the weekly Standard

THE AL QAEDA CONNECTION
STEPHEN F. HAYES

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The Battle Ahead

William Kristol on the high stakes of 2004

David Tell on the Iowa Democrats

Matt Labash on Bob Graham's summer vacation

Nicole Humphries (front), Verizon Sales Engineer from Tampa, Florida, works with The National Society of Black Engineers to take students on a totally cool ride at the National Roller Coaster Building Contest.

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One More Time: Californians Face the Race Issue

John H. Bunzel is a senior research fellow at the Hoover Institution; past president of San Jose State University; and a former member of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

California voters will be asked to confront the race issue once again when the Racial Privacy Initiative (RPI) appears on the October 7th, 2003 ballot (unless the court intervenes). The measure would prohibit the state and other public entities, such as universities, from collecting information on a person's race, ethnicity, or national origin.

Backers of the initiative claim it would be a major step toward creating a color-blind society. Asking people to check a box identifying their race or ethnicity prolongs "race consciousness," they maintain. "The only way to make race not count is to stop counting it." Those who support RPI insist that race and ethnicity are not the most important things to know about people—hence their desire to eliminate statistics of race and ethnicity from the records of California.

Striving toward a color-blind California is a noble goal; unfortunately, the RPI initiative will do nothing to make that goal a reality. The sad fact is that race remains, as author Richard Rodriguez has observed, "the sine qua non of American transactions."

One may look forward to a time when racism and discrimination no longer scar our lives yet still oppose a measure such as RPI that would prevent policymakers from discovering areas where whites, blacks, Hispanics, and Asians are treated differently by everybody from loan officers to teachers and doctors.

One thing seems certain. As *San Francisco Chronicle* columnist Debra Saunders has argued, "Not knowing the facts will not put an end to discrimination or make racial equality a more immediate reality."

"But isn't it discrimination," some one will ask, "to classify people by racial categories?" The answer is no—unless the intention is to pit one minority group against another. **It is not discrimination to record a person's race or ethnicity when the openly acknowledged purpose is to eliminate racial inequities, not perpetuate them.**

Statistical evidence about racial and ethnic groups helps track various forms of discrimination, especially as it affects the everyday lives of people of color. Equally important, race- and ethnic-based data can also assist in charting the economic progress of black Americans who have significantly improved their situation. As Harvard demographer Edward Glaeser has noted, the facts represent not just changes for the better but "big changes in terms of historical trends."

Everyone in this increasingly fierce debate wants to see a time when people will treat each other equally and fairly. But it is a mistake to replace empirical observations with ideological or moral preconceptions. Race and ethnicity continue to be real forces in American life, and it is wishful thinking to pretend they are irrelevant or "artificial." By making constructive use of racial and ethnic data, state planners and legislators can determine not only which policies may be succeeding (and which ones are not) but how closely many issues of race and inequality remain intertwined.

— John H. Bunzel

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THIS IS A COMBINED ISSUE. THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE WEEKLY STANDARD WILL APPEAR IN TWO WEEKS.

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Another Phony Anti-Bush Slander

BuzzFlash.com, a sort of *Drudge Report* for the left, has joined forces with former Clinton aide Sidney Blumenthal to spin the line that the Clinton administration was heroically tough on terrorism but that the Bush administration, despite being "fully briefed by Clinton staffers about the imminent threat posed by terrorism," fell asleep at the switch until 9/11.

Under the banner "Bush Ignored the Terrorist Threat," *BuzzFlash* readers can enjoy excerpts from Blumenthal's recent book *The Clinton Wars*, in which he recounts transition meetings between Clinton and Bush national security officials. In one, we learn that Clinton NSC adviser Sandy Berger "told them that Osama bin Laden was 'an existential threat' and told them he wanted 'to underscore how important this issue is.'" In another transition briefing, according to Blumenthal, "Richard Clarke, head of counterterrorism in the NSC, the single most knowledgeable expert in government, gave a complete tutorial on the subject."

THE SCRAPBOOK agrees with Blumenthal that Clarke is an expert, which is why we want to share excerpts of a March 20, 2002, interview Clarke gave to PBS's *Frontline* on the events leading up to 9/11. It paints a rather less flattering picture of Blumenthal's heroes:

FRONTLINE: Some also say that due to the Lewinsky scandal, more action perhaps was never undertaken. In your eyes?

