the weekly Standard

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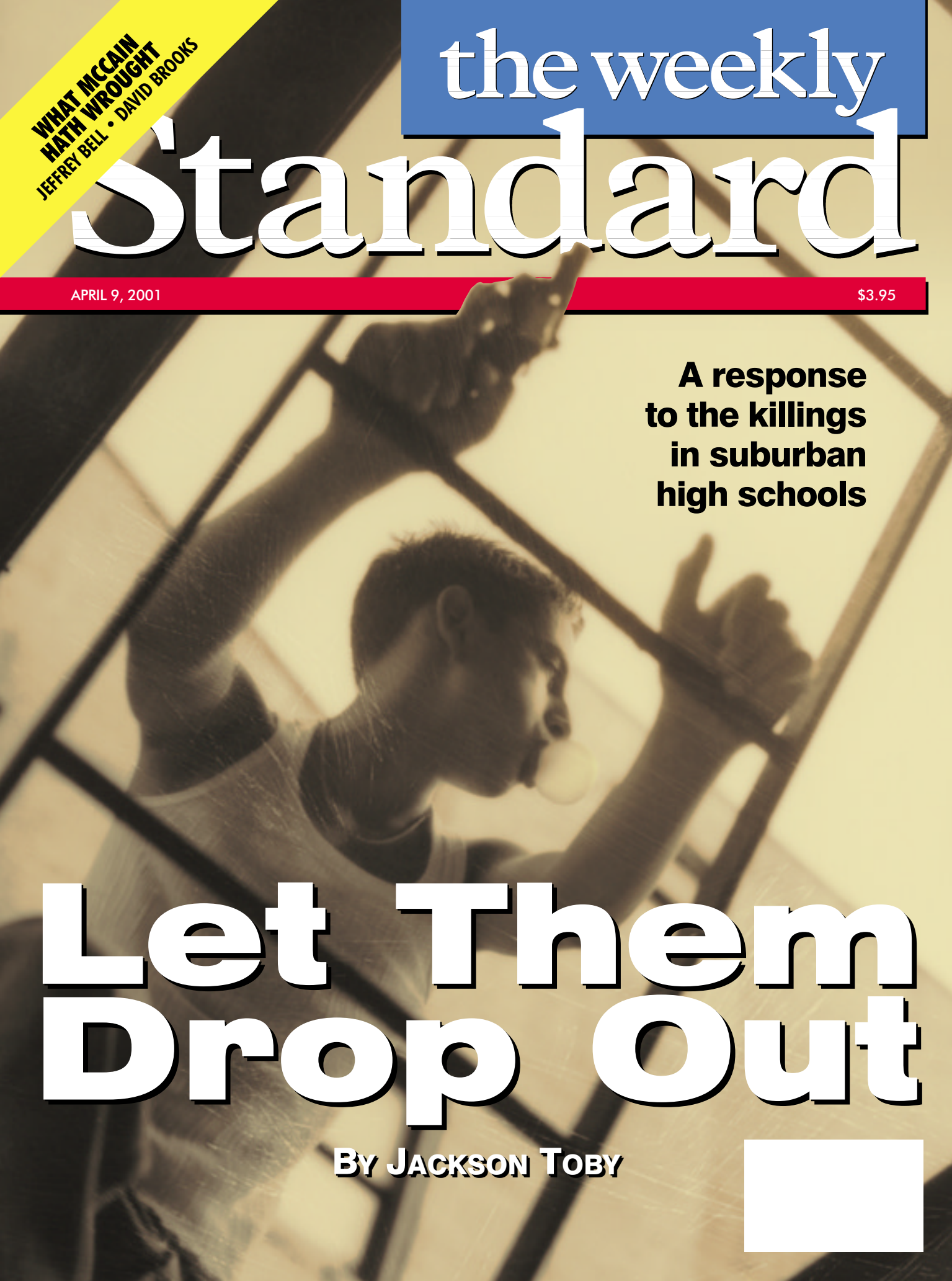
WHAT MCCAIN HATH WROUGHT
JEFFREY BELL • DAVID BROOKS



A response to the killings in suburban high schools

Let Them Drop Out

BY JACKSON TOBY

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Let Our People Go!

As The Scrapbook goes to press, wire services are reporting that China has been detaining yet another American citizen, without charge or explanation, for more than a month. Li Shaomin, 44, a Princeton Ph.D. who currently holds a professorship at the City University of Hong Kong, walked from his home across the border to the neighboring Chinese city of Shenzhen—with his U.S. passport—on February 25, intending to visit a friend. He never arrived. Officials at the American embassy in Beijing were informed of Li's arrest at some unspecified later date. But the U.S. government has refused comment on the case, and Li's wife, Liu Yingli, has been refused all contact with her husband.

Earlier this month, of course, came news that another American citizen, a 5-year-old boy named Andrew Xue, had been held incommunicado from the U.S. embassy—and from his parents—for 26 days beginning February 11, when the family was detained at Beijing's airport. Andrew and his father have subsequently been released and reunited. But Andrew's mother, Gao Zhan, a political scientist at American University in Washington, D.C., remains under arrest on patently ridiculous espionage charges. Andrew's father reports that the boy now spends his days wailing over and over: "I want my mommy."

Surely the time has come for the United States, its government and its people, to get angry—very angry.

American foreign policy experts and other deep thinkers now scratch their heads to divine what signal China's leaders might hope to send us by means of such unusual . . . diplomatic initiatives, as it were. For what it's worth, we would argue that it doesn't matter what signal China's leaders are sending. They are Communists, which more or less explains everything. The day after the Xue incident was made public, Chinese vice premier Qian Qichen, fêted in Washington by the industrialists at the U.S.-China Business Council, put it quite well: "Chairman Mao is a great leader of the Chinese revolution. And this is the view of all the Chinese people." His audience applauded.

Twenty-four hours later, responding to questions from the *Washington Post*, Chinese president Jiang Zemin expressed incredulity that Americans might be distressed about the Xues. After all, Andrew and his parents were arrested—which "means they must have violated the law to a certain extent." Besides, "the United States is the most developed country in the world in terms of its economy and its high tech; its military is also very strong. You have a lot of things to occupy yourself with." So "why do you frequently take special interest in cases such as this?"

This is the authoritarian mind: consumed with questions of power, and impatient with the "sentimentality" about individual liberties that a nation like the United States insists on as a matter of principle.

The key word here is "insists." We think it shouldn't matter much at all exactly why China has lately taken to making American citizens disappear in its dungeons. We think it should matter enough—and only—that it has been done. Where major world powers are concerned, the arrests without charge are virtually unprecedented in modern diplomacy. You may have to go back to the first decade of the 19th century, in fact, when England was impressing American merchant seamen into service in the British navy, to find the willingness and ability of the United States to guarantee the safety of its citizens traveling abroad so frontally challenged. The Xue and Li detentions are the acts of a rogue state. The Bush administration must recognize them as such.

As we write these words, the White House and State Department have not done more than issue cautious expressions of "concern" about Gao Zhan and Li Shaomin—to go with quiet, backchannel protests to the Chinese foreign ministry. This timidity ill-suits American honor. A more appropriate response would be for the State Department to recall its Beijing ambassador for consultations. And for the president to order an immediate moratorium on bilateral contacts with China until Gao Zhan and Li Shaomin are set free. ♦

The *New York Times* vs. the First Amendment

On the afternoon of March 26, the Senate debated a measure styled "Joint Resolution 4," sponsored by Fritz Hollings of South Carolina. The resolution proposed an amendment to the U.S. Constitution authorizing Congress and the states to "set reasonable limits" on contributions to, and expenditures by, candidates for all public offices. A new constitutional amendment would be necessary to authorize such limits because an old constitutional amendment—the first one—stands in the way.

An unbroken, quarter-century-long string of Supreme Court decisions hold that the First Amendment forbids even "reasonable" limits on campaign contributions unless those limits are necessary to combat corruption.

Under the same line of high court rulings, the Constitution will not tolerate any limitation on campaign expenditures unless the money in question comes from general tax revenue in a publicly financed election.

Joint Resolution 4, in other words, was a proposal to abridge the Constitution's elemental protection of political speech. And when the debate was done, 40 senators voted to do just that, with Montana's absent Max Baucus announcing through the clerk that he had intended to join them. All forty-one of these people, incidentally, would vote for the McCain-Feingold bill a few days later. Such is the nature of modern "reform."

When so many U.S. senators decide that the First Amendment needs curtailment, you'd think some people would get upset—leading journalists especially. But no. The next day's *New York Times* restricted mention of the Hollings resolution to the final sentence of a 1,000-plus-word story the paper ran on page 18. In the same issue, breezily dismissing complaints that the McCain-Feingold bill, too, would impede free speech, the *Times*'s lead editorial boasted, "This page . . . has a record of vigilance on the First Amendment." Oddly enough, "this page" failed to notice the Hollings resolution at all. ♦

Simon Says

Shortly before he died last year at age 72, Ford administration Treasury secretary William E. Simon designed a major program devoted to the cause of private charity, one of his lifelong concerns. Administered through the 34-year-old foundation that bears his name, Simon's final project made its initial mark last week.

The first annual William E. Simon Prize in Social Entrepreneurship was awarded to investment banker Peter Flanigan for his work as principal founder of the Student/Sponsor Partnership, a nonprofit agency providing financial aid and mentoring services to disadvantaged students attending private schools. The first annual William E. Simon Prize in Philanthropic Leadership was awarded to John Walton, an investor and Wal-Mart director, for his work in a series of private-school scholarship initiatives directed at children from low-income families. Each prize is worth $250,000.

Honorees Flanigan and Walton have both helped thousands of deserving students escape dysfunctional and reform-resistant inner-city school systems. The Scrapbook joins the William E. Simon Foundation in applauding them. ♦

E-mail The Scrapbook

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Casual

DOT-COM-FREUDE

I doubt that anybody has made better or more valuable use of the Internet than I have. In my time, I've bought a new car online at a few hundred dollars over cost, rounded out various obsessive collections through auctions, and researched hundreds upon hundreds of articles without moving from my desk.

And yet, despite the bounty that I've been provided, I find myself absolutely, chillingly delighted by the Nasdaq crash and by the ghoulish daily reports about the bankruptcy or collapse of new-media companies. And I'm not alone. The emotion is so widespread in journalistic circles that it deserves its own name: dot-com-freude.

The dictionary definition of "schadenfreude," the term from which I've derived my neologism, is "enjoyment in the troubles of others." It's the flip side of envy, and like envy, it's a sin in which writers seem to specialize. After all, we log on daily to Jim Romenesko's Media News website to see who's been fired, laid off, transferred. A friend of mine was on a reporting trip to Botswana, and took time out to find his way to an Internet café to check up on the day's Romenesko gossip.

This attitude of taking unholy pleasure in the wounds suffered by our fellow writing and editing professionals is one of the reasons that non-journalists complain about journalism's negativity. They can perceive our ill will, and are repelled by our bad taste.

Bad taste it may be, but being indiscriminately positive can have dire consequences as well, as the cries emanating from 100 million households watching their 401(k)s diminish in value indicate.

Consider the dot-com boom. Nobody who writes for a living (save a few scientifically literate journalists) had any real cause to be skeptical of the run-up in the so-called tech stocks, like Microsoft and Cisco. Everybody in the world of journalism uses Microsoft products, and it was almost impossible to understand just what Cisco made.

But the dot-coms were another story entirely. They had the same relation to Cisco that a magazine like this one has to an automobile factory. The dot-coms were created by the Internet, whose infrastructure Cisco helped to build, while THE WEEKLY STANDARD is produced in a modern print facility based (like all production lines) on the assembly-line model perfected by Henry Ford.

Once you take away all the blather about the revolution in consciousness the Internet was creating and the Brave New Instant World, what are dot-coms anyway? They are either magazines or catalogues—and catalogues are just magazines made up entirely of ads.

If there's one thing that journalists know about, it's the financial structure of magazines. And what we know is that it is exceedingly difficult for magazines to make money. Most large-circulation magazines actually lose money on every issue they sell. They allow this to happen by discounting each issue in order to boost readership enough to attract advertisers who'll pay them lots of money.

Most print publications don't discount to the extent of simply handing issues out (though some do, in a dubious marketing strategy known as "controlled circulation"). The money they earn from subscriptions and newsstand sales is real, honest-to-God cash, and is an important means of defraying their fixed costs—like salaries, rent on office space, and health care benefits.

Every cent spent by a magazine like this one (which does very little discounting, actually) on its fixed costs is spent by dot-coms as well. What they don't have to do is print and mail their product, which certainly looks attractive at first glance. But maintaining their websites with server capacity and HTML experts and such turns out to cost about the same as printing and mailing—or at least the dot-coms threw the same sort of money at the technical aspects of production as conventional magazines.

The emperor truly had no clothes. And yet, throughout 1999, we journalists read and heard about and even knew people who had migrated to dot-commery whose stock options made them worth millions of dollars. And while that was certainly enviable, what was even worse for us was the cultural heat the dot-coms generated.

It was, for a brief but long-enough time, far more chic to work for an online publication than it was to write for something that actually had to run through an offset printer and be sent through the mail. They were on the cutting edge. We were dinosaurs.

The loss of their virtual millions certainly was an element of our dot-com-freude. But far more important was the way the bear market finally revealed the hollowness behind the idea that print was dead. It turned out that print was dead only because stock analysts, brokerages, and fantasists looking for a big score had a vested interest in foisting a false market on an unsuspecting public.

Of course, like everybody else, print journalists have had to watch our 401(k)s plunge and our stock holdings deteriorate in value. So it's not as though we haven't suffered. But at least we have dot-com-freude to give us a nice warm feeling as the Nasdaq collapses.

JOHN PODHORETZ

Stressed Over Strauss

The Weekly Standard is my favorite weekly political and cultural review. On the whole, I agree with most things it publishes, and am impressed by the high level of writing and editing. Imagine my surprise, then, in reading Melinda Ledden Sidak's review of *The Sopranos*, where in passing she gratuitously makes Tony Soprano "a secret disciple of Leo Strauss," because Tony forcefully "counsels" his son to embrace hypocrisy about religion ("Mob Mentality," March 26). I take strong exception to her remark. I had agreed with almost everything she had written up to that point, but I was genuinely puzzled and dismayed by that unnecessary and low dig, and the remark soured me on an otherwise sprightly review.

By any standard, that was an unfair, untrue, and unnecessary remark in an otherwise intelligent critique of the drooling, by both liberals and conservatives, over *The Sopranos*. It seems to me that your usually independent stance on, and rigorously intelligent seriousness about, cultural matters has been compromised by a foolish comment that looks like it was meant to appease your enemies by soiling your own nest.

Therefore, I am duty-bound to register my unhappy surprise and even extreme displeasure with the hostility against, and libel of, the good name of Leo Strauss, and by implication, of Straussians of every stripe, in a journal like yours. I would have expected this dig in the guise of humor, directed against the good name of Strauss from such so-called liberal publications as the *New York Times* or the *New Republic*. But to have to read it in The Weekly Standard? Your magazine can do better than that.

Kenneth Green
Toronto, Canada

I was shocked to see The Weekly Standard tarnish the reputation of the most profound twentieth-century American political philosopher, Leo Strauss. In her review of *The Sopranos*, Melinda Ledden Sidak quotes a vulgarism from the movie, then makes a gratuitous reference to Strauss's alleged irreverence toward God. The comment dishonors all the students of Strauss who have written for the magazine. Its flippancy aside, the slander reinforces a prejudice about Strauss that serious scholars and journals aim to challenge and that, moreover, Strauss himself repudiated in writing after writing.

Ken Masugi
Claremont, CA

Rethinking Rushdoony

Peter Leithart praises the Reverend Rousas J. Rushdoony as an "American original" and a "thoroughly American intellectual—in the old-fashioned sense" ("Old Geneva & the New World," March 26).

