worked hard, learned her craft, and after only a few months was promoted to the sports beat, over "the all-but-dead body of the sports editor."

Her career in mainline journalism lasted twelve years, and took her to post-war Paris, before she returned to help her little brother with his magazine. *NR*'s gain was conventional journalism's loss, for she was a competent reporter and a first-rate writer. She was also a young woman living in the two most fascinating cities in the world. *String of Pearls* tells the story with wit and charm; it is a delightful book.

And my suspicions about her role at *NR* are all but proven.

— R. W. Bradford

A Langer on the desk is worth two on the shelf —

Where do you go to find out who was the first emperor of Mexico? Where can you discover how the First Servile War began? An encyclopedia, I suppose. But what happens if you don't even know that there was an emperor of Mexico, or that there was more than one of them, or that there ever was such a thing as a Servile War? The answer is "Langer," a one-volume, chronologically arranged summary of everything in history. Well, almost everything. You can look up specific events, if you know they happened, or

you can just read along and see how much you still have to learn. There have been several editions of the work since Langer and other distinguished historians began it in the 1920s. The latest edition (*The Encyclopedia of World History*. Peter N. Stearns and William L. Langer, eds. Houghton Mifflin, 2001, 1272 pages) includes a searchable compact disk of the whole text. But the older editions are still useful: ask at your local used bookstore. And to satisfy your curiosity, the first emperor of Mexico was not Maximilian; it was

Augustin I (1822–1823); and the First Servile War began in 135 B.C., "when the ill-treated slaves of the large Sicilian estates revolted under the Syrian Eunus, who called himself King Antiochus. Eunus held Henna and Tauromenium against Roman armies, but was finally captured and his supporters brutally executed. Rome now possessed eight provinces . . ." and the eight are listed. No need to guess, when you have Langer on your desk.

— Stephen Cox

continued on page 52

Notes on Contributors

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Kirby Wright is a recipient of the Academy of American Poets Award and the Browning Society Award for Dramatic Monologue.

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

Letters, from page 32

face. The question: to whom was he giving the Communist salute?

Then after saying "they hit me," he said he was "just a patsy." Okay. He was the fall guy. But when did he realize that he was a fall guy? Did he accept the role knowing he would be sacrificed? I don't think so. Certainly a Lone Nut can't be a patsy. That alone would indicate the involvement of others. Was it when he saw the activity on the grassy knoll from his vantage place on the sixth floor that he realized, at last, that he was just a pawn in the game?

Surely, going in, he thought that he would be the lone assassin; that all the glory would be his, that he was the key actor in the plot. What did he see when he drew a bead on Kennedy's little bean 600 feet away through the trees in a moving car?

Unlike Mr. Steele, if I were a good conspirator I would have one or two backups to make sure the job got done. Failure was not an option; they wanted Kennedy out of there. One cannot say for sure, but possibly Oswald saw an additional shooter or two rise up on the grassy knoll.

Maybe he even saw Johnny Roselli rise up from the sewer to deliver the coup de grace to the front of the head as Roselli told Bill Bonanno he did. Personally, I really like the story — as improbable as it may sound. A Mafia guy coming up from the sewer to shoot the president? That's poetry, man. It is true that the manholes were not welded as tightly as they should have been.

Whatever Oswald did see, he must have realized at that point that he was just a pawn in the game. His actions indicated that he knew his life wasn't worth three expended shell casings or his second rate Mannlicher. He put the rifle down and got the heck out of there. He then went home to get a handgun for the inevitable shootout he knew was coming. He knew he was expendable at that moment; he became a patsy later.

He shot Officer Tippit in self-defense, then called as much attention to himself as he could by crashing a movie theatre so he would be fingered in a crowd where hopefully he wouldn't be blown away by the cops. You see, he had to die.

Are these the actions of a Lone Nut with no chips to play? — I ask rhetorically. "I'm just a patsy," he said. Do you think he was lying? I don't.

The CIA's motives seem clear to me as do those of Giancana and the Outfit. The apparent MO was certainly the Outfit's, at least as far as the Oswald segment went, which is probably as much of the plot as the Outfit needed to know. If you will remember back to the Outfit's method of disposing of Chicago's Mayor Cermak in Miami in the '30s you will find the MO identical. Same results.