CLARKE: The interagency group on which I sat and John O'Neill sat—we never asked for a particular action to be authorized and were refused. We were never refused. Any time we took a proposal to higher authority, with one or two exceptions, it was approved. . . .

FRONTLINE: But didn't you push for military action after the [al Qaeda bombing of the USS] *Cole*?

CLARKE: Yes, that's one of the exceptions.

FRONTLINE: How important is that exception?

CLARKE: I believe that, had we destroyed the terrorist camps in Afghanistan earlier, that the conveyor belt that was producing terrorists sending them out around the world would have been destroyed. So many, many trained and indoctrinated al Qaeda terrorists, which now we have to hunt down country by country, many of them would not be trained and would not be indoctrinated, because there wouldn't have been a safe place to do it if we had destroyed the camps earlier.

FRONTLINE: Without intelligence operatives on the ground in these organizations, how in the end does one stop something like this? If you look back on it now and you had one wish, you could have had one thing done, what would it have been?

CLARKE: Blow up the camps and take out their sanctuary. Eliminate their safe haven, eliminate their infrastructure. They would have been a hell of a lot less capable of recruiting people. Their whole "Come to Afghanistan where you'll be safe and you'll be trained"—well, that wouldn't have worked if every time they got a camp together, it was blown up by the United States. That's the one thing that we recommended that didn't happen—the one thing in retrospect I wish had happened.

Given the strident criticism of President Bush's conduct of the war on terrorism by senior Clinton administration officials, THE SCRAPBOOK wonders where, say, Madeleine Albright or Al Gore came down on the recommendation to take out the camps following the *Cole* bombing? And just what was the other "exception" cited by Clarke? ♦

What's Wrong with This Headline?

Last Tuesday, August 19, a suicide bomber named Raed Abdul Hamid Misk, a member of Hamas who lectured on Islamic law at a Palestinian university, boarded a bus in Jerusalem wearing the latest in Hamas haute couture—11 pounds of explosives larded with nails and shrapnel. Misk's bomb killed 20 people, including children and infants. Five of the victims were Americans.

Israel kept its powder dry for the following 24 hours, testing whether Palestinian prime minister Mahmoud Abbas would move against the Hamas terrorists, who had immediately claimed responsibility for the bus bombing. When Abbas punted, Israel launched a retaliatory missile strike on Thursday, killing Ismail Abu Shanab, a Hamas official in the Gaza strip, and his bodyguards. At this point, Hamas announced that it was ending its so-called truce with Israel—a laughable bit of propaganda that nonetheless made its way straight into this Associated Press headline later on Thursday: "Hamas Abandons Truce After Israeli Strike."

So let's get this straight: Hamas's idea of a "truce" is that it should be allowed to blow up any number of children whenever it feels like it, with impunity. (The bomber who so coldbloodedly murdered the children riding his bus, by the way, was himself the father of a 4-year-old boy and 18-

month-old girl.) Being a terrorist organization, Hamas would obviously think this way. But what was AP thinking? Surely the truce, such as it was, ended with Hamas's mass murder of Israeli and American civilians. ♦

Our Eye for the Hairless Guy

Four years ago in these pages, David Skinner presciently noted the fashion of chest-shaving among post-adolescent Hollywood heartthrobs. Nary a male lead torso under the age of 40 seemed to be sporting even a single strand of hair. The so-called "hairless man" made appearances elsewhere, too, in professional tennis, for example, with the onetime Schick razor spokesman Andre Agassi showing off his newly de-carpeted chest at various tournaments. The effete affectation had gone populist as well, with a boom in hair-removal services and, according to the shaving industry, sharply increasing sales of razors used to mow the high grass just below the neck.

Still, it seems to be some kind of coming-out party for the hairless man to make an appearance on America's most-talked-about cable show of the summer, the male-makeover hit *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*. On one recent episode, a bearish crew member had his back stripped professionally before getting his chest "manscaped" by the show's gay groomer, using a standard barbershop-type clipper. While the show's message of healing between gays and straights breaks down into several layers of irony, we can't help noticing how literally *Queer Eye* has fulfilled the vision sketched out by Skinner in his "Notes on the Hairless Man."