Very old-fashioned. Rushdoony believed that democracy is "heresy" and "the great love of the failures and cowards of life"; that "some people are by nature slaves and will always be so"; that civil law should be replaced by a form of Biblical law "to suppress, control, and/or eliminate the ungodly." These, and his many similar ideas, have not characterized American intellectuals since intellectuals burned witches.

While Leithart acknowledges that Rushdoony advocated the death penalty as a possible punishment for abortion, adultery, sodomy, and incest, he omits other law-breakers whom Rushdoony believed worthy of execution, including incorrigible juvenile delinquents, blasphemers, and "propagators of false doctrines."

To his credit, Rushdoony believed execution to be impermissible without the testimony of two witnesses. The penalty for false witness is, unsurprisingly, execution. This offense was exemplified by "the false witness borne during World War II with respect to Germany."

Rushdoony thought that a generation nurtured on violent entertainment and media "could not be expected to react to a murder or two," and, therefore, the extent of the Holocaust was exaggerated in order to shock a desensitized world: "Did the Nazis actually execute many thousands, tens, or hundreds of thousands of Jews? Men to whom such murders were nothing had to blow up the figure to millions. . . . The evils were all too real: even greater is the evil of bearing false witness concerning them. . . ."

Death to those who oppose Holocaust denial? Leithart describes Rushdoony as "eccentric"; a stronger word is in order. While he did not have the influence to be truly evil, to portray Rushdoony as a benign, admirable, classically American contrarian, is a whitewash.

David Cantor
New York, NY

Character Counts

Having closely read the tightly reasoned and thorough articles of Andrew Ferguson for some time now, I always give your senior editor a presumption of correctness as soon as I see his name attached to an article. However, I was forced to depart from this presumption, at least momentarily, after reading "'Character' Talk Is Not Enough" (March 19).

Ferguson did not fully comprehend what President Bush was trying to communicate when he briefly talked about character education in the wake of the Santana High School Tragedy. Bush could have chosen a better label than "coward" when referring to the criminal in question. My agreement with Ferguson departs at the point when he criticizes Bush for arguing that had the gunman known better the difference between right and wrong, this moral

knowledge might have influenced him to not carry out the shooting.

But Bush's claim—that solid character education could have very well stayed his hand from the gun—is quite indisputable. Indeed, there is a substantial probability that the gunman would not have conceived or carried out his murderous plan had he been strongly educated in the basic notions of right and wrong (i.e., character). Such an education gives rise to a finely tuned conscience, and like a compass, this conscience would have guided this young student to make a choice other than murder. Character education in our schools—that is, education with respect to moral right and wrong—is not only an American tradition, it is also an essential aim of a free and civil society.

JASON RANEW
Akron, OH

ANDREW FERGUSON'S ARTICLE about the latest school shooting makes many good points, but misses the crucial one. Character isn't knowledge, it's virtue. No doubt the gunman knew quite well the wrong of pumping bullets into his schoolmates. The problem is that he was willing to do it anyway.

The reason so-called "character talk" is not enough is that the development of virtue takes many years, through steady discipline and closeness with God. Home and church have a lot to do with it; school, much less. The implications are not difficult to draw.

J. BUDZISZEWSKI
Austin, TX

WESTERN UNION

IN JOHN PODHORETZ'S COMMENT on Las Vegas ("Unironic America," March 26), he writes that impressionist Danny Gans "will probably never get an HBO special or a one-man show on Broadway . . . because his act doesn't have any kind of edge."

Actually, Gans appeared on Broadway in 1995. The Associated Press reviewer praised Gans's talent and likability but said his act was much better suited "for a relaxed nightclub setting, preferably after you have had a couple of drinks and are ready to put up with the assembly-line format of quickly listening to one famous voice after another."

While Podhoretz mainly focuses on those who vacation in Las Vegas, he notes that, on the electoral map, "Las Vegas was Bush Red." Actually, Las Vegas and surrounding Clark County voted for Al Gore, while the state went for Bush. After all, Las Vegas—the capital of "Unironic America"—is the fastest-growing union town in the country.

NORMAN ODER
Brooklyn, NY

PAYCHECKMATE

JEFF JACOBY AND MICHELLE MALKIN are correct in arguing that "paycheck protection" statutes will be easily evaded by union officials intent on preserving their power to spend the dues money of the workers they "represent" for political purposes ("One Cheer for Paycheck Protection," March 26). But even a national right-to-work statute does not go far enough. The ultimate source of all the damage that Big Labor does is the National Labor Relations Act. The core of the NLRA is its exclusive representation provision that enshrines a union, once voted in by a majority, as the sole bargaining representative for all the workers in the "unit," even those who prefer to deal directly with management themselves.

Unions ought to have to sell their services on an individual, voluntary basis just as other service businesses do. Until we get rid of the NLRA, they will continue to act as the worst sort of monopolists. Repeal of the NLRA should be our long-term goal.

GEORGE C. LEEF
Raleigh, NC

THE GOOD FIGHT

April W. Susky ("Correspondence," March 19) is certainly right that Harvey Mansfield's change from his long practice of issuing grades as he sees them leaves the ranks of the informal fraternity of honest teachers thinner, even without our captain, for Mansfield has long fought the good fight.

Since he is approaching retirement, perhaps the loss is balanced by the publicity he has gained for us. No improvement in the honesty of the American professoriate is, however, likely until the gravest innovation of the late sixties is corrected—anonymous student evaluations of their teachers. These have pressured teachers into thinking that pleasing students before the end of a term is more important than educating them.

They who have files on you—and you, no files on them—will rule you, and not always pleasantly. The point was appreciated at one college where, all rational arguments having failed, a professor declared: "This is a great idea. So great it shouldn't be limited to teachers. Teachers should give anonymous evaluations of administrators, upon which their salary and their continuation in office will hang." The administration never uttered another word about forcing such anonymous collections of inexpert, uninformed, and not disinterested opinion upon the teachers.

MICHAEL PLATT
Cedar Springs, UT

GIVE CHINA A CHANCE?

AFTER READING Mike Murphy's opinions about China's bid to host the 2008 summer Olympics ("Beijing Goes for the Gold," March 19), I have to wonder if he has ever been to the country.

Like most Americans, I had many preconceived notions about mainland China, its people, their attitudes, and their lifestyles. These mostly media-generated images proved incredibly useless when I actually had the opportunity to spend time in China in 1998 and 2000.

From the big cities to the small villages, my wife and I met countless locals. They beamed with optimism while speaking of their developing market economy and more recently attained individual freedoms. Criticism of China's strong and often oppressive central government remains justified, and human rights violations assuredly do remain. But these should be dealt with by other means.

JIM GOTHREAU
Putnam, CT

the weekly Standard

How to Prevail on Taxes

President Bush can be excused for failing to propose instant tax relief to boost the sagging economy and cratering stock market. When he met with congressional Republicans at the White House last week, Bush had an explanation. While he's anxious about the livelihood of all 270 million Americans, he's chiefly "worried about three Americans," namely two Republicans and one Democrat whose votes he needs to win Senate approval of his budget. He doesn't want to tinker with his $1.6 billion tax cut plan just yet for fear of raising its overall cost and spooking the waverers. That could cause the defeat of the budget and jeopardize the tax cut. So as a tactical matter, he's holding back. Fine.

Perhaps the president should be forgiven as well for letting Democrats seize center stage on the tax issue, at least temporarily. They've leapfrogged him by noisily advocating a stimulus to jack up the economy now. They've done this by exploiting the flaw in Bush's tax pitch: He's touted his 10-year tax plan as a remedy for the current downturn but hasn't proposed enough in up-front tax relief to have much impact. Democrats want to trump Bush by giving every American who pays federal income or payroll taxes a $300 rebate (at a cost of $60 billion) as soon as possible. They'd also like to trim the lowest income tax rate from 15 percent to 10 percent immediately. Democratic senator Joe Lieberman goes further, calling for a cut in the capital gains tax rate from 20 percent to 15 percent. But few Democrats have joined him. The problem for Bush is Democrats may prevail on their stimulus package. That is not fine.

The Democratic tax offensive threatens the overriding goal of Bush's tax policy, which is to insure prosperity and reduce the size of government relative to the economy. How could this be jeopardized? Democrats want their stimulus to be the only tax relief passed this year. And if it wins, it may be. That would mean no across-the-board cuts in personal income tax rates now and no assurance of them in the future. It would leave the bulk of the surplus in Washington for Congress to spend. Bush acknowledged the threat last week in his speech at Western Michigan University. And he wisely insisted that his full tax cut be approved along with any stimulus. He can accomplish this by following the Ronald Reagan model.

In 1981, Reagan said the country faced an "economic Dunkirk" if tax rates weren't slashed. His tax cut would produce enduring economic well-being and, by the way, he added, it would also lift the country out of the recession. Reagan was ready to marry the pragmatic to the ideological, the political to the economic. He did what it took to prevent Democrats from outbidding his tax cuts, even if that meant swiping some of their proposals. Bush needs to do the same to bolster the near-term stimulus his tax cut offers and make it more politically attractive. So far, he's agreed only to make it retroactive to January 1, 2001. That's insufficient if Bush is to thwart Democrats. And the money is available—$93 billion in the non-Social Security surplus this year.

What should the president do? There's plenty to choose from. Starting to phase in the rate cuts in 2001, not 2002 as originally planned, would cost only $17 billion (though it would make the overall tax plan a bit costlier). This first phase would reduce each rate by 1 percentage point except the top rate, which would drop from 39.6 percent to 38 percent. Bush could also adopt the scheme passed by the House, which lowers the bottom rate from 15 percent to 12 percent. That would cost several billion more. Then, there's the child tax credit. The House voted to double the credit, and to begin phasing in the increase with a $100 credit on 2001 taxes. That, too, would add some billions. A capital gains tax cut, however, would cost nothing if enacted for two or three years, even in the normal scoring, which treats tax cuts as lost revenue.

There would still be room for the boldest step Bush could take: a Republican tax rebate. As luck would have it, House majority leader Dick Armey has already gotten the Joint Tax Committee to cost out potential rebates. A $600 rebate for all income taxpayers would cost $70 billion. Of course, adjustments downward in the rebate could be made so the $93 billion ceiling isn't exceeded. But the point is there's every reason Bush should grab the Democrats' idea of a rebate, add to it, and use it to win votes for his entire tax plan.

One can almost hear the White House's complaints: We don't need to take extreme measures since Democrats are gradually moving our way. Congressional Republicans may panic, but the president shouldn't. A rebate wouldn't have supply-side effects. And so on. But what Bush needs is for taxpayers, as they fill out their tax forms a year from now, to see they've already gotten a meaningful tax cut and to know more is on the way. If this happens, Bush will have succeeded as president, both economically and politically. Just like Reagan.

—Fred Barnes, for the Editors

What McCain Hath Wrought . . .

And why Bush will go along. BY JEFFREY BELL

WITH THURSDAY'S DEFEAT of a killer amendment on "non-severability," the McCain-Feingold reform of federal campaign finance has gained, for the first time, an air of inevitability. Still to come are final Senate passage (expected Monday, April 2), House action, a possible conference committee, and a signature-or-veto call by President Bush. Though each of these stages has its perils, it's becoming much harder to see how a final package resembling the Senate bill gets derailed.

The major new element to emerge in recent days is the apparent decision by George W. Bush to sign pretty much whatever reform bill arrives at his desk. As soon as that decision became clear, the two sides of the debate knew for sure that they were shooting with live bullets, and began their endgame of private negotiations on such tricky matters as the raising and inflation-indexing of campaign contribution limits.

What led Bush to his decision? Two things, one suspects. First, the increasing belief by analysts in both parties that McCain-Feingold, as amended in the Senate, is a net benefit to Republicans. Second, the dynamics of Bush's rivalry with John McCain.

The Republican party is the party of hard money, not of the party leadership-generated soft money that is on its way to being banned. Beginning in the 1960s, the combination of direct-mail fund-raising and a more populist issue profile gave the GOP an overwhelming predominance of small givers. When the $1,000 personal contribution limit was imposed in 1974, two things happened: the rise of Ronald Reagan, who was king of direct mail, and the switch of Republican party committees from the plutocrats of yore to a mass base of mainly small givers, which gave them massive financial superiority over the Democrats' candidate committees in the late 1970s and 1980s.

Two Democrats, Dukakis finance chairman Robert Farmer in 1988, and President Bill Clinton in 1995-96, turned the situation around by engineering the rise of soft money. Farmer was the first national fund-raiser to set up a special program for raising soft money (at the time restricted to "party-building" activities), while Clinton (at the urging of Dick Morris) raised and spent huge amounts of soft money on effective television commercials that turned the tide in the 1995 budget debate, and drove up the negative ratings of House speaker Newt Gingrich and eventual Republican nominee Bob Dole.

Clinton's success meant that restrictions on the use of soft money were effectively over. Any candidate relying on hard money could ask a contributor for no more than $1,000 in a given race, but could ask for a check for $100,000 from the same contributor for the same race, assuming the solicitor could use his party committee or another committee as a conduit. Given this huge discrepancy, it was inevitable that soft money would grow to dominate campaigns—and that the GOP advantage in a system of small givers would sooner or later disappear. Taking soft money off the table thus poses far more risks to Democrats than Republicans, which is why Senate minority leader Thomas Daschle looked so nervous last week.

Another affected interest group is incumbents of both parties. The badly needed increase in the individual contribution limit will help challengers, but not as much as it might have. To simply make up for the inflation of the past three decades, the individual ceiling should have been raised from $1,000 to around $3,500. But in the closest vote of the week, Nebraska senator Chuck Hagel lost a bid to raise the limit to $3,000 and index it for future inflation. Approval of an increase to only $2,000, plus indexing,

Jeffrey Bell is a principal of Capital City Partners, a Washington-based consulting firm.

Illustration by Thomas Fluharty

will allow incumbents to breathe a little easier, while the 84-16 margin of approval will make it difficult for the House to keep up its resistance to any raising of the limit, which in its own versions of McCain-Feingold it has never done. But even this modest hike could help some GOP congressional challengers in swing districts—which is why House minority leader Dick Gephardt was unhappy by week's end.

Bush's decision not to fight this legislation probably dates to the most frightening moments of his nomination fight. When McCain campaigned in New Hampshire early last year, his theme was campaign finance reform and little else. Following his landslide victory there, the Bush and McCain campaigns decamped to South Carolina, where Bush climbed back into the lead in three main ways: He proclaimed himself a "reformer with results," mobilized social conservatives against McCain, and succeeded in throwing McCain off message. Instead of "reform," the election became about Bob Jones University, McCain's alleged departure from the veterans' agenda, and the role of the religious Right. This did not prove to be McCain's ideal turf, to put it mildly.

A presidential veto of McCain-Feingold, no matter on what grounds, would have threatened to leave Bush as a "reformer without results." It was the one thing that would have restored McCain to his most potent incarnation, the "man against the machine" who triumphed in New Hampshire. Meanwhile, conservative legislators and spokesmen who have fought McCain-Feingold are unlikely to break with Bush at a time when he is perceived to be leaning their way in most other areas. Much as they dislike McCain-Feingold, they dislike John McCain even more.

Bush's move to neutralize his rival's signature issue leaves McCain with new stature as a legislator, but with a profound political dilemma. The other issues on which McCain has chosen to challenge Bush—patients' bill of rights, gun control, size of the tax cut—are fairly conventional components of the liberal agenda.

Campaign finance reform, disliked as it is by conservative leaders, is the one issue that generated large numbers of GOP primary voters, not to mention the big crossover vote. Unless McCain finds a way to diversify his issue mix, he risks being contained by the Bush team as this generation's John Anderson—a man of refreshing style loved by the press, but much too liberal for Republican primary voters and with too Democratic-sounding a message to establish an independent base should he decide to bolt the party.

So: On policy, an undeniable triumph for John McCain. In politics, his move. ♦

Michael Ramirez

'The Sopranos' and Its Groupies

The most ballyhooed show you've never seen.