Think about it. The CIA was employing the Outfit to kill Castro. You see, it is not only possible that they would partner with the Outfit to kill Kennedy, it was likely.

Giancana had a motive or two. The Outfit, among other things, had got out the vote from Chicago's graveyards several times to accommodate Papa Joe, the old mobster, to get Sonny elected. And then this Bobby double-crosser gets in the way.

At the same time, the Outfit wanted their Havana casinos back. If the CIA was using the Outfit, then perhaps the Outfit was using the CIA. Maybe they were double agents working for Castro at the same time. Possibly he hinted they could get their casinos back. Oswald a Lone Nut? It's almost insane to think a large number of people weren't involved, isn't it?

And this Oswald had lived as a Communist in Russia; then after returning, he had become involved in Cuban politics in New Orleans. Whose side was he on? Maybe Oswald was a double agent of the CIA and Castro who was ostensibly recruited by the Outfit which didn't know what his ulterior motives were.

To whom was Oswald giving the crooked arm salute? Remember that that salute was broadcast around the world.

Wasn't it a surprise when Oswald was shot down the next day? Just about as big a surprise as when Bobby caught a couple four or five years later. Gosh, who would have thought either killing would have happened? There were a few of us.

I could see that out of the chaos surrounding Oswald as he walked down that long, lonesome hallway backing the cameraman along with that con-

venient 20-foot gap between them that something was going to happen.

Jack Ruby had been associated with the Outfit in one way or another for decades. What do you think he was doing in Dallas?

Steele asks the rhetorical question: why a public execution for Kennedy? Why not a poison pellet for the president? Because: a poison pellet would be murder and require a full-scale investigation whereas getting a Lone Nut to shoot down the president in public wouldn't. Everybody in the world could see it as it happened. If the revolution wouldn't be televised, the assassination could. Hidden in plain sight. Get it?

Now, I don't want the editor to think I'm one of those conspiracy nuts he derides in his little note at the end of Steele's article. No, thank you! Shucks, I know there has never been a conspiracy in the history of the world. Look at the word: con-spire. Know what it means? Breathe together! On the very face of it, who can do that? I've got all I can do to breathe alone. I say it out loud: Oswald was a Lone Nut. But he was in association with a bunch of other Lone Nuts. They were not breathing together, they were breathing individually. Breathing together is impossible, hence, no conspiracy.

Yes, it was a little crowded on that grassy knoll, but it was well organized.

Ronald E. Prindle
Portland, Ore.

Justice is Blind (And All Wet)

I can see why *Liberty* reader Robert Stock (Letters, December) was shocked to find the daughter of libertarians involved in tossing water balloons at parked cars ("Splish, Splash, I Was Taken to Jail," November). The damage would be horrible enough if the balloons landed on their intended targets. But think of the carnage that could have resulted if they had hit unsuspecting humans. The scene at this crime could have been a huge water bath!

The police were fully justified in drawing their handguns to subdue this insurrection. I assume they were appropriately armed with water pistols.

Charles Schisler
North Palm Beach, Fla.

Reclaiming Objectivism for humanity

— In his new monograph, *Ayn Rand, Homosexuality, and Human Liberation* (Leap Publishing, 2003, 62 pages), Chris Matthew Sciabarra surveys “Ayn Rand’s impact on the sexual attitudes of self-identified Objectivists in the movement to which she gave birth and the gay subcultures that she would have disowned” (p. vii).

The work is appropriately brief. There isn’t much to say, and nothing is belabored. Rand found homosexuality “disgusting” and “immoral.” Yet Objectivism, the philosophy she created, continues to attract strong individualists who differ from the heterosexual norm. Among the people Sciabarra interviews, the broad consensus seems to be that Objectivists as a whole are not as intolerant as Rand was. Members of the movement are more able than Rand to separate personal judgments of taste and value from rational judgments of moral and ethical behavior.

Sciabarra gathered the material for the monograph from interviews with people active in the Objectivist movement. Remarkably, many were willing to contribute to the project only on condition of anonymity. In his foreword, Lindsay Perigo correctly suggests that this alone indicates the need that existed for a specific treatment of the place of gays in the Objectivist movement. While many Objectivists have separated personal prejudice from phi-

losophy, many have not.