Many commentators have complained that this or that aspect of *Queer Eye* demeans gays or straights, but surely the overall message—as the hairless man foreshadowed—is just how accommodating of homosexuality and gay campiness mainstream culture has become. A major network has picked up the cable show and its audience numbers are growing at an incredible rate. Don't say we didn't warn you. ♦

Ideal for Fighting Those 9 to 5 Wars

"STOCKHOLM - Sweden's armed forces will operate only during office hours for the rest of the year to cut costs, military headquarters said on Friday. "

—Reuters, August 15

See You in Two Weeks

Like the Swedish military, we're kicking back—and not publishing next week. But we'll be back after Labor Day.

Meantime, be sure to visit *weeklystandard.com* for Bill Whalen's excellent reports on the California governor's race, and much else besides. ♦

Casual

SHINE

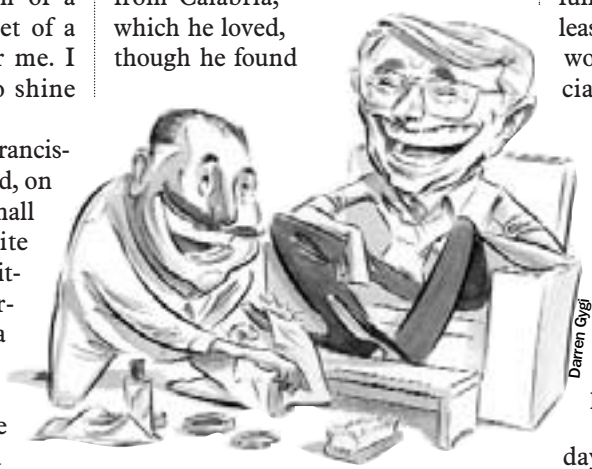
I haven't had a shoeshine, a professional shine, in more than a decade, maybe two. I shine my own shoes, usually once a week. Shoeshine parlors were common when I was a boy, and even a young man, in Chicago; most barbershops also had a shoeshine man. Not always but often he was black. I stopped getting shoeshines when race relations in America became so ragged and nervous-making. The symbolism of a black man working at the feet of a white man was too heavy for me. I decided—the hell with it—to shine my own shoes.

But the other day, in San Francisco and needing a shine, I passed, on Geary Street, near the city's small theater district, a small white man, with a face resembling a little that of the battling welterweight Carmen Basilio, in a blue smock seated before his three-seat shoeshine stand. I climbed up into one of the seats. He took a last drag and prepared to toss away his cigarette, which I told him he needn't do. He replied, in a strong Italian accent, "Smoking all in the head anyway."

The shine began with his tucking the bows of my shoelaces into the tops of my shoes, so that he would not get polish on them that would rub off on my trouser cuffs. He next lit a Zippo lighter that he touched briefly to the outer sides of my shoes; this, I've subsequently learned, is to burn off any loose threads from the leather. With a toothbrush he painted the outer edges of my soles. Five or six rounds of creams and polish were applied, each followed by buffings with either soft clothes or brushes.

Several years ago, *Esquire* printed an article titled "The World's Second-Best Shoeshine." Turns out it was to be had at the airport in Cleveland, where they used an ultraviolet lamp—to precisely what purpose, I cannot now recall—on one's shoes. For the world's best shoeshine, it was, the author of the article claimed, a dead-heat tie between the shines available at Grand Central Station and at the Pierre Hotel in New York. This man on Geary Street in San Francisco should have been in the running.

Working away, he told me he was from Calabria, which he loved, though he found it impossible to earn a living there. After he asked me my age, he told me that he was seventy-two, and had attempted to retire, but after three days at home concluded it was not for him. He had four daughters, all living in northern California, and ten grandchildren.


Darren Gygi

We spoke as two men of the world, and I hope I report accurately when I say there was no condescension on either side. The shine was first-class—it lasted sixteen days. I never asked him how much it cost. When I dismounted from the chair, I handed him a $10 bill. "*Grazie*," he said. Had I been wearing a hat, I would have tipped it to him.