BY ANDREW FERGUSON

THE *SOPRANOS* airs the fourth, or maybe the fifth, episode of its television season this Sunday. Or is it the sixth? It's very hard to keep track. In any case, the show is still sailing along on an updraft of favorable publicity that is extraordinary even by the standards of television, where hallucinatory embellishment and repetition are basic communication strategies. The coverage and critical notices that swarmed over the show's season premiere, when it debuted on the cable channel HBO four or five or six weeks ago, read more like advertising than journalism. And there's no sign of a trailing off.

The Sopranos is a certified cultural phenomenon, according to the public prints. Last week alone came a cover story in *Newsweek*, yet another feature in *USA Today*, a gushy valentine in *GQ*, and a lengthy chin-puller in the *New Yorker*, all of them written in tones of undying appreciation. I don't know about you, but I think that unanimity on this scale, especially among the skeptical, fiercely independent minds that enliven our nation's major newspapers and glossy magazines, should make everyone else suspicious. Aren't there any people out there who don't like *The Sopranos*?

As a matter of fact, there are such people, tons of them, and their existence is now one of the great unreported stories of American journalism. And I'm not just referring to people who've seen *The Sopranos* and didn't think it was particularly worth watching, though I'm sure such viewers exist. I'm referring to people who don't like *The Sopranos*—and who, for that matter, don't dislike it, either—because they've never seen it.

Even as I write that sentence I can imagine hundreds of heads snapping upright in dozens of newsrooms, eyes blinking furiously, faces glancing at

one another with looks of panic or disbelief or incomprehension, as though the floor had suddenly lurched upward. *There are . . . people . . . who have never . . . seen* The Sopranos*?*

Yes, yes, yes! Tons of them, as I say. Now, there's a pretty good reason for this, and it has nothing to do, at least directly, with the chronic unhipness of the American people, or with the unconscionable influence of money in our political system, or even with the hidden machinations of the religious right. It's much simpler: *The Sopranos* is on HBO, one of the many premium subscription channels offered by cable companies, and there are people who don't pay the premium to subscribe to HBO. I did some checking. There are about 103 million American households that contain, for better or worse, a functioning television set. About two-thirds of those households get cable service, and about half of those cable-wired households—35 million or so—pay the extra money to receive access to HBO in a package with other premium channels. That's a lot of people, of course, and the programmers and marketers at HBO should be very happy with their success. I'm very happy for them, too.

But still. Put this the other way round: A very large majority of Americans don't even have access to HBO and therefore, of course, to *The Sopranos*. It costs money to watch *The Sopranos*—an extra 200 dollars or more a year for people who already get cable, and much more than that for people who would have to initiate cable service and then add the premium channels to boot. Difficult as it is for some of us to believe, most people in the United States have chosen not to spend the extra money. What this means is that, relative to the universe of TV watchers, *The Sopranos* isn't being seen by very many people. On any given night in prime time, 80 million Americans or more will be staring at the television in a futile attempt to obliterate the piled-up frustrations and petty resentments and failed dreams that constitute their pathetic little lives. Or maybe they're just watching TV to pass the time. Whichever. The important point is, not many of them are watching *The Sopranos*, which on a typical Sunday will be seen by roughly 8 million viewers—or one out of ten of the total.

This makes it a great triumph for HBO, but only a middling success measured against the standards of network commercial television. For network TV, a smash superboffo megahit—excuse the technical terminology—would be *Survivor*, the sadistic reality show that will sometimes

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snag 40 million viewers or more. On its face, then, *The Sopranos*'s 8 million looks like small potatoes.

But what potatoes! Among the couch spuds will be (it's safe to say) the entire combined editorial and business staffs of *GQ*, *Newsweek*, the *New Yorker*, and so on, and the staffs, excluding paperboys, of every sizable newspaper from the *New York Times* down to the New Orleans *Times-Picayune*. And all of them (likewise safe to say) seem oblivious to the possibility that anyone else is *not* watching. They continue to write their stories about their particular entertainment obsession, all of which assume that *The Sopranos* is a mass phenomenon on the order of, say, the televised Olympics or a runaway hit movie like *Titanic*. But of course it isn't.

The saturation coverage of *The Sopranos* is another instance of a cultural development that has become increasingly un-ignorable, though still stubbornly ignored. Along with the rest of the American elite—"the top one percent," to borrow a useful figure of speech—the mainstream organs of opinion and news have detached themselves from the common life to a degree we haven't seen in many years. It should go without saying that just about every subject television touches it renders idiotic—think of politics brought to you by *Hardball*, high finance brought to you by CNBC, even weather brought to you by the hysterics on the Weather Channel—but once upon a time you could say this in its defense: TV created a kind of shared experience for the country at large. We all trusted Walter Cronkite, we all laughed at *Laugh-In*, we all accepted Ed Sullivan's taste. The wealthy and the working class, the banker and the baker: They all watched the same crap.

Not any more. *The Sopranos* is the entertainment equivalent of the gated community. The well-to-do now retreat to their own corner of the television world, with the obliviousness that has always been a hallmark of the rich and privileged. Tony Soprano may be fun to watch, he may even be great TV, but he's no Ed Sullivan. ♦

Seattle As Metaphor

The battle, the rattle, and now the skedaddle.

BY PHILIP GOLD

Seattle

SOMETHING HAS ENDED out here. It's not quite clear what, but it's got some nasty metaphoric aspects.

We built a glorious new baseball stadium. Our best players left—Randy Johnson by involuntary deal-him-while-he's-still-worth-something trade, Ken Griffey Jr. to be home with Dad in Cincinnati, A-Rod for a quarter-billion (plus incentives) to bang about in Texas.

We're building a glorious new football stadium for one of the most playoff-averse teams in the NFL. Had Seahawks owner Paul Allen taken the proceeds from his one-day earnings the last time Microsoft's stock split, he could have built two stadiums. But no; he just funded the special referendum that permitted We the People to finance the facility. He saved his money to build the Experience Music Project, his tribute to Jimi Hendrix, a building in the shape of a broken guitar, down near the Space Needle that Ahmed Ressam wanted to blow up last Y2K Eve.

That big earthquake last month rather got our attention. And our

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juice is going south. Not so long ago, we worried that a race of barbarians known as "Californicators" would overwhelm us. Now they stay where they are and exact tribute in the form of electricity. A couple of days after the "Rattle in Seattle," the *Seattle Times* ran a letter from San Francisco: "Send more electricity or we send more earthquakes. You have been warned."

Speaking of local newspapers, we've got two in the morning, allegedly engaged in an old-fashioned newspaper war . . . although under an old joint operating agreement, the *Post-Intelligencer* could vanish tomorrow and continue making money for the Hearst chain till Britney Spears draws Medicare. The war was interrupted by a long strike at both papers. The strikers howled *unfair*, then waited for the popular support that never came. Management and non-strikers put out the papers and gave them away. Mayor Paul Schell, an old '60s protester and state-of-the-art imperious liberal, refused to grant or let his staff grant interviews because he felt that would constitute crossing a picket line. When city lawyers informed him that would constitute taking sides in a labor dispute, he okayed discreet liaisons between his staff and the press.

Now Boeing's leaving. Just the corporate headquarters, although the manufacturing exodus has also started. Minutes after the announcement, Mayor Schell was on the air, assuring everyone that he'd put a call in to Boeing CEO Phil Condit. "I know him well," the mayor said, then added, "Maybe not as well as I thought."

Things have been going this way for awhile. It's been more than a year now since the World Trade Organization riots, the "Battle in Seattle," the first of the micro-intifadas in defiance of globalization and whatever else anyone cared to protest. Things got out of hand because Mayor Schell apparently believed that the "good protesters" could control the crazies better than the cops. This was, of course, before organized labor marched in solidarity with the topless lesbians (or was it the other way round?) and the radical lawyers set up street-corner cardtables, recruiting for their class-action lawsuits. Were you brutalized by the police? Do you think you were brutalized? Do you wish you'd been brutalized? (I covered the fracas by going underground. I posed as a member of the Towhomit Tribe, as in "To Whom It May Concern." Our tribal motto: "Of course we're concerned. We're Towhomit!")

Microsoft may be busted up. But they're not leaving . . . not yet. When the verdict came down, Canada—well, some folks in Vancouver—indicated that Bill Gates would be welcome to move north. The offer's still open.

We celebrated Mardi Gras this year with rioting in Pioneer Square, including one death. The police did nothing for several hours. Mayor Schell defended the inaction. Local TV played videos of black gangs attacking whites. A group of black clergy protested the broadcasts as racist, then awaited the popular support that never came.

How badly has the dot-com meltdown, including that of the local Mother Dot, Amazon, hurt? We won't know for sure until the Chardonnay consumption reports come out. For the moment, the local media are reporting that the real estate market is still solid, but the "Price Reduced" signs are going up here and there, and you can now find spaces at the more fashionable Park & Rides. To help restore Pioneer Square, Mayor Schell has instituted free parking on Saturdays. Paul Schell is running for reelection.

And the list could go on, but let's just cut to the Metaphor. Something has changed here. This is more than the latest iteration of Seattle's traditional boom and bust cycle. And it goes beyond the overdue realization that man does not live by IPOs alone, that the earth sometimes quakes, and that crowds tend to behave like crowds and gangs like gangs. It's more diffuse.

The 1990s were good to Seattle. But we made two mistakes. First, we did successful things. After a while, we began to think that things would succeed because we did them. Bad juju, when the times start changing. Second, we became a city no longer little, yet ignorant of how to be big. We did not understand that when you're ignorant of how to be big and not everybody loves you, trouble ensues.

After all, what could go wrong? The *Federales* won't take on Microsoft. They wouldn't dare. Terrorists blow up the Space Needle? Why would they? This is such a nice place. Old Man Boeing would rise from his grave if his successors ever dreamt of leaving. Riots and murders in the streets? We're much too civil for that. And away with the crabbed old notion that to succeed in business you have to do something that turns a profit. This is the Information Age, and We're the Information.

Yes, the '90s were good to Seattle. But we're beginning to wonder, in a dim, annoying, 3:00 A.M. sort of way, whether maybe, just maybe, what we built is turning out to be less than the sum of its parts, and whether historians will someday describe those good years as "The Wasted Nineties." Stars leave; stuff happens. The old liberal pieties no longer seem so affordable, the tactics and insults no longer so availing. Someone (Plato, I think) once defined courage as "endurance of the soul." How much endurance will be needed soon? And from what kind of soul will it come?

And perhaps Americans are starting to wonder the same, about and for the nation as a whole. Was it in fact the Wasted Nineties? How much endurance will be needed now? And from what kind of soul will it come?

Meanwhile, it seems we've had too much good weather these last few years. Governor Gary Locke has declared an official drought. Water ain't going over the hydro dams like it once did. Come summer, we may not have enough juice to pay tribute to the barbarians.

More earthquakes? ♦

Bob Smith's Last Hurrah?

The next Republican senator from New Hampshire may be a Sununu. **BY BERNADETTE MALONE**

Manchester, New Hampshire

IN THE PAST, counting Bob Smith out has been a mistake. The embattled Republican senator from New Hampshire—a plain-spoken, tireless defender of the Second Amendment, unborn babies, and Elián González's Miami relatives—survived naval service in the Gulf of Tonkin from 1965 to 1967. He weathered tough primary races for his House seat in the early 1980s.

He withstood a near-death experience at the hands of former U.S. representative Dick Swett in the 1996 Senate race. (The networks prematurely declared Smith the loser, and had to retract their reports late that Election Night.)

He left the Republican party in disgust, started to run for president as an Independent, rejoined the Republican party, and became a powerful committee chairman—all during the summer and fall of 1999.

So anyone who decides Smith can't win in 2002 because his polling numbers are poor (37 percent approval among state voters, according to a recent Becker Institute poll, the worst of any of the 34 senators facing reelection next year) either underestimates Bob Smith—or has noticed something different about him this time around.

Indeed, for the first time in his political career, it seems many of Bob Smith's friends don't want him to run again—both for his own good, and for the good of a Republican party that barely controls the Senate. To compensate for this lack of confidence from his own team, the rock-ribbed Reaganite is using his chairmanship of the Senate Environment and Public Works committee to bring goodies back to New Hampshire. The once frugal politician has nailed down grants for downtown theaters and airport access roads in Manchester, the state's largest city.

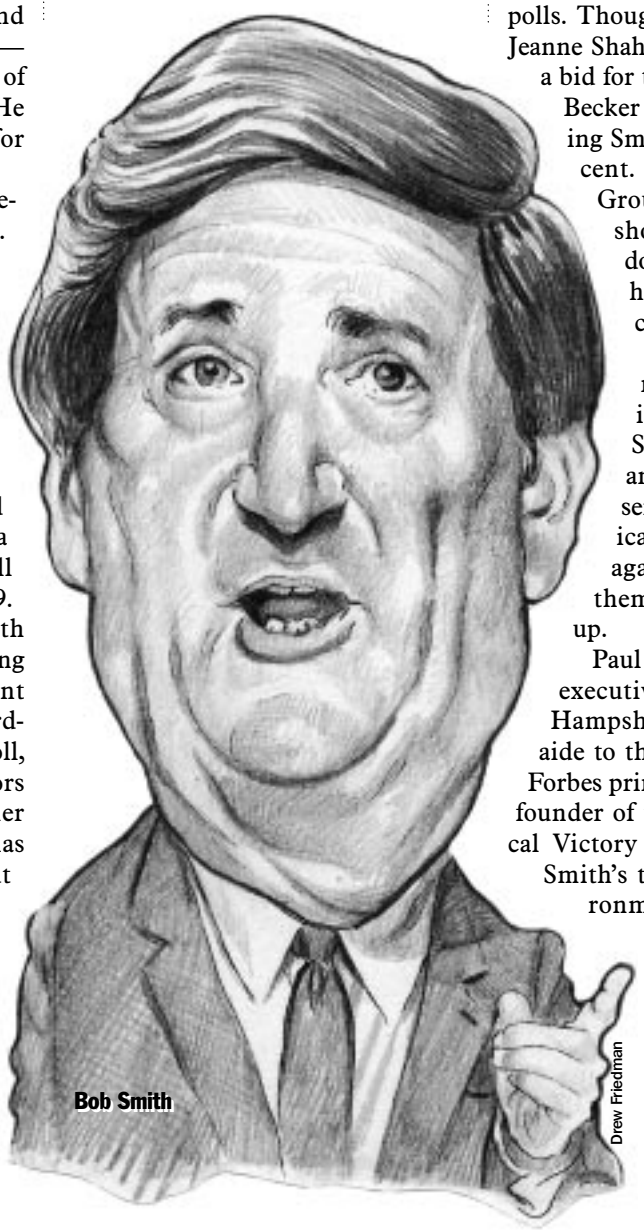
In addition to pork, Smith is using his chairmanship to side with environmentalists against President George W. Bush's energy policy, which includes drilling for oil in Alaska. Smith has also banded with Al Gore and those who want to classify carbon dioxide emissions from power plants as pollutants.

It's hard to explain Smith's turn to the left without looking at more polls. Though Democratic governor Jeanne Shaheen has not yet declared a bid for the Senate, a mid-March Becker poll showed her defeating Smith 51 percent to 35 percent. An American Research Group poll in January showed a smaller but still double-digit lead for Shaheen over Smith: 48 percent to 38 percent.

Long before these numbers began circulating, many were hoping Smith would step aside and allow a different conservative—with less political baggage—to run against Shaheen. Some of them have started speaking up.

Paul Young of Exeter, former executive director of the New Hampshire Republican party, aide to the Jack Kemp and Steve Forbes primary campaigns, and cofounder of the Conservative Political Victory Fund, is disturbed by Smith's turn to the left on environmental issues and is no longer supporting his reelection.

Says Young: "I had great hope in the beginning of Bob Smith's chairmanship that he'd come back to New Hampshire, reshape his image, and over-



Bob Smith

Drew Friedman

Bernadette Malone is editorial page editor of the Union Leader and New Hampshire Sunday News *in Manchester, New Hampshire.*

come his negatives. A lot of conservatives shared that hope. But those negatives aren't going away, and time is running out. John Sununu may be our last chance to save the seat."