The most fascinating part to me is the section “Male Bonding in the Randian Novel,” in which Sciabarra and others describe Rand’s view of “love” between the men in her novels as confused, even self-contradictory. I remember thinking when I read *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*, “If this weren’t Rand, I’d swear there were homoerotic overtones here.” Apparently others have had the same thought. You might be surprised to read what Rand had to say about the relationship between Wynand and Roark. I certainly was!

Sciabarra’s parting shot at Rand’s homophobia is a zinger: “[A]nti-gay bias,” he writes, “is a manifestation of collectivism — whether that bias is uttered by ‘religious’ conservatives or ‘atheistic’ Marxists” (56). This rings true, and it’s one of the more horrifying accusations a person could level at Rand. To make moral pronouncements based on personal taste is contrary to the individualism that was Rand’s signature personality trait and the cornerstone of her philosophy of life.

Only one part of this work sticks out like a sore thumb, and that is Sciabarra’s mention of a rumor that Rand was bisexual. He brings it up only briefly, discounts its veracity, and uses it primarily to set up a brief discussion of Rand and gender roles. Still, even the brief mention seems out of place in a work that otherwise focuses on legitimate historical fact and personal testimony of people he interviewed directly.

This monograph is easy to knock off in an hour or two and is worth the read, even for libertarians like me who have little more than a passing interest in Objectivism. Sciabarra calls for a new understanding of Objectivism that identifies sexuality as simply one more dimension of diversity that strong-minded individualists can celebrate.

— Patrick Quealey

True crime, truly senseless

— In January, 2001, James Parker and Robert Tulloch, teenagers from a small town in Vermont, gained admission to the home of a husband and wife who taught at Dartmouth College, on the politically correct pretense that they were conducting a survey of people’s attitudes toward the environment. They then murdered their hosts, collecting, for their efforts, the sum of \$340. The Dartmouth case gives accuracy to the cliché about “senseless murder.” Mitchell Zuckoff and Dick Lehr, the authors of *Judgment Ridge* (HarperCollins, 2003, 418 pages), a very superior true crime book, try to explain what went wrong with Parker and Tulloch, whose story reads like an eerie parody of *Bill and Ted’s Excellent Adventure*, and almost succeed. The good news is that although “psychopaths” are said to account for approximately 1 percent of the population, they usually have trouble planning and concealing their careers of crime, so you don’t need to run (at least very fast) from every hundredth teenager you see.

— Stephen Cox

If Free Markets Give People What They Want..., from page 28

erally remains immune from effective empirical challenge. If I may paraphrase an old saying: “Don’t confuse me with your theory, I already know the facts.” And the fact is that our media *are* biased, have happily admitted as much and admitted it often, have absolutely no shame about their bias — quite the opposite, really — and will continue to disappoint most all literate people in the future. We could call it just another case of “market failure” if a media free market had existed for some period of time. But it hasn’t, even though some day it just might. We can certainly continue to hope.

As a non-utopian, I am unwilling to suggest that in the future any such change will produce dramatic results in terms of the creation of more enlightened public policies. But, nonetheless, I will be happy because I like to see ideological

competition rather than monopoly in the provision of goods and services, and this is one monopoly whose demise will not generate calls for a return to “the good old days,” except by those whose jobs will be lost due to the changes.

When I can turn on the television and see a discussion that has real differences of opinion rather than left-liberals and neoconservatives niggling over details, I will know that competition has finally worked its magic. When I see a commercial movie released celebrating the life of, say, Thomas Szasz or Whittaker Chambers, I will know that Hollywood has at long last embraced real — as opposed to rhetorical — *diversity*.

Until then, I’ll confine my personal television viewing to ultra-serious, politically correct, elitist educational fare — only great shows — like my current personal favorite: *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. □

Viva Las Vegas, from page 34

see big enough. It is scarcely surprising that the largest trade shows, such as Comdex, which attracts 250,000 visitors, are held in Las Vegas.

Vegas amply supports the art of live performers who you've seen on television: musicians, boxers, comedians, magicians, even dancers as sophisticated as the Cirque du Soleil. Vegas offers everyone familiar names that are better live than on television, just as Vegas is better than real life. Las Vegas offers kinds of experience not available back home, whether because the comedians are raunchier or the acrobats perform with a depth that can be felt. Some of these acts, like the continuous show at Circus Circus, are free, while others, such as the Cirque du Soleil creation, "O", cost more than \$100. The companies that own casino corporations have become modern Medicis in keeping alive certain arts that might otherwise disappear.