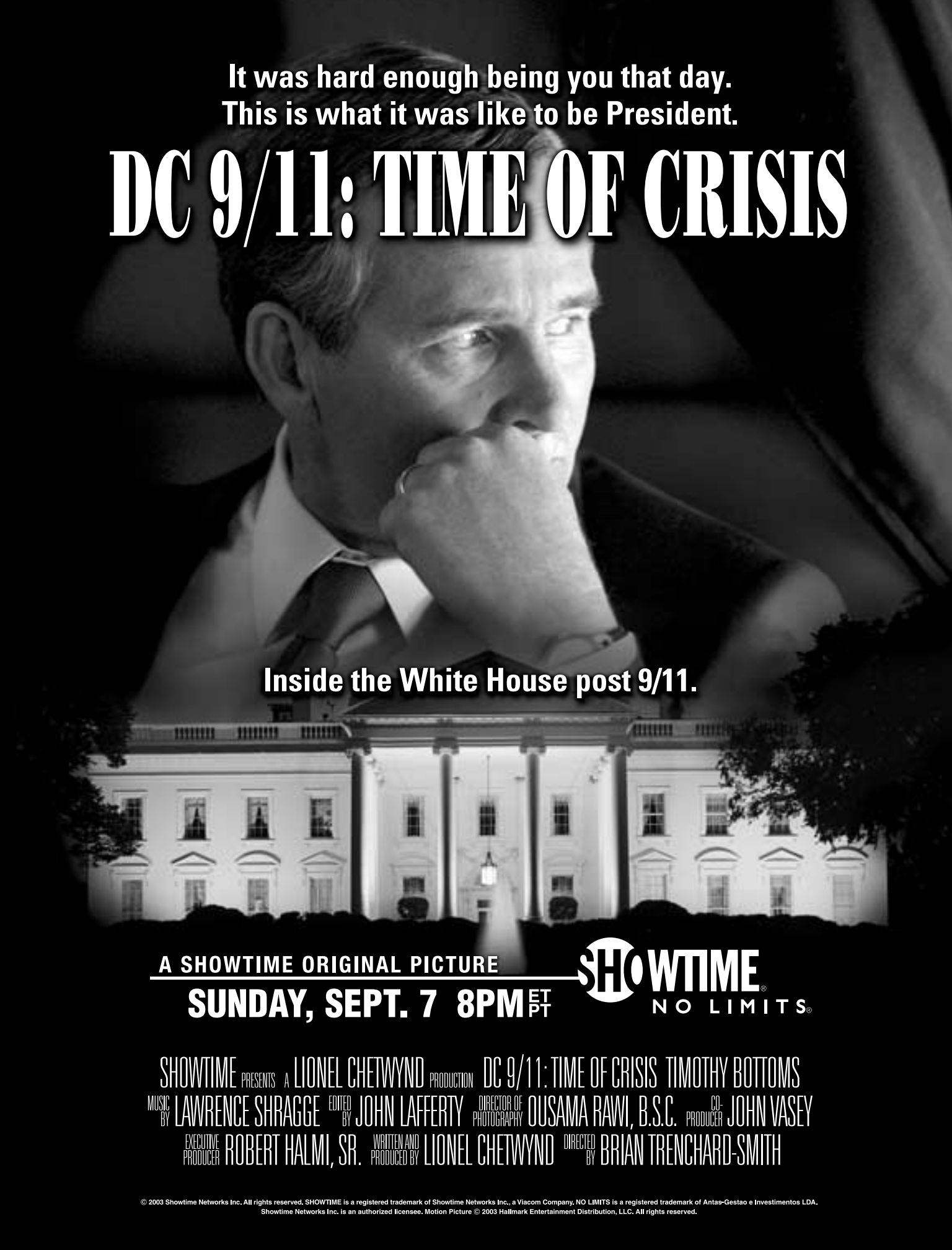
I walked off, admiring the deep brown gleam of my shoes, and pleased, not for the first time in my life, that I wasn't Gene Kelly, or I should have had to tap-dance down Geary Street all the way to Union Square, singing a lyric of doubtless astonishing banality. While perhaps less than Prozacian in its power of uplift, something there is about a fresh shoeshine that exhilarates, or at least it does me. Well-pleated pants, a colorful necktie, a good shine, and thou, and city living is paradise enow.

As a boy, I was asked to shine my father's shoes, which, unlike other small chores I was given, I didn't in the least mind. I don't recall spending much time shining my own shoes as an adolescent. Sometimes, if I were feeling flush, I might have a shoeshine in a barbershop. In the Army, shoe-shining could be nearly a full-time job. My fellow troopers, or at least the more gung-ho among them, would buy alcohol, Q-tips, and special cloths (let us not speak of the expenditure of vast quantities of spit) to achieve the highest possible sheen on their black boots and shoes. When I was a draftee in the peacetime Army, dedicated to a mediocrity of general performance, my own shines came out considerably lower than the highest wattage but were, somehow, passable.