Young's gentle reproach is typical of New Hampshire conservatives. Most of them love Smith for all his work for their cherished causes, yet are hoping he'll step aside for John E. Sununu, congressman from the eastern district and son of the former governor and White House chief of staff. With Sununu's 100 percent rating from National Right to Life and his "A" from the National Rifle Association, he's clearly a possible alternative to Smith. Al Rubega, president of Gun Owners of New Hampshire, says he'll stand by Smith, but adds, "I'm a huge supporter of both of them."

Karen Testerman, who directed Gary Bauer's New Hampshire campaign in 2000, appreciates Bob Smith's commitment on abortion. But she also sees how his changing policies on the environment are jeopardizing his effectiveness. "He's upset a lot of people and he's splitting his base," says Testerman, now the president of Cornerstone Policy Research, New Hampshire's family policy council.

"He can't afford to split his base. He barely won last time," says Testerman with concern.

Dave Carney of Hancock, who has joined with conservative former congressman Chuck Douglas in creating *draftsununu.com*, thinks Smith's overambitious presidential bid—which began with little home-state support and ended with less—is to blame for his loss of popularity in New Hampshire. With a 50-50 split in the Senate, explains Carney, many Republicans are disinclined to carry Bob Smith over the finish line again.

Smith's former allies in Washington tend to be harsher: "Bob Smith betrayed the conservative movement by whoring after the environmentalists, and he doesn't have the candlepower to realize they're not going to lift a finger for him [in 2002]," asserts Grover Norquist, president of Americans for Tax Reform in Washington, D.C.

Norquist's grass-roots organization always gave high marks to Smith, one of a handful in the Senate with the courage to oppose higher taxes and more regulations. But combine Smith's weakness at home with his new policy proposals, and Norquist is exasperated. "The Republican party and the conservative movement should say, 'Thank you very much; it's time for you to retire.'"

When Smith took over the committee on the environment, he promised to listen to both sides of the debate. But his courtship of the Green crowd took Norquist and others by surprise. "He's basically decided to do whatever it takes to get reelected in 2002," remarks Myron Ebell of the Competitive Enterprise Institute, the think tank whose science debunks global warming hype. "It will alienate his base supporters, but the environmentalists will never support him over a Democrat," Ebell says.

Most New Hampshire conservatives love Bob Smith, but tepid backing may be all he can expect this year from his old friends, as John E. Sununu ponders a 2002 primary challenge.

A Republican in good standing with his own party could gamble that a disaffected conservative base has no one else to support in an election. That's because Republicans would protect such a member from an ugly primary battle. But no one has stepped forward to dissuade Sununu from challenging Smith.

After Sununu told John DiStaso of the Manchester *Union Leader* on March 21 that he is considering running for the Senate to preserve the Republican majority, the two other members of New Hampshire's congressional delegation—senator Judd Gregg and representative Charlie Bass—declined to comment. The silence was deafening.

The next day, Senate majority leader Trent Lott appeared with Smith at a pre-scheduled fund-raiser in Concord. Though Lott is said to have great affection for Smith, he stopped far short of endorsing his colleague for reelection. He told DiStaso, "[National Republicans] are generally supportive of our sitting incumbent senators. Now, if the contest is between an incumbent and a credible opponent, you certainly have to be considerate of that."

Then Lott went on to call Sununu "an outstanding congressman who does a great job in the House." Is it a stretch to infer Lott thinks Sununu is that "credible opponent"?

Sununu garners support from both wings of the Republican party in New Hampshire. Former governor Steve Merrill, a moderate conservative, and former senator Warren Rudman, a liberal Republican, rushed to endorse Sununu last month.

The only major statewide Republican to counter with an endorsement for Smith was former senator Gordon Humphrey—the third consecutive candidate Jeanne Shaheen has devoured in a gubernatorial election. Smith and Humphrey are the oldest of friends, with a political relationship that dates back to the early 1980s. "[Smith] had the guts to support me [in 2000], so I'm going to have the guts to support him," Humphrey told John DiStaso.

"Guts?"

Such tepid backing may be the best Smith can expect from his old friends. And if his own friends aren't crazy about his running again, the time may soon come to count out Bob Smith. ♦

Scholar, Strategist, Gentleman

Alvin H. Bernstein, 1939-2001.

BY GARY SCHMITT

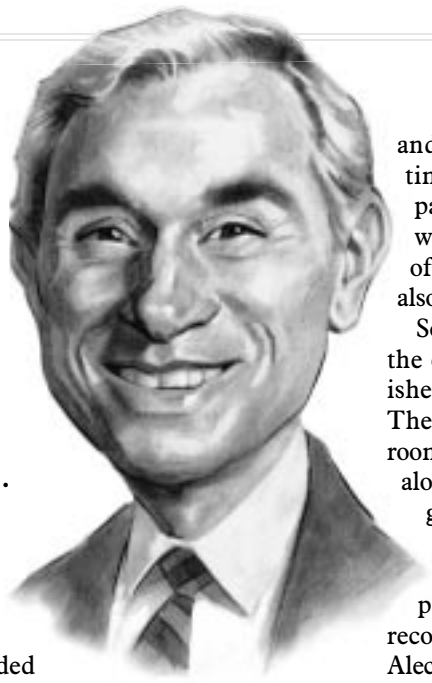


Illustration by Darren Gygi

TWO WEEKS AGO, Alvin Bernstein, a close friend, died. Al had been sick and had been recently diagnosed with cancer. Even so, his friends all expected him to wage a battle with the disease and, given his will, win it. But an infection took him suddenly, and many of us were left with the miserable feeling that we hadn't gotten our good-byes in and our thank yous said.

Al was a remarkable guy. A scholar of ancient history educated at Cornell and Oxford, he taught at Cornell, Yale, and in recent years the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. He also headed up some of the government's most important military educational institutions, chairing the strategy department at the Naval War College, directing the National Defense University's Institute for National Strategic Studies, and leading the Pentagon's George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, a school for civilian and military officials from the former Warsaw Pact that Al virtually created from the ground up.

But he was far more than an impressive résumé. Handsome and athletic, he was, as a woman friend once said, "the walking, talking definition of the word 'charming.'" He was also the guy who, as a young professor at Cornell in 1969, amidst the chaos of the student uprising and the university administration's surrender, could be found in the weight room, surrounded by football players and other students, counseling them on the true meaning of "the academy" and the kind of courage required to sustain it.

But maybe more than anything, Al loved good conversation—whether about his family, his friends, or foreign policy.

As the fact of his death sank in, I kept thinking of the last time a group of his friends had gotten together. The occasion was a going-away party for a long-time buddy. We spent an afternoon and evening watching a favorite video (*Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*), eating and drinking, and debating everything under the sun: the state of pro football, the Punic Wars, and Al's interpretation of the *Godfather* movies. It was on the ride back into town that evening that he told a story from his graduate days at Oxford in the early 1960s.

It was spring, and the university was closing down for a few weeks. With little money in his pocket to pay for lodging and food, Al decided to drive to Spain, where even the best hotel was relatively cheap and there was plenty of sun. After the long drive through France, he arrived at his hotel late in the afternoon tired and hungry. It was too early for the dining room to open, so Al headed out back to the patio to enjoy the setting sun and unwind with a glass of wine.

Blinded at first by the sun, Al eventually noticed a couple—an older man and a much younger woman—sitting at the other end of the hotel patio. After a bit, Al noticed the woman looking his way every so often. She was striking, he said, but also a bit "hippy."

Soon the dining room opened, and the couple headed off to eat. Al finished his wine and went in as well. The maître d' seated him across the room from the older man, now dining alone. While Al was still eating, the gentleman rose from his table, picked up his glasses, and headed out of the room. Leaving, he passed Al's table. Al looked up and recognized the famous British actor Alec Guinness.

After Al finished his dinner, he went out to the lobby and asked the concierge for a notepad and a pen. Though not the fawning type, he wrote a short note to the British star saying how much he'd enjoyed his work and thanking him for many hours of entertainment over the years. Al gave the note to the clerk at the desk to pass along to the actor and went up to his room.

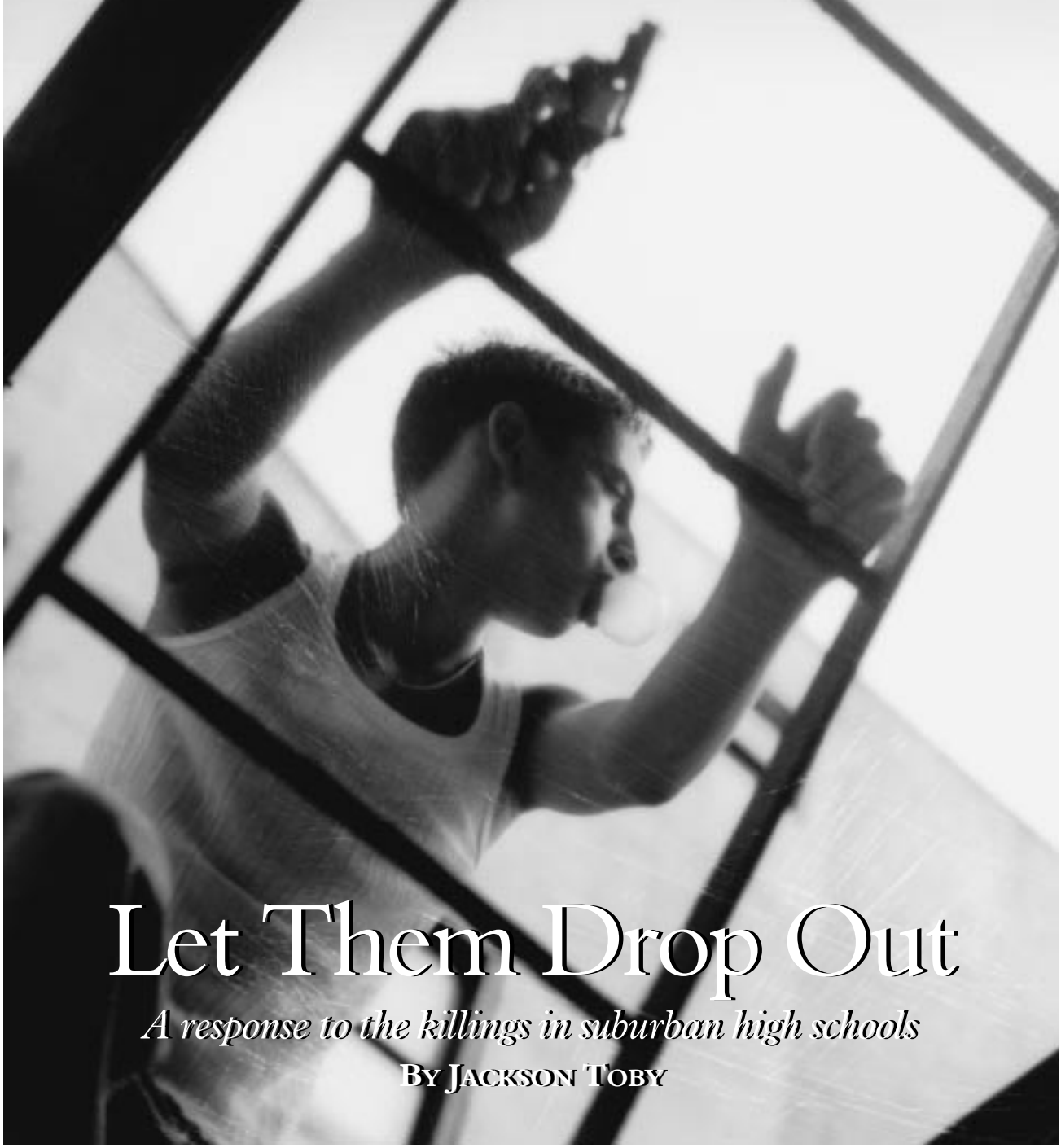
The next morning, Al was awakened by a phone call. A voice asked if this was "Alvin Bernstein." When Al said yes, the voice said, "Well, this is Alec Guinness, and I want to thank you for your kind words." The actor then went on to explain that he was in Spain shooting a movie but had a day off. Would Al want to join him to go touring?

So Al spent the day with Alec Guinness, knocking around the surrounding villages and visiting Moorish castles. According to Al, Guinness was dignified but not in the least ostentatious; he was easy to converse with and free with a laugh—the perfect companion.

In the final lines of his 1986 memoir, *Blessings in Disguise*, looking back on a life filled with successes, Guinness wrote: "Of one thing I can boast; I am unaware of ever having lost a friend." I'm sure Al, had he ever been inclined to boast, could have made that claim as well.

Oh, and the woman at the hotel—it was Kim Novak. ♦

Gary Schmitt is executive director of the Project for the New American Century



Let Them Drop Out

A response to the killings in suburban high schools

By Jackson Toby

Why do white middle-class kids from seemingly normal families kill their classmates in suburban high schools like Columbine, Santana, and Granite Hills? How can these crimes be stopped? For answers, we should look to the schools where such crimes almost never happen—bad inner-city schools. For although mass murders inside of American schools are statistically very, very rare, when they do occur, they are more likely to take place in good suburban schools than in bad inner-city schools.

Why should excellent schools incubate mass murderers? Because the more exalted the reputation of a school, the worse it is for a student who feels trapped in such a school. *Trapped?* Yes, students in excellent schools are learning what they need to know to get in to selective colleges and, ultimately, to land well-paid jobs in our information-oriented society. But still they can feel miserable for what adults may consider trivial reasons: the teasing of classmates, a poor body-image, athletic or romantic failures, unpopularity. What's more, they can't escape their

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misery because, even if they have passed the age when state laws no longer compel school attendance, dropping out of a Columbine or a Santana High School is culturally unacceptable. Their parents would be horrified. Their friends would be bewildered. Their teachers would be shocked. Consequently it is unthinkable and therefore undoable. Better to kill people and commit suicide?

No. Most of the time such students just suffer in silence, and maybe a semester later the world brightens. They lose weight and become more attractive. Or maybe they develop a skill that makes them more popular. But sometimes they take desperate measures to cope with what they perceive as a desperate situation. They steal guns and try to kill as many people as possible at their school. That is what happened at Columbine High School and the handful of other suburban and rural schools that have experienced senseless massacres in recent years.

There are occasional murders in inner-city high schools, but they are nothing like suburban school shootings. In February 1992, for example, a black teenager fatally shot two of his classmates in the hallway of Thomas Jefferson High School in Brooklyn an hour before the mayor of New York City at the time, David Dinkins, was to deliver a speech at a school assembly telling students that they had the power to break free of the violence and drugs of their neighborhoods. Why did this make so little news? Probably because the 15-year-old shooter was on probation for a street robbery two years earlier to which he had pleaded guilty. And he was carrying out a grudge murder against a former partner in crime. Had the shooting not taken place in the high school, it might well have occurred on the streets of a neighborhood where, alas, quarrels frequently escalate into lethal violence; on those streets more than a dozen Thomas Jefferson students had been killed within recent memory.

But why are inner-city high schools themselves, though located in violent neighborhoods and plagued by much more everyday school violence, far less likely to experience the promiscuous mass murders of successful suburban schools like Columbine, Santana, and Granite Hills? The explanation lies in the different causes of school violence. Everyday school violence is fostered when students do not perceive school as contributing to their futures, have little incentive to be respectful to their teachers or to try to please them, and must cope with being compelled to spend a good part of their time in an environment they dislike. Some become truants. Some clown around for the amusement of their friends and themselves. Some come to school drunk or high. Some wander the halls looking for friends to speak with or enemies to fight. Some assault other kids or extort money or valuables from them, partly for profit but also for kicks. Everyday school violence results from internal dropouts—students going through the motions of education, unconvinced that education will lead anywhere. But everyday school violence is tame stuff compared with the explosive violence that sometimes erupts in middle-class schools.