My favorite is Cirque du Soleil — a remarkably sophisticated Canadian dance troupe that bills itself as a circus and adds some clowning. Very much in the high modern choreographic tradition of using props as resistance, the performers put their bodies through a skeletal cube, large metal triangles, upright poles, trapeze bars, bungee chords, trampolines, on see-saws, and much more. They perform twice each night in a theater built especially for them, with remarkably good sight lines for each of the 1,400 spectators. I'd love to see the same show again; that desire is always the simplest measure of excellence. Though the tickets cost each of us \$80, I did not feel ripped off, accepting my fate in Las Vegas, though I might have felt differently if a theater anywhere else charged me so much.

Given all the 99¢ shrimp cocktails, free drinks, and bargain hotel rooms, it is hard to believe that all of them turn a profit and that all the hotels fill enough beds during the year. But new hotels are rising and old ones are being refurbished or spectacularly demolished to make space for yet more new ones, so someone must believe it is possible to sell yet more of the same here. (The haze on the otherwise clear horizon is blamed upon "construction dust.")

Some speak of Las Vegas as a sexy town, but I had just the opposite impression. I didn't see single people picking

one another up. Instead of the attractive young women normally dominant in deluxe hotel lobbies, I saw plenty of middle-aged, ill-looking, poorly dressed, frumpy, and overweight people, most of them Americans. What the city offers is not sex but its substitute in the form of orgasmic euphoria that can come from the surprise of winning more money than expected. A secondary business is the generation of quick cash, beginning with more pawn shops than I've ever seen in one place anywhere else. One sign offered cash against a

The principal business of Las Vegas is simply, shamelessly, and amicably separating outsiders from their money.

credit card, without the need for a secret "pin" number, again illustrating an ease in separating people from their money.

I assume that most who live in Vegas are inured to the constant sales pitching — they must if they are to remain solvent. Our Grand Canyon guide confided that everyone walking on the Strip must be a tourist. Locals never go there. The truth is that no one is forcing anyone to spend his money; it's all done voluntarily. My assumption is that people surviving here must assume that they're superior to the hoi polloi, much as, say, bosses assume they are different from employees (or vice versa) and college-educated people assume they differ from those who aren't. After all, if you can survive on only one buffet a day and \$4.95 prime rib dinners, staying at a casino might be cheaper than staying at a Motel 6 and eating at McDonald's.

What Las Vegas represents is the redistribution of American wealth — away from an aging middle-class to corporations on one hand and hospitality employees on the other — all without coercion from either a six-gun or any state. The benefits are as two-sided as capitalism itself. For the visitor who knows not to gamble (in my case, I lost \$1.75 at the slots), Las Vegas is an extraordinary adult playground, the Coney Island that my predecessor Cummings never imagined, and that I look forward to visiting again. □

Encounter at Puko'o, from page 38

back to make it right.

"I wish I had Ben's .22," I told my father.

"What for?"

"To shoot Billy Duva."

"They coulda had a gun on that boat."

I cursed myself for not standing by my father's side when Billy came on shore. We could have fought together. But it had all happened so fast. We reached the curve at Buchanan Fishpond and my father took the turn slow.

"Did Gramma ever tell you about Billy?" I asked my father.

"What about him?"

"He was in her bedroom."

"Oh," he said. "That."

"I want to kill him."

"Now, Jeffrey," my father said, "you don't wanna ruin your life killing a bum like that."

I gazed across the channel at Maui and saw a black plume rising toward Haleakala out of the fields. They were burning the cane so the stalks would be easier to cut after the fire destroyed the razor-sharp blades. My father shifted gears and I suddenly felt close to him. I wasn't sure how much of the Billy story he knew but I sensed he didn't want to discuss it. I suspected he felt powerless like me. There were things in my grandmother's life that I wanted to go back and fix but I knew I couldn't. My father sped up and drove in the middle of the road. The jeep rumbled over the wooden slats of a bridge and two boys leaned against the railing. One hitchhiked and the other peeled a mango.