After shining my shoes nowadays, life seems to be a touch more promising. I don't suppose anyone notices that my shoes are shined, but I, for some reason, notice when they are not. (In this, the age of the gym shoe, some men may no longer own leather shoes.) The notion of having shined shoes speaks to holding up standards, even if in a very minor way.

What really pleased me about my shoeshine in San Francisco was the craft that went into it, which, even though the task might be small, seemed to me of a high order. This Calabrian was a man supplying a service; I required that service. He knew what he was doing, and did it well. The phrase "a pleasure doing business with you," which I uttered when we parted, did not, for once, seem mere cant.

JOSEPH EPSTEIN



Correspondence

Saudi Snake Oil

Max Singer correctly challenges the conventional perception of Saudi power ("Saudi Arabia's Overrated Oil Weapon," August 18), but one doesn't win wars by underestimating one's enemy. Singer dismisses Saudi Arabia's ability to utilize its spare production capacity and lower extraction costs. The Saudis have dumped oil on the market to maintain market share as recently as 1998, in response to increased Venezuelan production. Because Saudi extraction costs are below $2.50 per barrel, they could still afford to dump oil to scuttle a $15 per barrel competitor like the "unconventional oil" Singer praises.

Singer concludes that "there is no strategic imperative for the United States to reduce its 'dependency' on imported oil by reducing oil consumption." Really? The International Energy Agency projects that non-OPEC oil production will peak around 2015. The way to nail the Saudis is through American development of oil hybrids, ethanol blends, and fuel cells. In an age of terrorism, energy efficiency is the fastest, most reliable way to energy independence. Neither foreign governments nor vulnerable pipelines need be relied upon. Ignoring efficiency means playing with fire.

Jack Halpern
New York, NY

Oil's Not Well

In discussing the financing of the Iraqi occupation, Irwin M. Stelzer ("A Foreign Policy Worth Paying For," August 18) proposes the imposition of a $5 per barrel tax on imported oil. While it would certainly please the powerful ethanol lobby, this tax is nothing but a tariff. And it would surely lead to the imposition of a "windfall profit" tax on domestic producers and to political pressure for exemptions for stripper wells, Canadian tar-sands oil, and synthetic motor fuels. In other words, it would open the proverbial can of worms.

A far better scheme for raising revenues might be a sizable increase in the federal tax on gasoline and other motor fuels. This would not only lower the level of imports, but also reduce driving and traffic congestion, and raise the demand for more fuel-efficient cars. It might even force SUVs off the roads, at least for commuting to work.

On the other hand, there may be a case for putting a different kind of import fee on the books, even though it would likely remain unexercised. A variable fee—not a fixed tariff—to establish a floor price for imported oil would guard against price manipulation by OPEC that drops the price for a short period only, say to $10 a barrel, but long enough to damage U.S. oil production permanently.

S. Fred Singer
Arlington, VA

Dangerous Diplomacy

For a response to Robert Satloff's assertion that Radio Sawa is "a failure waiting to happen" ("How to Win Friends and Influence Arabs," August 18), we should turn to another issue of The Weekly Standard, and an article by Stephen F. Hayes ("Liberating Iraq," April 14). He was in a base camp with Free Iraqi Forces waiting for word to move forward, deeper into Iraq: "The Iraqis huddle outside the front door . . . following war developments on the radio. The most accurate news, they say, comes from Radio Sawa, a U.S. government outlet that broadcasts in Arabic. . . . Their listening habits mirror those inside Iraq, according to the Iraqis we have met in southern towns such as Umm Qasr and Safwan."

Kenneth Tomlinson
Broadcasting Board of Governors
Washington, DC

Robert Satloff presents an accurate assessment of the problems faced by the U.S. government's public diplomacy functions. It would not be unreasonable to say that, as far as the Middle East is concerned, these functions are in disarray. Public diplomacy in the Middle East is broken and needs to be fixed. However, we take exception to Satloff's assertion that Radio Sawa is "a failure waiting to happen." To the contrary, it is a failure in progress. Radio Sawa—the creation of Norman J. Pattiz, a Clinton administration appointee to the Broadcasting Board of Governors—is a travesty. Broadcasting pop music to the Middle East with a minimum of news and other information about the United States serves no useful public diplomacy purpose.

The government, through the Broadcasting Board of Governors, is spending taxpayer funds to provide, in essence, free entertainment to teenagers in the Middle East. And to make matters worse, it cost the taxpayers of this country at least $35 million just for the first year.