Why so tame? Because escape is possible before frustration reaches a flashpoint. These internal dropouts become chronic truants or actual dropouts; schoolwork does not enjoy sufficient parental or peer group support to keep them in class. They are less trapped than middle-class kids in suburban schools. The silver lining to a high dropout and a high truancy rate in inner-city schools is that no one need reach the breaking point that occurs occasionally in suburban high schools like Columbine.

True, the high dropout rate of the inner city is widely deplored, and inner-city kids, too, are under pressure to remain enrolled whether they find school meaningful or not: formal pressure from compulsory attendance laws, informal dropout-prevention arguments from teachers, parents, and the larger society, threats of depriving dropouts of driver's licenses or welfare benefits, and incentives like part-time jobs, promises to finance college attendance, and even money payments. For instance, the Red Bank Regional High School in Little Silver, New Jersey, has used a grant of $108,000 from the Labor Department to pay potential dropouts $25 a week to stay in school, attending regularly, and bringing books and pencils to class. Perhaps fortunately, these programs are not very successful; the dropout rate in such schools is high. If they were more successful—that is, retaining more reluctantly enrolled students—the violence rate of inner-city high schools, already too high, might explode.

So how can suburban school massacres be prevented? The conventional wisdom relies on one or both of two remedies: (1) Identify possible mass murderers early and send them for psychotherapy; (2) Prevent lethal weapons from getting into the hands of kids.

Neither of these remedies looks practical. True, some desperate kids talk about their fantasy of shooting up the school. But most of the time this is idle chatter—false positives, as researchers call them. And some mass murderers do not signal their intention to anybody, including the psychotherapists they are already seeing. As for keeping lethal weapons where kids cannot get at them, remember that Americans own more than 200,000,000 guns for

hunting, target practice, self-defense, and collecting. Why should kids be less likely to get hold of them for school murders than adults are for more common crimes like armed robberies and fatal quarrels?

A more practical approach to preventing *some* mass murders at school would be to give children who are miserable at school for whatever reason more options. For those old enough to drop out and go to work, make it legitimate to stop school for a while and try a job in the real world. (The Swedes speak of kids being "school-tired" and do not stigmatize those who leave for a time-out; most eventually return a year or two later.) In the torrent of words commenting on the murders at Columbine in Littleton, Colorado, an obvious question was not raised: Why, if Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold were so miserable at school, didn't they simply drop out and try a job in a nearby ski resort?

The first step in legitimating leaving school temporarily is to dispel two myths. One myth is that dropping out is tantamount to suicide because dropouts are doomed to live an economically and culturally impoverished life. What kind of job can a dropout get? Flipping hamburgers at the minimum wage? Fast-food restaurants have a reputation for offering dead-end jobs, yet they are actually a major trainer of the poorly educated for jobs that lead into the middle class. McDonald's is more successful at training egocentric teenagers, including dropouts, to become workers good enough to move on to better jobs than most government training programs. Of course, some have to be fired and others quit. But those teenage employees who stick it out learn to be less shy with other people, to cooperate with fellow workers, to smile even in the face of customer abuse, to say, "Thank you; please come again," to get to work on time, and to work hard and fast.

McDonald's is more successful than most government training programs at turning egocentric teenagers, including dropouts, into workers good enough to move on to better jobs.

The second myth is that students who leave school before graduating will generate a crime wave. Two longitudinal studies exploded that myth a generation ago: a national study of adolescents conducted by researchers from the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan (*Dropping Out: Problem or Symptom?*) and a study of California youths conducted by two distinguished criminologists (*Delinquency and Dropout*). Both studies followed students carefully throughout their high school years and beyond, gathering delinquency data covering the entire time period, and independently reaching the same conclusion: While it is true that high school dropouts have a higher crime rate than students who graduate, the higher delinquency rate *precedes* their dropping out of school. In the national study, the rate remained at the same high level after the students dropped out of school; in the California study, delinquency actually *declined* somewhat after the students left. Why didn't their criminality get worse after dropping out? We don't know for sure. Perhaps they could no longer tell their parents that they were going to school and consequently faced pressure to get a job. Those who did often found more responsible role models, and their behavior improved. Of course, some dropouts, already in trouble with the law, did not get jobs and continued a criminal way of life.

So, even apart from successful famous high school dropouts like Marilyn Monroe and George Gershwin, it does not seem that leaving school early is necessarily a career handicap. Formal education is not the only path to responsible adulthood. Furthermore, deciding not to complete high school is a revocable choice. The former governor of New Jersey, Jim Florio, dropped out of high school at 17, joined the Navy, realized that lack of education was a handicap, took the GED exam to obtain a high school degree, and eventually completed college and law school. Instead of locking the high school doors to prevent students from leaving and thereby inviting violence, we ought to let those who leave know that the doors are open when they are ready to return.

Yes, there are students too young to leave school, even temporarily, who feel trapped and miserable. School systems can make other educational choices more available for them. We have been gradually moving toward increasing options for the sake of educational effectiveness, and this development should help with the school violence problem, too. There already are alternative schools, charter schools, and private and parochial schools available through voucher programs. The guiding principle should be: Try not to trap kids, because trapped kids can become dangerous to their classmates, their teachers, and themselves. Suburban school massacres are rare; increased options for desperately unhappy kids could make them rarer. ♦

The End of the Party

One consequence of campaign finance reform is clear: The parties lose.

By David Brooks

One of the many virtues of the campaign finance reform debate was that it prompted a national reevaluation of the film career of Yul Brynner. Robert Byrd got this going when he rose on the floor of the Senate to discuss the vulgarity of political ads on TV. The extremely senior senator from West Virginia has trains of thought that are as jagged and irregular as the landscape of his home state, and before anybody knew what was happening, Sen. Byrd was discussing his favorite TV program, which is a BBC sitcom that runs on PBS called *Keeping Up Appearances*. It appeals to the undervalued 82-86-year-old demographic, and, as Sen. Byrd noted, it contains no sex.

Discourses on the tedium of Yul Brynner

Then Sen. Byrd's train of thought jumped another track and he offered the Senate his cinematic tastes. He has lived in Washington for 49 years, he said, but in all that time, he has seen only one movie. It was a Yul Brynner film, and Byrd was so bored he walked out in the middle. It must have been truly boring, because Sen. Byrd, who stays awake through his own speeches, has demonstrated a high tolerance for tedium.

But historians will be transfixed by the question, Which Yul Brynner film was it that managed to draw Sen. Byrd into the movie theater in the first place? Many will guess it must have been *The King and I*, Brynner's signature role. But remember that as the Senate's self-appointed expert on ancient history, Byrd has a taste for things historical, so it seems at least as likely that he was lured by one of Brynner's Cecil B. De Mille-type toga movies, such as *Solomon and Sheba* or even *The Ten Commandments*. In the latter, Brynner played the pharaoh Rameses, who went in for massive construction projects, just like Sen. Byrd.

After a few minutes, Byrd looked up from his little disquisition on the merits and demerits of movies versus public television. He wore a startled and quizzical expression, as if to say, "How did I get onto this? What am I doing here? What's happening to me?" No one could blame him for his confusion. Because with the likely passage of campaign finance reform, American politics is truly entering a new phase. The debate on it was merely a harbinger of things to come.

A distinctive feature of the campaign finance debate was the near-total absence from it of the party leaders, Trent Lott and Tom Daschle. Senator Lott especially seems to view the whole issue as if it were some sort of gross body organ that had inexplicably been tossed onto his dinner plate. So the discussion was not scripted from the top. It was open, free-flowing, and unpredictable. And in that, it was a precursor of the way politics will be if this bill does become law. For, as opponent Mitch McConnell made clear in one of the best speeches of this or any recent Senate debate, the McCain-Feingold law is going to decimate the power of the political parties.

The parties are mostly funded by soft money, and without soft money, the party committees will be weak. That could mean an end to party discipline as we know it. Right now, the parties are like Hollywood studios. They and their campaign committees have huge pots of money they can commit to various projects and candidates at election time. But that money will be gone. Either it won't go into politics, or, more likely, it will be funneled into politics through different channels. So members of Congress will not pay as high a price for flouting party discipline. We will see weird cross-party alliances,

Photos: AP / Wide World Photos

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exactly as we did throughout the campaign finance saga.

Another notable feature of the campaign finance reform debate was the deafening cheerleading by the media. The public as a whole is largely uninterested in the issue, but the big editorial pages covered it as if it were the invasion of Normandy. The media played a huge role in pushing this issue onto the agenda. That too is a precursor of things to come. For this law gives the media awesome power. In the last 60 days before an election, only two groups will be allowed to mention the names of candidates on radio and TV without restriction. The candidates themselves will be able to mention their own names, and journalists will be allowed to mention them (as will guests the journalists invite onto their programs). If you are a union leader, or a business leader, or a member of an interest group such as the NRA or the ACLU, it will be extremely difficult—and in many cases illegal—for you to take out ads mentioning candidates' names or showing their faces.

Against the "killing field" of television

Eventually, that could mean that big business groups, labor unions, and interest groups will buy up media properties and manipulate them to support their agendas. If the only people who can freely express themselves are the owners of newspapers and broadcast stations, then it makes sense to buy a newspaper or a station to get your ideas out. But in the next election cycle or two, before that happens, the current crop of reporters may have enormous influence on elections. That will probably push politics in a slightly liberal direction, and could outweigh the influence of the parts of the bill, such as the raising of the hard money limits, that favor Republicans and conservatives.

But it will also have a more immediate and profound effect. If free media become more important than paid media, then candidates will have to get even better at attracting free media attention. First, they'll have to get more hysterical. And, while the campaign finance debate was generally intelligent and substantive, it included some scary foreshadowings.

For example, Illinois senator Dick Durbin rose one day to talk about the stakes involved. He too was moved to offer his opinion of the quality of television programming. First he misquoted Newton Minow's comment that television was a "vast wasteland," then he deepened his critique, likening TV to the Cambodian holocaust: "Television has become a killing field. A killing field, because the people who run the television stations, the networks and local broadcasters, have forgotten the bottom line: their responsibility to the American people." As Tucker Carlson noted that evening on *The Spin Room*, Durbin could be accused of exaggeration: "A killing field. Go behind any television station. Big pile of skulls." But that's the kind of rhetoric it will take to get free coverage.

Second, candidates will have to build up melodramatic story lines. The coverage of this debate was dominated by a series of story lines: McCain vs. Bush, the relationship between McCain and Nebraska's Chuck Hagel, the supposed villainy of Sen. McConnell. Senators will practically have to hire screenwriters to come up with dramatic story lines if they want to get TV and radio attention.

Politicians whose lives are extended soap operas, like the Clintons and the Kennedys, will have a huge advantage. There was a perfect little soap opera moment during last week's debate that illustrated the sorts of sitcom-like episodes we'll be seeing more of.

At one point senator Ted Kennedy rose to condemn something called the Hatch Amendment, the substance of which has been lost in the sands of time. Throughout the debate Sen. Kennedy, like his liberal neighbor Paul Wellstone, displayed an ability to work himself into fits of high rhetorical fervor that were completely unrelated to the words that were coming out of his mouth. Imagine somebody reading a menu, going through the appetizer section in a calm sweet voice, and then suddenly and for no apparent reason reading the entrée options in a full rage, with spit flying and veins bulging.

The evils of the Hatch Amendment

That happened in the middle of Sen. Kennedy's speech in opposition to the Hatch Amendment. All of a sudden, a storm came down from the mountains, and Sen. Kennedy, whose jowls were buffed to an impressive shine that morning, started spewing vitriol at the suggestion made by the senator from Utah. It was not only a misguided amendment. It was an evil amendment. It was a dumb amendment. It was a poorly crafted amendment.

That really starched Sen. Hatch's collar. He rose to respond, his face white with rage (which for Sen. Hatch is

pretty white). "I don't need lectures from the distinguished senator from Massachusetts," Hatch bellowed a few times. Hatch sees himself as a tough fighter. He may look like a goody-goody, but he actually came up from nothing and had to fight for everything he's achieved. He was going to stick it to the spoiled rich boy; for a second it looked like there might be some Chappaquiddick reference coming round the bend.

The man who hugged Sen. Kennedy

But he couldn't keep it up. Hatch and Kennedy are actually close friends, and Hatch's anger was subsiding quickly. "I pay tribute to Sen. Kennedy. He represents his special interests very well. I wish we had someone on our side who could do that," said Hatch, his insults scaled down to the backhand variety. "I love the senator as few in this body do," Hatch continued. Then Sen. Kennedy strode across the floor (to the extent that Sen. Kennedy can stride) and gave Sen. Hatch a hug right in the middle of his speech. Senator Hatch started crying. He wiped a tear from his eye. This was the most emotional male hug since *La Cage aux folles*, and really a more graphic display of Sen. Kennedy's private side than many of us want to see. Many instinctively reached for their sick bags. But it is exactly the sort of Moment of S— (as the screenwriters call it) that can get you on the evening news.

Now, it would be a mistake to romanticize the current situation and make the forthcoming change in our politics out to be some sort of fall from grace. The decline of the party apparatchiks is not necessarily a terrible thing. Will the Democratic party be better or worse off if Terry McAuliffe has less influence? Probably better off. The party leaders are often hacks, subservient to corporate interests, who try to impose a mind-numbing uniformity on the parties. On the other hand, party governance does have its uses, as everybody since Edmund Burke has pointed out, and a Congress full of freelancers could be a disaster. It's hard to say right now whether the pre-McCain-Feingold world or the post-McCain-Feingold world is better for democracy.

Moreover, the declining importance of soft money donors and the rising importance of the people who control free media is not necessarily a dreadful development either. Under the current system, politicians spend huge amounts of time being money whores. They often spend several hours a day hitting up big donors. Under McCain-Feingold—I'm assuming for purposes of this article that it won't be struck down in the courts, a huge assumption—they will spend less time as money whores and more time as media whores. They will have to spend more time, as Sen. McCain does, flattering journalists and reporters and less time catering to lobbyists. Is that good or bad? I don't know. Pick your poison.

Two things are sure: This law will change the rules, and people who are desperate to be politicians will continue to do whatever it takes to get and keep their jobs.

Strangely enough, while these people may be inexplicable freaks on one level (who would want to live that way?), they are quite impressive on another level. For all its egomaniacal digressions and sitcom moments, the campaign finance debate was conducted at quite a high level. John Edwards of North Carolina was smart. So was Mike DeWine. So was Fred Thompson. So was Russ Feingold. Some of the best speeches were made by people who do not have the best reputations. For example, New Jersey's Robert Torricelli, who's famous for dating Bianca Jagger and being the subject of a growing fund-raising scandal, gave a series of extremely intelligent speeches. Every time Mitch McConnell rose he had a new bit of argument or information to share with his colleagues. This was in contrast to the Democratic floor manager, Chris Dodd, who operated under the principle that if an argument is worth making badly, it's worth making badly over and over again.

The good arguments didn't always prevail.

The good arguments didn't always win. I can scarcely remember seeing as one-sided a debate as the one that preceded the vote on "non-severability" (whether the whole bill should be voided if any part is struck down by the courts). The debaters in favor of non-severability crushed their opponents, if you judged strictly on debating points, and yet the amendment lost. At least it's comforting to know that while politics may be a bog, and we may be on the verge of trading in an old bog for a new one, at least there are still impressive people who for some odd reason are willing to devote their lives to this messy business. ♦

Commerce Uber Alles

When national security and profits collide, you can trust businessmen to be businessmen

By William R. Hawkins

Down through the centuries, trading nations have confronted the task of reconciling their commercial interests with national security—a task the United States faces with regard to China. And repeatedly, history has pointed to a great lesson: that private firms cannot be trusted to police their own dealings so as to avoid strengthening potential adversaries; and that no invisible hand keeps corporations aligned with their nation's objectives in security and foreign policy.

The 1930s present an exceptionally powerful demonstration of this rule. Edwin Black's recent *IBM and the Holocaust: The Strategic Alliance between Nazi Germany and America's Most Powerful Corporation* highlights how Hitler's regime used a new American technology—the IBM Hollerith punch card machine, a precursor to the computer—to organize slave labor and manage the death camps in which millions perished.