"Hui!" the hitchhiker said.

My father waved.

The boy with the mango gave us the finger. I wanted my father to stop so I could push them off the bridge. I was bigger than them but Billy was bigger than me.

Being fair was the farthest thing from my mind. □

Bolinas, Calif.

Another electoral victory for environmentalism, from the *Sacramento Times-Herald*:

Voters of the Bolinas Community Public Utility District passed this advisory resolution on November 20, by a margin of more than 2 to 1: "Vote for Bolinas to be a socially acknowledged nature-loving town because to drink the water out of the lakes to like to eat the blueberries to like the bears is not hatred to hotels and motor boats. Dakar. Temporary and way to save life, skunks and foxes (air-planes to go over the ocean) and to make it beautiful."

London

Dispatch from the War on Fire, reported by *The Times of London*:

Roger Bugg's car was towed away and crushed because he had left the windows down half an inch. The traffic warden who reported this error said that kids could have dropped a match through the windows, threatening an electric substation.

Whittier, Calif.

Innovative application of zero tolerance in the Golden State, from the *Whittier Daily News*:

Whittier High School students who arrive at class after the 8 a.m. tardy bell more than twice are written \$165 tickets by the Whittier Police Department.

Sweden

Public safety note from Europe's most advanced welfare state, from a dispatch in the *New York Post*:

Swedish authorities have issued a warning against intoxicated elk after a woman was attacked by a drunken elk.

Rockdale, Ga.

Dispatch from the front in the War on Drugs, from the *Gwinnett Daily Post*:

Three Conyers Middle School students have been charged with violating the state Controlled Substances Act after a plastic bag filled with parsley was found at the school. "We believe, because of the way the parsley was packaged, at least two of the students believed it was marijuana," said Rockdale County Sheriff's Deputy Myra Pearrell.

U.S.A.

Curious new fashion trend, from an offering on Yahoo.com:

Undee Bandz, head bands which are made from underwear waistbands, "are great for all ages from youth to teen and adult. These are the HOTTEST headwear ever."

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

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

Shreveport, La.

How zero tolerance enriches the educational experience, from a report in the *Shreveport Times*:

Student Amanda Stiles was expelled from Parkway High for a year for having Advil in her possession on school property. Stiles and her mother appealed to the school board, but were denied; the school is following a state law that requires a one-year expulsion, consistent with the system's "zero-tolerance" policy.

Los Angeles

Advance in multicultural understanding, from a report in the *New York Times*:

A Los Angeles County official has asked computer and video equipment vendors to consider eliminating the terms "master" and "slave" from equipment because they may be considered offensive.

"Based on the cultural diversity and sensitivity of Los Angeles County, this is not an acceptable identification label," according to an email sent to vendors. The memo asks manufacturers, suppliers, and contractors to change or remove any labels on components that could be interpreted as discriminatory or offensive in nature.

Internet

Abuse of power in cyberspace, from the net's leading search engine.

Typing "miserable failure" into Google and clicking the "I'm Feeling Lucky" button (which produces the most relevant search result) brings the websurfer to a biography of George W. Bush — hosted on whitehouse.gov, the official website of the White House.

Biron, Wisc.

Curious epicurean delight discovered by the *Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune*:

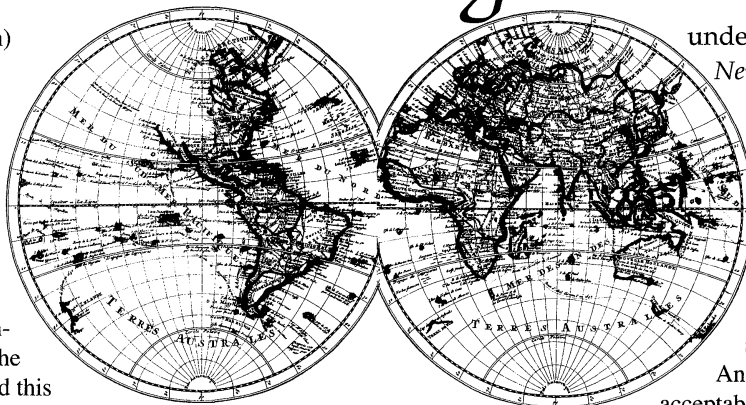
Mr. Ed's Tavern began what it hopes will be an annual tradition the Saturday after Thanksgiving by serving fried turkey testicles. People lined up for two hours for the delicacy. "It was the largest single grossing sale I've had since I opened the place," proprietor Ed Fitzgerald said. Many diners said the testicles tasted like beer-battered hot-dog beef.