As for the alleged "success" of Radio Sawa, such claims by the Broadcasting Board of Governors have been suspect from the beginning. Actual audience numbers were probably no greater, and perhaps even less, than those listening to the Voice of America (VOA) Arabic service before it was abolished and replaced with Radio Sawa. The yearly cost of the VOA Arabic Service was one-tenth that of Radio Sawa.

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the weekly Standard

Do What It Takes in Iraq

National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice gave an important speech a couple of weeks ago, in which she called on the United States to make a "generational commitment" to bringing political and economic reform to the long-neglected Middle East—a commitment not unlike that which we made to rebuild Europe after the Second World War. It was a stirring speech, made all the more potent by the knowledge that it reflects the president's own vision. President Bush recognizes that, as is so often the case, American ideals and American interests converge in such a project, that a more democratic Middle East will both improve the lives of long-suffering peoples and enhance America's national security.

For all our admiration for this bold, long-term vision, however, there is reason to be worried about the execution of that policy in the first and probably most important test of our "generational commitment." Make no mistake: The president's vision will, in the coming months, either be launched successfully in Iraq, or it will die in Iraq. Indeed, there is more at stake in Iraq than even this vision of a better, safer Middle East. The future course of American foreign policy, American world leadership, and American security is at stake. Failure in Iraq would be a devastating blow to everything the United States hopes to accomplish, and must accomplish, in the decades ahead.

We believe the president and his top advisers understand the magnitude of the task. That is why it is so baffling that, up until now, the Bush administration has failed to commit resources to the rebuilding of Iraq commensurate with these very high stakes. Certainly, American efforts in Iraq since the end of the war have not been a failure. And considering what might have gone wrong—and which so many critics predicted would go wrong—the results have been in many ways admirable. Iraq has not descended into inter-religious and inter-ethnic violence. There is food and water. Hospitals are up and running. The Arab and Muslim worlds have not erupted in chaos or anger, as so many of our European friends confidently predicted.

But the absence of catastrophic failure is not, unfortunately, evidence of impending success. As any number of respected analysts visiting Iraq have reported, and as recent horrific events have demonstrated, there is much to worry about. Basic security, both for Iraqis and for coalition and other international workers in Iraq, is lacking. Continuing power shortages throughout much of the country have damaged the reputation of the United States as a responsible occupying power and have led many Iraqis to question American intentions. Ongoing assassinations and sabotage of public utilities by pro-Saddam forces and, possibly, by terrorists entering the country from neighboring Syria and Iran threaten to destabilize the tenuous peace that has held in Iraq since the end of the war.

In short, while it is indeed possible that, with a little luck, the United States can muddle through to success in Iraq over the coming months, the danger is that the resources the administration is devoting to Iraq right now are insufficient, and the speed with which they are being deployed is insufficiently urgent. These failings, if not corrected soon, could over time lead to disaster. Three big issues stand out.

* **Where are the troops?** It is painfully obvious that there are too few American troops operating in Iraq. Senior military officials privately suggest that we need two more divisions. The simple fact is, right now there are too few good guys chasing the bad guys—hence the continuing sabotage. There are too few forces to patrol the Syrian and Iranian borders to prevent the infiltration of international terrorists trying to open a new front against the United States in Iraq. There are too few forces to protect vital infrastructure and public buildings. And contrary to what some say, more troops don't mean more casualties. More troops mean fewer casualties—both American and Iraqi.

The really bad news is that the Pentagon plans to draw down U.S. forces even further in coming months. Their hope is that U.S. forces will be replaced by new Iraqi forces and by an influx of allied troops from around the world. We fear this is wishful thinking. It seems unlikely that any Iraqi force capable of providing security will be in place by the spring. And as for the international community—never mind whether we could ever convince France and other countries to make a serious contribution. In truth, our European allies do not have that many troops to spare. And

consider the possibly unfortunate effects of turning over the security of Iraqis to a patchwork of ill-prepared forces from elsewhere in the world.

That's why calls from members of Congress to "internationalize" the force and give the U.N. a preeminent role are unhelpful, and really beside the point, at this critical juncture. Senator Biden is correct to say that "we have a hell of a team over there, but they don't have enough of anything." But he's wrong to suggest that a meaningful part of the solution would be "to internationalize" this. And when Rep. Mark Kirk says that "every international peacekeeper brought in is a chance to replace an American," he's raising false hopes among the American people. Such calls for "internationalization" also signal to Iraqi Baathists and Islamic radicals an inclination on the part of the United States to cut and run.