In the 1930s, Germany was IBM's largest overseas market. The relationship began in 1933 as Hitler came to power and continued well into World War II. IBM leased its machines to the regime, trained German officials to use them, and became the sole source of the billions of punch cards Hitler needed. Because a major part of IBM's business was to service and supply these machines, some at IBM knew that the company's products were located in concentration camps or used to organize the railroads and manage war industries. IBM did nothing to stop any of these activities; indeed it felt compelled to be extra cooperative with the regime in order to prevent the confiscation of its assets. IBM founder Thomas Watson was even awarded the Merit Cross (Germany's second-highest honor) by Hitler for his contributions to German industry. The facilities IBM had built in Germany continued to operate under private management throughout the war.

To tie so prominent and successful an American company as IBM to the roundup of European Jewry and the efficient execution of the Nazi genocide is to frame an especially shocking indictment of the "business as usual" corporate mentality. Yet IBM was scarcely alone among American corporations in contributing to the building of Germany's police state and war machine.

International Telephone and Telegraph worked to build and improve Germany's communications systems (including those on aircraft and warships), radar, sonar buoys, and artillery fuses. ITT became a partner in Focke-Wulf, the aviation firm that built the Luftwaffe's best fighters, and its components were used in the V-1 "buzz bombs" that brought the blitz back to England in 1944. The Nazis refrained from seizing the corporation's assets during the war because of its close ties with the regime. To strengthen these ties after the outbreak of war in Europe, ITT put the Gestapo's number two man, Walter Schellenberg, on its board of directors.

Ford Motor Company set up shop in Germany in 1925, and six years later built the large Ford-Werke plant in Cologne. In 1938, Henry Ford accepted the Grand Cross of the German Eagle, the Reich's highest honor for foreigners. By 1941, however, Ford of Germany had stopped manufacturing passenger vehicles and was devoting its entire production capacity to military trucks. Of the 350,000 trucks used by the Wehrmacht as of 1942, roughly one-third were Ford-made. Ford-Werke was never nationalized, but only placed under trusteeship six months after Hitler declared war on the United States.

Ford also operated a large plant outside Paris, which, after the fall of France in 1940, started building trucks and aircraft engines for the German military. According to historian Charles Higham's book *Trading With the Ene-*

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my, Henry Ford's son, Edsel Ford, kept in contact with operations in Occupied France through neutral couriers and the Vichy puppet regime.

The list of other American companies operating in Germany or the occupied countries during the Hitler era is a long one, and it includes such leading firms as Standard Oil, Chase Manhattan Bank, RCA, and General Motors. Even such strategic items as oil and ball bearings continued to flow to Germany from American companies during the war, through foreign affiliates and neutral countries. And Americans were the largest class of foreign investors in bonds issued by the Third Reich during the 1930s to finance state projects, including rearmament.

Higham and other left-wing writers offer a conspiracy theory to explain U.S. commercial ties to the Third Reich. American businessmen, they argue, assisted Hitler because they were "bound by identical reactionary ideas . . . [and sought] a common future in fascist domination, regardless of which world leader might further that ambition." In reality, the view from the boardroom is much more mundane, colored by a simple desire to do business regardless of politics. Wars, revolutions, and elections make little difference; governments come and go. Corporations adapt, keeping all eyes on the money prize and doing whatever they must to protect their investments.

Wars, revolutions, and elections make little difference. Corporations adapt, keeping all eyes on the money prize.

If an ideology was at work here, it was classical liberalism. As Milton Friedman stated in his influential polemic *Capitalism and Freedom* published in 1962, "There is one and only one social responsibility of business—to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits so long as it stays within the rules of the game." The rules are set by governments, because businessmen are incapable of knowing what is best for society. "If businessmen do have a social responsibility other than making maximum profits for stockholders, how are they to know what it is?" asks Friedman. Apparently businessmen forget everything they know or think about the wider world on their way to the office.

Nevertheless, business interests and the libertarian activists they finance work hard to prevent government from enacting measures that would interfere with profit-making, whether in the domestic or the international arena. With a certain arrogance, the business lobbies assume that private corporations are superior to the state—even in the conduct of foreign policy.

Thus, as tensions mounted in Europe in the late 1930s, the idea was increasingly put forward that transnational negotiations between industrialists should supplant talks between diplomats. As a Federation of British Industries memo stated at the time, "Captains of industry had long recommended that meetings of businessmen . . . might perhaps be a suitable means of bringing about a return to common sense." The same spirit emanates today from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, USA*Engage, and other business groups convinced of the beneficial impact of commercial "engagement" with China, an approach they favor extending to states like Cuba, Iran, and North Korea.

Currently, the Chamber of Commerce is sponsoring a 10-city exercise in private diplomacy, dubbed "A National Conversation with the Chinese Ambassador." It kicked off at Denver in January and has since visited San Jose and Phoenix. Featured sponsors in addition to the Chamber include Amway, Cisco Systems, FedEx, New York Life, CNA, and United Airlines, all of which do business in China. The Chamber claims the tour is "about the many opportunities for doing business with China." Chinese officials, however, use the platform to discuss political issues. In Denver, Chinese ambassador Li Zhaoxing attacked U.S. plans to build a national missile defense system, warned America away from closer ties with Taiwan, and defended the suppression of the Falun Gong meditation movement.

What is disturbing here is not that business follows a self-serving agenda, but that governments go along with it. In 1935, the British Foreign Office created the Economic Section, which became the vehicle for the state-sponsored commercial appeasement of Germany. The appeasers wanted not only to liberalize trade, but also to stimulate the German economy. England would become valuable to Hitler as a market for his exports—and would even endure a trade deficit to improve relations.

The economic appeasers saw their approach as an alternative to an Anglo-French alliance that threatened a return to the confrontational policies of 1914. A 1936 memo from a London banking house quoted in *The Appeasers*, by Martin Gilbert and Richard Gott, speaks of "Nazi moderates"—Germans with whom the bankers

thought it possible to "come to an understanding and cooperate" so as to avoid another war.

In 1938, prime minister Neville Chamberlain raised the issue of economic relations with Central and Southeastern Europe at the infamous Munich Conference. Within the framework of supposed Anglo-German economic cooperation, the British conceded to Hitler predominance in these regions. In London, there was even discussion of a multilateral loan to Germany, comprising funds from Britain, France, Holland, and Belgium, to help Germany buy imports from the Balkans, thus stimulating trade, of which Britain expected a share. Private British banks were making loans to German industry right up until the outbreak of war.

Yet the two major constraints on Germany's rearmament program were foreign exchange and raw materials. The Reich's trade surplus with the British Empire was a help here, providing Berlin with sterling to finance imports. And Germany's economic dominance of Eastern Europe eased both problems. The Reich entered into a series of trade agreements with Yugoslavia, Hungary, and Romania that made those countries dependent on Germany as a market for their raw materials and agricultural products—and helped pull Hungary and Romania into the Axis alliance.

Other goods obtained from Eastern Europe Germany dumped onto the world market to earn foreign exchange. To Berlin, trade was merely a means to strengthen the national industrial base for war. On January 30, 1939, Hitler proclaimed to the Reichstag yet another "export battle" to raise foreign exchange. His economic absorption of Austria in 1938 and of Czechoslovakia, with its very substantial armaments industry, in 1939 was a major factor in shifting the balance of power in Europe sufficiently to give Hitler the means to wage his lightning wars of 1939-40.

British leaders did not think of economics in these strategic terms. Instead, they were guided by a notion that has surfaced again today in certain circles: the view that one has less to fear from economically strong states than from weak ones. If Hitler felt secure, the appeasers argued, he would have no reason to use force. Germany would then mellow in outlook, produce fewer armaments and more consumer goods for export, and become a "normal" country. Typical of this school was Frank Ashton-Gwatkin, head of the Economic Section of the Foreign Office, who wrote in 1936: "I myself believe, however, that this nearly mortal complaint [Nazism] will yield to the radioactive treatment of increased world trade instead of cutting out Hitlerism with a knife."

Ashton-Gwatkin wanted to form an Anglo-German economic bloc, beginning with a "reduction of customs barriers," that would provide "the key to European peace." This scheme was popular among British businessmen, who formed an Anglo-German Society in 1935 backed by such major firms as Dunlop, Unilever, BP, and the British Steel Export Association. Their hopes, and those of Chamberlain and Ashton-Gwatkin, of course, were dashed. What they failed to realize was that Hitler had his own ideas about how the world should work—ideas not based on classical liberal precepts.

Some people didn't have to wait for the full shock of Nazi aggression to see where appeasement was heading. Winston Churchill realized the rising economic strength of Germany was being converted into military power and diplomatic influence. He warned of Germany's growing capabilities, "with her factories equipped to the very latest point of science by British and American money." Churchill understood that it was folly to increase the resources available to a regime whose foreign policies were inimical to those of his own country.

Churchill and Chamberlain were both members of the Conservative party, but they sprang from very different intellectual traditions. Chamberlain was, in the words of Kenneth W. Thompson, "the archetype of bourgeois conservatism . . . [which] is derived from a decaying liberalism under whose colors the businessman in the nineteenth century achieved his now precarious eminence." By contrast, Churchill was a classical conservative, heir to a long aristocratic tradition of state-centered power politics and unending rivalry among nations and empires. Thompson's conclusion, in *Winston Churchill's World View*, is that this "Tory tradition, . . . having suffered less disillusionment and dismay over the abrupt and violent reappearance of barbarism and violence, was better able to meet the threat by organizing resources of power against predatory foes."

Today, the same dangerous patterns have emerged again, but with even more impact. In the 1930s, the world economy was in depression. The amount of international trade and investment was limited. Now, the global economy is humming with capital flows, technology transfers, and joint ventures between American firms and foreign government entities—including those of regimes whose ambitions are clearly at odds with U.S. national interests and values.

China poses the greatest problem, both because of its size and because of the enthusiasm American business

has shown for developing Beijing's programs in aerospace, petrochemicals, computers, and telecommunications. Stories abound of the growing alliance, from U.S. companies' giving technical aid to Beijing's long-range missile program and training its aerospace engineers, to Chinese telecom firms' installing fiberoptics of American origin in Iraq's air defense and military command-control systems. Even so, Chinese officials constantly call on Washington to further relax restrictions on technology exports, just as they encourage foreign corporations to set up research and development centers in China and to invest in the country's high-tech industries.

As Mark A. Stokes noted in his report *China's Strategic Modernization: Implications for the United States* (published by the Army War College's Strategic Studies Institute), a "seemingly endless stream of critical technologies" is flowing into China and driving strategic modernization. "Strategic programs put on hold in the 1970s and 1980s due to technical difficulties have been resurrected due to increased access to foreign technology and expertise."

As these commercial ties have expanded, Beijing's view of the United States has not softened. Chinese government pronouncements, stories in the state-run press, books, and interviews with officials routinely portray the United States as Enemy No. 1. Strategists writing in the publications of the People's Liberation Army openly discuss war with the United States—and not just over Taiwan. Rather than moderate Beijing's ambitions, economic development is giving the regime the confidence to assert itself. This is the pattern seen in the 1930s. China's ancient motto *fuguo qiangbing*—strong economy, strong army—is a bit of enduring wisdom shared by many nations and empires.

Against that backdrop, this year's congressional agenda includes a string of issues that will test Washington's resolve. Among them are the renewal of the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act; senator Phil Gramm's intention to loosen export controls on "dual use" products; and senator Fred Thompson's effort to punish private firms (not just governments, as under present law) for contributing to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Business lobbyists are gearing up on all these measures, and they are continuing their push to relax virtually all restraints on dealing with potentially hostile regimes—in a reprise of the 1930s that could be lifted straight out of Edwin Black's book. As for what course the Bush administration will steer, that remains to be seen. ♦

One Europe, Under France?

The European Union and European Culture

By Christopher Caldwell

Sándor Bortnyik, *The New Eve* (1924). Archivo Iconografico / CORBIS.

A decade ago, the French fascist Jean-Marie Le Pen used to bring auditoriums full of his howling followers to their feet by attacking the European Union. "The United States of Europe," he would shout, "will be the United States *in* Europe!" Americans could be forgiven for not knowing what he was talking about; few Europeans did, either.

The European Union began as a Franco-German industrial consortium (the European Coal-and-Steel Community) in 1951, turned into a managed-trade zone (the European Economic Community) in 1958, and today comprises 15 countries, with a dozen more—from Turkey to Estonia—stacked up like delayed planes, signaling for entry. Since the Maastricht Treaty of 1992, EU members have pledged an "ever closer political union"—i.e., a European government, with (already) its own currency and (soon) defense. But what kind of government? Will the EU be a unitary state? An alliance of sovereign nations? Or a federation, a real "United States of Europe"? It's impossible to say, because even today the people willing to ask hard questions about the EU tend to be either self-interested bureaucrats on one hand, or extremist cranks on the other.

The American-born Oxford political philosopher Larry Siedentop is neither of those. In *Democracy in Europe*, he laments that the ground rules for what will be a country bigger, richer, and better educated than the United States are being drafted with negligible democratic input and scant constitutional sophistication. "It might be supposed," Siedentop writes, "that the desire to advocate or to oppose change would have created by now in Europe the counterparts of Madison, Hamilton and Jay." Geniuses don't just arise wherever there is a need for them, of course, but we can take his point that the founding of the European Union is not merely political horse-trading on a grand scale. It is a test of—and evidence of a crisis in—Western values.

Democracy in Europe
by Larry Siedentop
Columbia University Press
272 pp., $27.50

According to Siedentop, the battle over Europe is a battle between three models of the state: the British, the German, and the French. Given its track record in creating stability, assuring representation, and protecting liberty, one would assume the British model would have the upper hand.

Not a bit of it—because, at the very moment when Europe's constitutional arrangements are being set in stone, Britain finds itself in a constitutional crisis. Britain, unlike America or France, has never looked to its bourgeoisie to provide it with a national self-image. Its long history of liberty rested on its class system and a series of informal arrangements managed by its aristocracy. Decades of postwar misman-

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agement left a dysfunctional state—which Margaret Thatcher fixed through constitutional vandalism, undermining recalcitrant local authorities, flouting every traditional prerogative not written explicitly into law, and concentrating power in the executive in a way that would be the envy of many continental nations. Tony Blair has extended this centralization beyond Thatcher's wildest dreams, abolishing hereditary peers' right to vote in the House of Lords, seeking to abolish the automatic right to trial-by-jury, and taking his country into war in Kosovo with a minimum of parliamentary friction. Although Siedentop doesn't say it, Britain has—suddenly and stunningly—become in many ways the least free country in Western Europe.

Even in its heyday, Britain's unwritten constitution, based as it is on local particularities and customs, would have been difficult to export. But under present circumstances, it's not worth the paper it's not written on. With the old class identities abolished, no checks and balances have arisen to take their place. The result, in Siedentop's view, is total social and political bafflement, a populace that marries upper-crust insouciance to proletarian vulgarity. Nowhere was the New Britain on gaudier display than during the orgiastic mourning that followed the death of Princess Di. ("What the younger generation in Britain celebrated in Diana," writes Siedentop, "was, above all, her confusion.")

More promising, Siedentop thinks, is the almost-quaint German model of corporate federalism, with power dispersed between the capital, the *Länder*, and a patchwork of local bodies. But the German constitution is (thank goodness) designed to stifle rather than promote creativity, more suited to governing than to nation-building. And anyway, the British ruling classes, who, according to Siedentop, have taken their place as "the least constitutionally literate people in Europe," have proved unable to distinguish between corporatism and authoritarianism, and are engaged in a campaign of calumny against the German model.

Jean Victor Schnetz, *Charlemagne Receiving the Monk Alcuino* (c. 1850). Archivo Iconographico / CORBIS.

Charlemagne as emperor

That leaves the initiative to France, Europe's most efficient and most centralized political culture, with what Siedentop correctly calls "the most formidable, the best educated, and most determined political class in Europe." France is to the European Union what the United States is to NATO: the source of all its ideas and most of its motive force, the country without which nothing gets done. When Arabs shut off the West's oil in 1973, France responded with a nuclear power system that was providing 60 percent of the country's energy by the end of the decade.