New York

Reported attempt to make it easier to sleep in the City That Never Sleeps, from the *New York Daily News*:

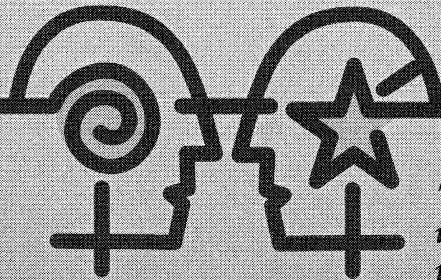
George Pulido has been taken to court because his 9-year-old son's balloon burst while they were taking a walk. A policeman standing nearby when the balloon burst informed Pulido that he had just made an "unreasonable noise."

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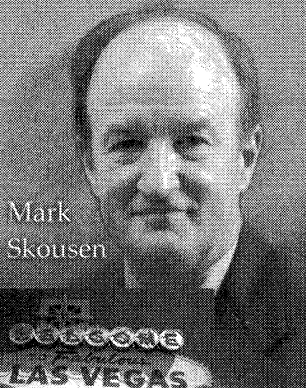
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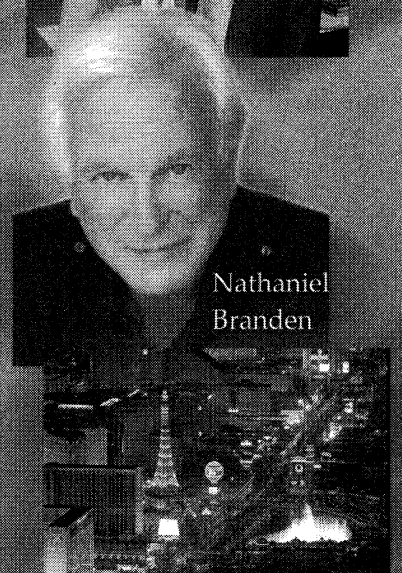


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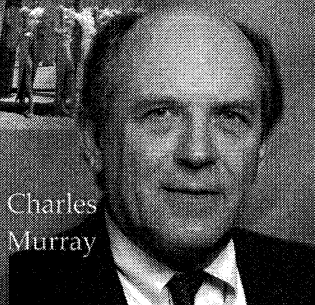
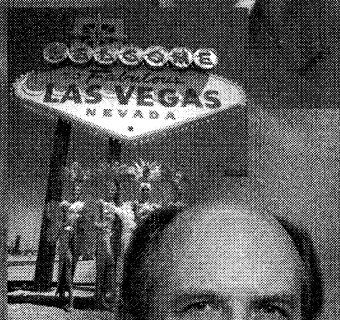
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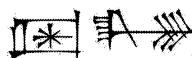
The founders' arguments over the proper construction of the new Constitution, the political economy, the appropriate level of popular participation in a republican polity, foreign policy, and much else, not only contributed crucially to the shaping of the nineteenth-century United States, but also have remained of enduring interest to all historians of republican liberty.

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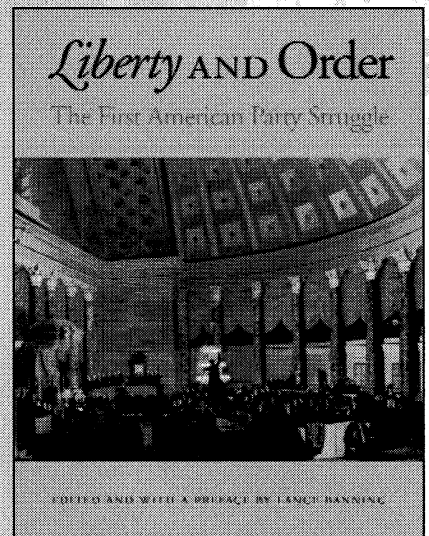
Lance Banning is Professor of History at the University of Kentucky, where he has taught since 1973, and was the 2000/2001 Distinguished Professor in the College of Arts and Sciences.



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