It's true that, unfortunately, we don't have many troops to spare, either: We should have begun rebuilding our military two years ago. And it is true that increasing the size of our forces, both in Iraq and overall, is unattractive to administration officials. But this is the time to bite the bullet and pay the price. Next spring, if disaster looms, it will be harder. And it may be too late.

⋆ **Where is the money?** The same goes for the financial resources the administration has sought for Iraqi reconstruction. It is simply unconscionable that debilitating power shortages persist in Iraq, turning Iraqi public opinion against the United States. This is one of those problems that can be solved with enough money. And yet the money has not been made available. This is just the most disturbing example of a general pattern. The Iraqi economy needs an infusion of assistance, to build up infrastructure, to improve the daily lives of the Iraqi people, to put a little money in Iraqi pockets so that pessimism can turn to optimism. There has also been a stunning shortage of democracy assistance, at a time when, according to surveys taken by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, Iraq is undergoing an explosion of political activity.

We understand the administration's fear of asking Congress for the necessary funds for Iraq. The price tag, which may be close to $60 billion, will provide fodder for opportunistic Democratic presidential hopefuls who are already complaining that money spent in Iraq would be better spent in the United States. But, again, the time to bite the bullet is now, not six months from now when Iraq turns to crisis and the American campaign season is fully underway. If Rice and others are serious about making a "generational commitment" equivalent to that which followed the Second World War, then this is the necessary down payment.

⋆ **Where are the personnel?** The American military is not alone in facing a shortage of people in Iraq. Everyone returning from Iraq comments on the astonishing lack of American civilians as well. Until recently, only a handful of State Department employees have been at work in Iraq. The State Department, we gather, has had a difficult time attracting volunteers to work in Iraq. This is understandable. But it is unacceptable. If the administration is serious about drawing an analogy with the early Cold War years, it should remember that the entire U.S. government oriented itself then to the new challenge. We need to do the same now. The administration must insist that the State Department pull its weight. Indeed, we need to deploy diplomats and civil servants, hire contract workers, and mobilize people and resources in an urgent and serious way. Business as usual is not acceptable. Getting the job done in Iraq is our highest priority, and our government needs to treat it as such.

These are the core problems the Bush administration needs to address. Success in Iraq is within our reach. But there are grounds to fear that on the current trajectory, we won't get there. The president knows that failure in Iraq is intolerable. Now is the time to act decisively to prevent it.

—Robert Kagan and William Kristol

The High Stakes of 2004

Everything's up for grabs.

BY WILLIAM KRISTOL

THE 2004 presidential election will be the biggest in at least a generation. Perhaps more. The choice between Bush and Dean/Kerry/Hillary (to list Democrats in the order of their chance to become the nominee) will be the starkest since Reagan-Mondale in 1984. More will be at stake in terms of the direction of the country than in any election since 1980, or perhaps since 1964. After the last decade's noticeably smaller elections, in terms both of starkness of choice and magnitude of consequence, 2004 will be the real thing.

Let's start with foreign policy. The Bush administration's response to September 11 was ambitious and unambiguous. It seemed to have bipartisan support for a while. No longer. Bush's Democratic opponent in 2004 looks likely to oppose fundamentally the Bush Doctrine and its most prominent instantiation so far, the war in Iraq. So we will have a Reagan-Mondale degree of difference on foreign policy, made more consequential by the fact that we are at the genesis of a new foreign policy era. The implications of September 11 for American foreign policy, the basic choices as to America's role in the world, will be on the table. They will not be resolved in November 2004 once and for all—things never are. But they may well be resolved for a generation.

At home, the entire federal judiciary is at stake. Again, it's not that every Bush appointee will be a Scalia, or every Democrat a Souter (oops)—but no one doubts that the (unfortunately) ever more powerful courts will look radically different by 2008 if Bush or a Democrat is president. Indeed, in thinking of the judiciary, one is reminded of the court-packing effort following the election of 1936. Issues of the size and role of government will of course be nowhere near so dramatically posed in 2004 as they were then—though the contrast between a Bush administration proud of its tax cuts and a Democratic opponent pledged to roll many of them back is not trivial.