When Britain and France agreed to build the Channel Tunnel, Britain negotiated with various environmental pressure groups and local bodies; France *built* the thing. When every other European government, east and west, knuckled under to my-way-or-the-highway warnings about the need to shrink the state sector in order to compete in the global marketplace, France alone replied, "Baloney," and has been rewarded with a per capita income higher than Germany's and *much* higher than Britain's. Most important, according to Siedentop, "the French have more to give to Europe than any other country *because they believe in Europe as a cultural and a moral undertaking*."

But France's role in Europe is too much of a good thing. The EU capital at Brussels is now "an appendage of Paris and of the French political elite," and France gets its way on almost everything. The Union's outdated Common Agricultural Policy is a windfall for the country's farmers. Exceptions carved out of the EU's free-trade principles give France dozens of protected markets. The country has exercised a de facto veto over the leadership of the new European central bank, and the new European currency, the euro, leaves the deutsche mark permanently overvalued against the franc, improving France's export position. (This last is France's payoff for "assenting" to German reunification.) Despite its high per capita GDP, France makes a lower net contribution to the EU than Britain, Germany, or Sweden. At times the European Union looks to other member states like Greater France.

The problem for Europe, Siedentop thinks, is that France is home not only to Europe's most gifted elite but also to an elitist and bureaucratic political *culture*, in which secrecy and inside dealing create a permanent climate of suspicion. Power is perceived as lying always in the hands of *les autres*, and French history has been marked as a result by regular spasms of "direct action"—to use the French euphemism for political violence.

The French habit of official secrecy has been brought to Brussels. Corruption scandals are frequent, and Germany had recently to wage bureaucratic war on the EU's accountants to gain the release of country-by-country data on tax contributions and service outlays. As a result, the peoples of Europe haven't a clue about the future—or the present—of European integration. With virtually all the continent's centrist parties backing monetary union and further integration, electoral opportunities open up on the radical fringe.

Siedentop may be alarmist. France does have a tradition of political violence, but with the exception of Britain, every other European country provides it with stiff competition in that department. What's more, there's a political naiveté in his wish that France spread its influence "by example and persuasion, rather than by the over-rapid accumulation of power in Brussels"; where representative bodies are at issue, "persuasion" and accumulation of power are near synonyms.

But he is right to claim the cost of any misstep could be high. If Europe is not to have federalism, thinks Siedentop, then the EU will face a problem that has not arisen in a serious way since Montesquieu identified it: the problem of size. Montesquieu held that, while small states can enjoy a degree of freedom, larger ones, in which diverse populations need to be hammered into conformity with state needs, can be governed only by bureaucratic despotism. England retained an unusual degree of liberty only because its aristocracy was able to hold on to local power. But there is no guarantee that local elites can resist an inexorable centralization of powers, for the local downtrodden are constantly "going over their heads," appealing to higher authorities both for redress of grievances and for relief from the humiliation of being ruled by people they know.

A perverse example of local populations sacrificing their liberty because they prefer the "rule of strangers" is the smaller eastern European states immediately after World War II. Then, Communist parties "were able to impose a despotic control of the state, not just with the help of Russian power, but by means of a demonology which threatened ordinary people by insisting that the only alternative to Communist rule was the return to power of their previous 'bourgeois' oppressors."

We may soon need to ask a question not asked in two and a half centuries: whether Europe can have liberty without an aristocracy. Montesquieu didn't think so. And there is evidence that Europe's meritocratic elites don't think so either.

Jacques-Louis David, *Napoleon in Coronation Robes* (1807). Burstein Collection / CORBIS.

Napoleon as emperor

Why is the EU giving rise to such worries? To answer that question, Siedentop feels compelled to ask what a state is in the first place, what Europe is in the first place, and what the values are that unite it. Here, his book takes up political philosophy of the most empyrean and challenging sort, a turn that will enthrall those who like to think about government in an abstract way, and bore those who don't.

The West faces an identity crisis, Siedentop thinks, "a kind of liberal schizophrenia." (He means "liberal," of course, in the classical European sense of individualistic freedom, not in the American one of progressive leftism.) This schizophrenia's most telling symptom is the way economic language has replaced the language of politics. In a bizarre reversal of Marx, moral conflicts increasingly get expressed in the camouflage of economic terminology.

We have plenty of excuses for using these terms, ranging from the technological complexity of modern life to the predominance of global and trade issues, which lead governments to an impatience with constitutional niceties that is more typical of war or diplomacy than of day-to-day politics. But in following the line of linguistic least resistance, Siedentop thinks, we ignore a huge part of the story of the West—the part that makes Europe Europe. Free markets and free societies go together, but they have different philosophical groundings. The former are based on utilitarianism. The latter are based on a philosophy of individual rights that arises from the pre-Reformation church.

This is a complicated argument that leads in several directions. Its starting point is that all souls' being equal in the eyes of God is the origin of western liberty and equality. Europe's societies, however lousy their church attendance, are even today not "secular and materialistic": They're Christian. It is Christianity that "provides the moral justification for the social role of the individual, who is presumed to have independent access to the deepest truth *qua* individual." Thoroughly modern Europeans *think* their regnant ideology is something called "human rights," but outside observers know otherwise.

> When Westerners see [their own] emphasis on human rights spreading throughout the world, but interpret that spread as merely a matter of "common sense" or "obvious" human values or a "neutral" framework for adjudicating international disputes, they deceive themselves more than they deceive the defenders of other religions and cultures.

What those other cultures see—what Islam in particular sees—is Christianity on the march, for human rights is pared-down liberalism, just as liberalism is pared-down Christianity.

The philosophical argument is fascinating. The historical one is questionable at every turn. For instance, Siedentop writes,

> In the longer run, feudalism (which was assailed on many fronts) could not survive in Christian Europe, the norms of which rested on the contrary assumption of moral equality. That is why, after ancient slavery disappeared, it was replaced by a form of subjection, serfdom, which itself proved to be only transitory.

"Could not survive" and "transitory" are rather dismissive descriptions of social arrangements that lasted for centuries.

Then Siedentop implies that, because an individualist European moral culture developed earlier than an individualist European economic culture, the latter must embrace a welfare state, since as soon as the medieval city began to move away from treating the family as the essential economic unit, it was necessary to provide an alternative source of last-ditch aid.

Later, Siedentop credits liberalism with having "brought into question one traditional difference of status and treatment after another, a scrutiny which has cast doubt on whether birth, wealth, gender or even sexual preference are morally relevant grounds for treating people differently." Did it? These "grounds" provide slippery categories because, as Siedentop understands, there are also group-rights ideologies that make such arguments from different principles. We would call these ideologies multiculturalism and political correctness. Siedentop lumps them in with the economistic arguments of the utilitarians, and also calls them "wants" theories (to distinguish them from "rights" theories). It's hard to tell whether equal treatment of gays, for instance, is being urged out of liberalism or the group-oriented ideologies that are liberalism's potential enemies.

Siedentop thinks Europeans need to acknowledge the Christian roots of their social and political habits in order to clear up this sort of confusion. But given that most of them don't believe in Christianity, it's hard to see how that would do them any good. Ur-Europeans of the medieval cities treated others as individuals not because such treatment answered to a chain of reasoning but because they felt enjoined to do so by a God they loved or feared. Useful though Christianity may be as a hermeneutic tool, it gained sway over Europe as a *religion*.

The Christianity he means is basically Protestantism, which, "for all its aberrations, is a more self-conscious form of Christianity than Catholicism." Siedentop's affinity with Protestantism produces in him a strong identification with the American founding. It is only natural that, viewing the history of Europe as he does, he sees that "the universalism of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution captures the character of European civilization more successfully perhaps than any political document that Europe itself has produced." Clearly he hopes the model for the new European state will be the polity that best preserves the political and cultural heritage of the continent.

If so, he picked the wrong country. Having left America in 1960, Siedentop seems oblivious to the new constitutional order that has arisen while he's been in England. Take his urging of a larger role for lawyers in European public life, an urging that he backs up by citing the example of the United States: "It is their close association with the idea of social mobility which has made it possible for American lawyers to play a major political role without creating much protest about their role being undemocratic." In Tocqueville's time, maybe. Or: "To a surprising extent, American judges have been reluctant entrants into policy-making, but have been forced by some other characteristics of the American political system—in particular, by the reluctance of the elected branches of government to settle particularly controversial public issues such as abortion."

If the integration of Europe is proceeding undemocratically, that's because elites want it to proceed undemocratically.

Siedentop is like the mirror image of the American tourist, who goes to a France that is (in fact) full of televisions and shopping malls and seeks out the museums, bistros, and villages that put him in mind of his favorite nineteenth-century novels, so he can come back and complain that France is so much nicer because it's "untouched" by televisions and shopping malls. In like fashion, four decades of reading American constitutional thought at Keble College, Oxford, has left Siedentop under the nostalgic impression that his native land is brimming even now with Madisons and Hamiltons and Jays.

Siedentop wrote *Democracy in Europe* to "suggest what we ought to be thinking *about* rather than what we ought to be thinking." He succeeds marvelously at this stated aim, for which his distinction between economistic and political reasoning is enormously fruitful. Siedentop is frustrated by the black-and-white choice that is offered today between these two types of reasoning, and between the two visions of citizenship that arise from them.

On the one hand is a classical (political) understanding of the citizen-as-hero. The problem is that hero-citizens are suckers for charismatic leaders, and are "always at risk of being hijacked by populism."

On the other hand is a newfangled (economistic) understanding, that of the citizen-as-consumer. Tacky and shallow though it may be, it runs much less risk of riling up the *canaille*. Siedentop warns, though, that this latter vision of citizenship "treats people simply as role-players, and can lead to a political outcome which, if not as nauseating as fascism, takes an equally high toll of free-will and the human capacity for self-improvement."

And here we come to what ought to be (but is not for Siedentop) the master explanation of European constitutional diffidence. The average leader of the EU will hear the phrase "not as nauseating as fascism," and say, "Whoa! Stop! I'll take *that* one, please!" The central catastrophe of Western history is the twentieth-century rise of totalitarian ideologies, some of which—Nazism most spectacularly—came to power at the invitation of legitimately elected liberal democracies. This is a horror that

the word "tyranny," as the Founding Fathers understood, doesn't quite encompass, and a reckoning with it must underlie any responsible constitution-making in our time, particularly in Europe.

Religion may be too strong a term for the antifascism of the New Europe's ruling class, but "article of faith" is not. The ideology of human rights—or whatever one chooses to call antifascism—may be an "economistic" simulacrum of Christianity. It may lack grandeur and nobility. But an experience of totalitarianism has not been known for ennobling either its practitioners, its victims, or its opponents. Ennobling or not, enduring or transitory, simon-pure or unusually prone to hypocrisy, this new faith is one that political leaders *do* hew to with both love and fear.

Cujus regio ejus religio. If fascism is perceived by Europe's leaders to have arisen from an excess of democracy—and it is—then the excesses of democracy will go, and along with them, if necessary, the moral revolution that Siedentop describes as having begun in the hearts and minds of medieval burghers. Already there are signs of a re-medievalization of Europe. The technocratic classes of all countries—like their aristocratic forebears eight hundred years ago—are coming to intermarry, to speak a common language (English), and to constitute an international court society. Variety among the newly *embourgeoisé* European peoples is increasingly confined to its peasantries and proletariats—who have less and less say over the laws under which they live.

If the integration of Europe is proceeding somewhat undemocratically, that's because elites want it to proceed undemocratically. If non-democratic structures are being put into place under cover of democratic language, then it's pretty much what one would expect in the circumstances. In this light, Siedentop is wrong to view the debate over Europe since Maastricht as a "dangerous confusion." It may be less dangerous than it looks. It is certainly less confused. ♦

Malcolm in the Middle

Malcolm Bradbury's posthumous novel.

BY MARGARET BOERNER

The novelist Malcolm Bradbury died last winter, succumbing at the age of sixty-eight to a lifelong heart defect so serious that as a child he was featured in the British medical association's journal, the *Lancet*. Shortly before his death, he had been knighted for "services to British letters"—which must have amused him, since his father was a railway worker and his parents' one bookshelf held only the Bible, *Pilgrim's Progress*, a railway timetable, and "a very anxious book on etiquette, explaining how to address correctly the dukes and bishops we somehow never seemed to meet."

To the Hermitage
by Malcolm Bradbury
Overlook, 510 pp., $27

Good at books and bad at games, Bradbury survived the boisterous world of the English working-class life. After graduate work in the United States, he received his doctorate in American Studies from the University of Manchester. His teaching appointments finally took him to the new University of East Anglia, at the edge of the English fens in Norwich, where, with the novelist Angus Wilson, he set up England's first course in creative writing—a course thought too touchy-feely and American for serious, analytical, British universities. Luckily, Bradbury's first graduate student was Ian McEwan, who insisted upon turning in stories as well as analytical papers for the course and who went on to win many prizes, including a Booker prize in 1998.

Bradbury himself was writing fiction. In the late 1980s, he summed up his career by noting that he had managed to complete only four novels and a volume of short stories in twenty-five years. He wrote two more novels before his death. Bradbury conceded that "it may seem a slow record," but then

> I have been a critic, reviewer, and professor of American studies too, as well as a regular writer for television. . . . My basic themes, though, remain the same: the conflict between liberal humanism and the harsh systems and behaviorism of the modern world, and the tragic implications, which, however, I believe must be expressed in comic form.

The six novels Bradbury wrote are *Eating People Is Wrong* (1959), *Stepping Westward* (1965), *The History Man* (1975), *Rates of Exchange* (1983), *Dr. Criminale* (1992), and the volume he finished just before his death, *To the Hermitage*, which has now been published in America. All have English academic characters in them—who often seem to travel in Eastern Europe—and the first three are entirely about university life. For this reason, Bradbury was often confused with David Lodge, also a professor and critic, and the writer of such classic academic comedies as *Changing Places* and *Small World*. Bradbury and Lodge frequently got letters meant for the other, and in *Small World*, Lodge makes the two of them into peripheral characters at an MLA book party in New York City.

The hero of the novel has his glass refilled by "a shortish dark-haired man," Lodge, "standing nearby with a bottle of champagne in his hand." A "tallish dark-haired man smoking a pipe," Bradbury, was saying in an English accent, "If I can have Eastern Europe, you can have the rest of the world." "All right," said the shortish man, "but I daresay people will still get us mixed up."

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In *Unsent Letters*—an acerbic collection of fictional letters, the sort of letters one wishes one had the nerve to send—Bradbury receives a request from an importunate graduate student in Germany, "My professor hints me that you and David Lodge are the same person. Perhaps you are also T. Hardy, M. Beerbohm, T. Sharpe, and H. Jacobson. If so please tell me in your letter, and give me a full bibliography of your writings, under all your names." Bradbury replies that the graduate student has hit on "the vexed issue of the well-known writer 'Bodge.' A great many people ask each of us if we are the other and this has grown extremely confusing to the one or both of us." Bradbury claims that Lodge "gets my telephone calls, and I get his telephone bills."

But Lodge and Bradbury actually write different sorts of novels. Bradbury lacks Lodge's gift of keeping the reader riveted with page-turning plots and sharply realized characters. Though Bradbury's prose is much better than Lodge's (which is often pedestrian and colorless), what stands out is his acute observation of the range of human, particularly academic, foolishness. Indeed, Bradbury's novels tend toward rambling plots and take on the air of shaggy-dog stories—unhurried expeditions through the absurdities of life in general and modern life in particular.

In *The History Man*, his masterpiece, a history professor uses his swinging, left-wing credentials not to liberate the minds of his students (through the liberal arts) but to make them his slaves, mentally and sexually. The professor has written a trendy book that claims modern man is only a set of conditioned reflexes and thus possesses no private self. Bradbury then writes up the whole of the professor's story in nothing but description and dialogue—which is to say, the story imitates the dehumanizing thesis of the professor by excluding any inner selves. In *Rates of Exchange*, another tour de force, Bradbury takes a linguist to a fictional Eastern bloc country, and invents both the fractured English of the populace and its native "Slakan," a pastiche of several European languages. "Bradbury is in such virtuoso form," Anatole Broyard remarked of the novel, "that he can even make you enjoy an entire book in which the majority of the characters speak various degrees of broken English."

To the Hermitage is similarly inventive, taking as its model *Tristram Shandy*, the eighteenth-century classic in which Laurence Sterne, as Bradbury's narrating professor puts it, "used his transverse zig-zaggery to break every rule of the new form so rightly called 'the novel.'" Although Bradbury cannot rival the whimsicality of Sterne, he keeps up a smart pace of asides, colloquies, encyclopedic interpolations on history, snatches of verse from *Eugene Onegin*, and critical theory.


Hulton-Deutsch Collection / CORBIS

Malcolm Bradbury, 1932-2000

All of these are set in two periods of history. Chapters in the book alternate between "Now" and "Then." "Now" is October 1993, when members of a seminar on Diderot travel from Stockholm to St. Petersburg just as the Communists in Russia are undertaking a coup against the parliament, resulting in Yeltsin's final ascendance—a coup attempt that flickers on television sets in the background of the story. "Then" is "October" (i.e. Gregorian November) 1773, when Denis Diderot travels to St. Petersburg, guest of Catherine the Great as she attempts to remake the city and Russia according to Enlightenment principles and to cinch her ascendance—as rivals are tortured in the background.

When his protagonist is asked by a Swedish diva (she who sings verses of *Eugene Onegin* as a type of conversation) who Diderot was, Bradbury cheekily has him tell her the highlights:

> Well, in a word: French philosophe, the son of a knife-maker in Langres in Burgundy. He was going to be a priest, but he married a seamstress. Went to Paris, worked as a hack and teacher, wrote a funny dirty little novel called The Indiscreet Jewels. Traveled to Petersburg in 1773. . . . Died suddenly of an apoplexy while eating an apricot at his own dinner table, 31 July 1784. Wrote the big book that changed the world [the *Encyclopedia*].

A diva is on the Diderot project because the seminar is attempting to recreate the skills needed for those who contributed to Diderot's original encyclopedia. Thus, there is a politician, a philosopher, a professor of literature, and a carpenter. The union official on the team is "tall, Nordic, beautiful," and wears denim overalls "plastered with all the usual messages of concerned protest—against air, water, earth, fire, food, smoking, cars, cattle, men." The philosopher is Jack-Paul Verso, who wears a baseball cap that says "I love deconstruction" and is author of *The Feminists' Wittgenstein*. The writing crackles with Bradbury's mordant wit:

> Years of wandering the frontiers of the transgressive postmodern imagination have taught me what its key words mean. 'Conceptual' means: We haven't thought about it much, but we're cool, we'll stay cool, and something will happen to which we can add the name of art. "Postmodern" means: Guess what, we managed to get a corporate sponsor to pay for it.

To the Hermitage is not satisfactory as a novel, if by "novel" we mean the classic form of fictional prose with a plot in which character is examined and people change in the course of undergoing adversity. Instead we must go back to

the early days of the novel, long before the Victorians got hold of it. Here is material that is "novel"—a cabinet of curiosities, as it were. Here is a digression about Sterne's reburial two hundred years after he died; about the visits of Franklin and Jefferson to Diderot just after the American Revolution; about the missing books of Diderot's library, which—as a form of patronage—Catherine bought and had transported to St. Petersburg after his death; about where Descartes is buried; about drunken Finland's winters; about Sweden's humorless, obedient, clean, smoke- and alcohol-free society; about the French love for Louisiana.

In short, Bradbury has garnered unfamiliar bits and pieces of the culture that was planted during the Enlightenment. It makes for something of a rambling mess. But a charming one—if only because we can glimpse in this last novel the child who once perused everything from train timetables to etiquette books. ♦

The New Russia

Still a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma.

BY MICHAEL MCFAUL

Revolutions are often deeply disappointing. As opposition builds to an old regime, hopes for a better future grow exponentially. And when the old regime finally falls, the new utopia is supposed to arrive instantly. It never does. In all revolutions, the destroying of old institutions is easier than the building of new ones, and most great revolutions end in dictatorship—a fact that ought to be kept in mind by champions of the revolution that brought an end to communism in Russia.

Stephen Cohen's collection of essays, *Failed Crusade: America and the Tragedy of Post-Communist Russia*, reminds me of this fact. I say "me" because Cohen names me and others the naive cheerleaders for the revolution. Cohen's book is an extended "I told you so" to those romantics like myself who believed the revolution that destroyed the Soviet Union was going to succeed. By republishing the essays and opinion pieces he wrote as the revolution unfolded, Cohen proves that he has the right on many issues to say, "I told you so." On many issues, however, he does not. And on a whole host of others, it is too early to judge.

Failed Crusade
America and the Tragedy of Post-Communist Russia
by Stephen Cohen
W.W. Norton, 160 pp., $21.95

In the first section of his book, Cohen takes aim at the scholarly community, which he ridicules as a herd of "transitionologists" who do not understand the real Russia. In the second section, he seeks to interpret the Russian developments of the 1990s. And in the third section, he proposes a new approach for America's policy toward Russia.

In his first mission, Cohen fails completely, and in his third mission he proves a hopeless romantic—which is curious, given how often he has declared his loathing for "romantics." Cohen's second mission, however, is intriguing, for it offers a way to have a serious, constructive debate about the nature of the Russian revolution not unlike a similar debate that Cohen joined about the Bolshevik revolution decades ago.

Cohen's denunciation of scholarship about Russia fails primarily because he does not seem to know that scholarship. Indeed, judging from his citations, the best guess would be that he has never actually read the academic literature he so derides. Most scholars in the profession reject the "transitions" thesis Cohen despises, and we lack any dominant paradigm to unite or polarize the field today. That kind of scholarly discussion—totalitarianism versus its critics—ended when the Soviet Union collapsed. The one methodological division that does sometimes consume the new generation of scholars, rational-choice theory, gets no attention from Cohen at all.

Cohen's objection to "Russia-watching without Russia" (the title of a chapter in which he argues that no one in the field really studies Russian language, culture, or history) is equally outdated. Most young scholars I know have spent years learning the Russian language and have traveled more widely within Russia than ever before. In fact, what is liberating about the new generation of scholars is that the tired, old debates—area studies versus comparativism, history versus theory—are not central anymore.

But Cohen is not really interested in the scholarship on Russia, though he needs the straw man of mistaken scholars to make his thesis run. That thesis, the point of *Failed Crusade*, is that the United States' policy toward Russia in the 1990s has been "the worst American foreign policy disaster since Vietnam." In Cohen's view, post-Communist Russia is a mess, and America is partly to blame. The problem, in Cohen's view, is that Russia is a unique country with its own history, culture, and orientation, and it could thus never become a facsimile of the West. The missionary crusade to transform Russia into the United States was more than naive; it damaged Russia, and it ruined U.S.-Russian relations. In Cohen's view, the evil "reformers," who hijacked Gorbachev's successful evolutionary reforms, never had any support in Russia because the Russians knew the economic and political practices of the United States were ill-suited for their own country.

It's certainly true that the kind of capitalism and democracy now in place

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in Russia is not what we missionaries advocated when we traveled to Russia in the wake of the revolution. But were we wrong to try? Were the Russians wrong? Was there an alternative?

These are open questions. But the question of whether the Russians themselves desired change is closed: They may not have wanted the change they got, but change they wanted with all their hearts. Surveys I conducted with Timothy Colton last spring found a different Russia than the one described in Cohen's book. In our nationwide polls, 85.7 percent of Russian respondents said it was important to elect the country's leaders, 79.4 percent said it was important to have a free press, and 69.4 percent said it was important to have freedom of religion. When asked "Do you support the idea of democracy?" 62.9 percent said yes; only 18.6 percent said no.

Cohen's claim that by the spring of 2000 the Russian people "favored 'order' over democratic practices" is equally dubious. When asked in our poll, "How should order be brought about in Russia?" only 15.2 percent answered "at all costs" while an amazing 51.3 percent responded "without violating rights." When asked, "Are you prepared to support a state of emergency to bring about order?" a very high number, 31 percent, answered yes, but the majority, 52.4 percent, answered no. When asked, "Should the army rule the country?" 70.5 percent responded that this was a fairly bad or very bad way to rule.

The Russia of Cohen's narrative sounds like a hapless colony conquered by armed neoliberals and muscular democrats from the West. In fact, we missionary Americans could only engage in our zealotry if we had invitations from our Russian counterparts. What Cohen really dislikes is the choice of Russian partners and the policy objectives of the Clinton administration. Cohen is fully prepared to sanction domestic interference in Russia as long as it is his kind of aid, to his people, for his purposes.

Regarding those purposes, Cohen is clear: Stability is the paramount goal to which all other objectives must be sacrificed. He calls for a massive inflow of American money given directly to the Russian state (and not civil society) to pay Russian pensions and increase the wages of nuclear technicians. Echoing the chorus of Jeffrey Sachs, Anders Åslund, and Richard Nixon a decade ago, Cohen believes no price is too high—not even, he seems to say, $500 billion.

Of course, by advocating this mission underwritten from abroad, Cohen undermines the logic of his book. America would make this investment in the hope that it changes Russia in some way. Cohen's Russia, it turns out, is not so stuck in history and culture that it cannot change with the proper bribe to the proper people.

Were Russia's current ills caused necessarily by the revolution's success, or did they come from a perversion of the revolution's original goals?

Then, too, one must ask, where is the new hero who will save modern Russia? In 1992, Cohen pointed to the former vice president Aleksandr Rutskoi. (Cohen might be surprised to learn that some of us American and German missionaries for democracy also took a chance on this horse and provided assistance programs for Rutskoi's party.) Yet, just a year later, Rutskoi's party had abandoned him as too reckless.

Is Grigory Yavlinsky the one we should have backed? Cohen rightly praises this leader of Russia's democratic opposition. (He also might be surprised to know that we democracy missionaries shared Cohen's hopes and devoted more technical assistance per capita to Yavlinsky's Yabloko party in the 1990s than to any other political party in Russia.)

But even with more support, could Yavlinsky have saved Russia from the evil 1990s? Doubtful. Cohen's latest candidate—the Russian state under Vladimir Putin—seems like a poor next bet. After devoting an entire book to telling the reader the Russian state is corrupt and criminal, Cohen ends by advocating more money to this same Russian state.

Most supporters of the revolution against Soviet communism would not challenge Cohen's list of the ills in Russia today. But a question remains: Were these ills caused necessarily by the revolution's success, or did they come from a perversion of the revolution's original goals?

This question is reminiscent of the debate that structured Soviet historiography for decades: Were Stalin and Stalinism the inevitable outcome of the Bolshevik revolution, or was Stalin's rise a departure from the "real" trajectory and aspirations of the Bolshevik revolution? This is a debate Cohen knows well, since his seminal book on the Bolshevik leader Nikolai Bukharin made the case that Stalinism was not inevitable and a better outcome from the Bolshevik revolution was possible.

The same question needs to be asked about contemporary Russia. And the problem is that we still do not know what time it is in Russia's second revolution. As Cohen wrote in 1992, "If Russia becomes a predominantly democratic state with a flourishing market economy coexisting benignly with the former Soviet republics, historians may conclude that Gorbachev was the twentieth century's greatest leader, having launched the transformation of its largest country. But if Russia plunges into a new despotism, with a rapacious state economy and imperialism, he is likely to be viewed as another tragic leader in Russia's long history of failed reforms." Unfortunately for Gorbachev and Yeltsin and the rest of Russia's revolutionaries of the 1990s, it is still too early to know which of these places history has reserved for them. ♦

Cyndi Lauper sings in 1984. Neal Preston / CORBIS.

Loony Tunes

The worst list of best songs ever.

BY MICHAEL LONG

Put the guys in tweed jackets from the National Endowment for the Arts, the men in sharkskin suits from the main offices of the record business, and a bunch of cardigan-wearing textbook writers in a room together, and what do you get? The answer is a new "educational resource," the recently released list of "Songs of the Century." These 365 recordings—"One for each day of the year!" a helpful press flack told me—represent "America's musical and cultural heritage," according to the Recording Industry Association of America, the trade association of record companies.

"This project demonstrates that the recording industry takes seriously its role as a caretaker of our nation's cultural heritage," said NEA chairman Bill Ivey, proving once and for all that the reintroduction of clear thinking to the NEA is an utterly lost cause. If these are the best songs we've got, then our musical and cultural heritage doesn't need a caretaker; it needs an arsonist. After reading the list, one struggles incredulously to remember: Did, say, "The Lion Sleeps Tonight" rank just above or just below "We Are the World"—and what is either doing on a list of important recordings? And how about, oh, just choosing at random here, "Doo Wop (That Thing)" by Lauryn Hill? You ask why Hill's contribution makes the canon complete? Just check out the lyrics: *Member when he told you he was 'bout the Benjamins / You act like you ain't hear him then gave him a little trim*. This, from the aptly entitled album *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill*.

Helen Reddy's "I Am Woman" comes in at Number 311, despite the fact that it is, you know, "I Am Woman." Of course, by the time you've waded through the list to this point, the whole notion of ranking starts to look even sillier than it did back at Number 36, where *The Sound of Music* skated past Thelonius Monk.

"Participants were asked to keep in mind the historical significance" of the songs, states the press release. Okay, but since when was ABBA more historically significant than John Coltrane? Or how about this: Al Jolson, the first person to record an album, the first to sing on film, and a model for other entertainers for decades, ranks at a weak 124, his influence on American music trumped by Cyndi Lauper, Gloria Gaynor, and The Village People.

Does the history of rap belong here? Why not?—though the question seems morally similar to whether we should preserve the boyhood home of John Wilkes Booth. And what about "No Scrubs" by TLC? This 1999 record is, arguably, less a song than a drum track laid down behind an episode of Oprah Winfrey's television show. How is it that a culturally informed individual is suddenly incomplete if his familiarity extends to Gershwin but not to TLC? (Gershwin, by the way, doesn't make the list at all.)

The influence of drugs on rock critics is apparent not by the presence of the drug-soaked Grateful Dead at Number 321, but as the only excuse for such indefensible inclusions as "All My Rowdy Friends Are Coming Over Tonight" by Hank Williams Jr. and "I Love Rock and Roll" by Joan Jett and the Blackhearts. And the mistakes just keep rolling on: "You're Still the One" by Shania Twain, "Don't Worry Be Happy" by Bobby McFerrin, "9 to 5" by Dolly Parton. Oh, and did I mention "El Shaddai" by Amy Grant?

If you think most "music experts" have no business talking about music, then this is the list for you. Even Tim McGraw knows that Jimi Hendrix belongs ahead of Tim McGraw. Yet there it is, Hendrix's version of "All Along the Watchtower" squeezed in at the last position on the list, number 365, while McGraw's "Please Remember Me" chills out at 96. (Quick test: Hum "All Along the Watchtower." Now hum the McGraw tune. Case closed.)

Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Billie Holiday—the appearance of these giants feels like the result of someone having made notes while walking through the jazz aisle at a Tower Records store. "Our hope is that each song will help tell a very different story," said the head of RIAA, Hilary Rosen. And at least one of those stories is that the RIAA and the NEA are run by hacks whose cultural discretion makes Kid Rock look like Carl Sandburg.

That icon of all baby-boomer music fans, Dr. Johnny Fever, once cried out in sorrow, *Who's going to teach the children about Bo Diddley?* The answer: not the NEA and RIAA—at least not until they've covered Garth Brooks, Van Halen, and the 1910 Fruitgum Company. ♦

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The hard-bitten, skeptical Washington press corps confronts John McCain

John McCain and Russ Feingold with reporters, March 27. Photo by Ray Lustig, The Washington Post.

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