James Bennett

But even more striking is the divide over social and cultural issues. Bush is no aggressive culture warrior. But he is pretty unambiguously on the pro-life, anti-gay-marriage, worried-about-Brave-New-World, pro-religion-in-the-public-sphere side of the culture divide. The Democratic candidate is likely to pretty unambiguously embody a secular, progressivist, liberationist worldview. The partisan divide between religious and secular voters has been growing, and in 2004 it might well be the widest in modern American history. The losing side won't surrender, and the winner won't have an entirely free hand to make policy. But who wins will matter a lot.

In addition, Bush will be only the third incumbent in 60 years running for election with his party having controlled Congress the previous two years. Such reelections tend to be major referenda on the direction of the country. Carter ran in 1980 and lost badly, and Democrats lost the Senate for the first time in a generation, as well as working control of the House. When Johnson won big in 1964, he swept in Democrats all down the ticket. And the policy changes that followed both elections were, to say the least, significant.

Imagine the two most likely outcomes in 2004: a Bush victory, almost certainly accompanied by increased GOP majorities in both houses of Congress, and by a pickup of gubernatorial and legislative seats, leaving Republicans as the true governing party for the first time since the New Deal; and a Bush defeat, which would mean that the Democrat would have received more votes than the Republican in four straight presidential elections. In the latter case, even if the GOP hung onto majorities in Congress, moderate Republicans would suddenly be interested in working with a Democratic president, and bitter fights would emerge among Republicans and conservatives, rather than among liberals and Democrats.

So: the Bush doctrine abroad, a moderately conservative judiciary at home, an administration putting its thumb (however gingerly) on the conservative side of the scale in the culture wars. Or a Dean-Kerry doctrine abroad, an ever more liberal and activist judiciary, and the most culturally left-wing Democratic administration in 40 years.

The stakes could hardly be higher. ♦

William Kristol is editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

In Your Heart, You Know He's . . .

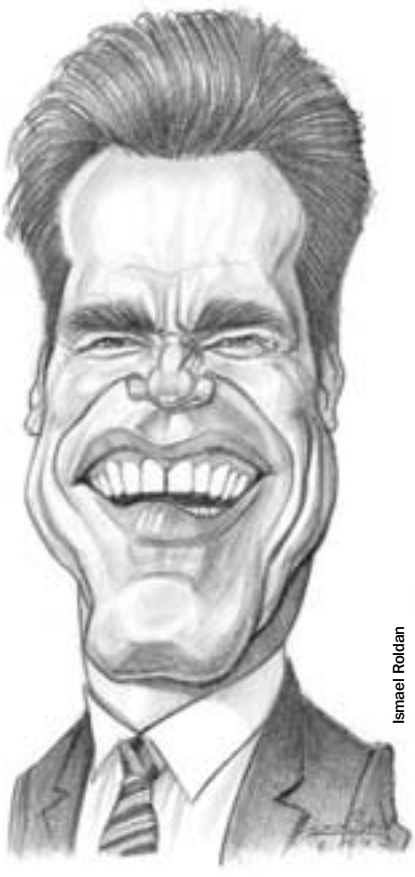
Not really a conservative (but it may not matter).

BY FRED BARNES

RUSH LIMBAUGH, the king of talk radio, was one of Arnold Schwarzenegger's sharpest conservative critics. He zinged the actor-turned-candidate on his show and wrote in the *Wall Street Journal* that Schwarzenegger "has yet to embrace any conservative positions." But after Schwarzenegger's first press conference last week, in which he opposed raising taxes and backed spending cuts in the California state budget, Limbaugh began to change his mind. He was "encouraged by Arnold's performance" and said his candidacy for governor was "much further along" in stressing conservative ideas than even a few weeks ago. Schwarzenegger, Limbaugh found, has the "potential to 'own' the state."

Limbaugh's warming ("I still have reservations") is a measure of Schwarzenegger's progress in courting conservative voters for the October 7 recall election. And Limbaugh matters. Though not from California, he is a major factor in shaping grassroots conservative opinion. A California bellwether is Jim Brulte, the Republican leader in the state senate. Brulte has been a skeptic on the recall, worrying it could leave Republicans worse off if Gov. Gray Davis is removed, which is now likely, and replaced by a more popular Democrat such as Lt. Gov. Cruz Bustamante. But Brulte was so impressed by Schwarzenegger that he belatedly endorsed the recall and declared the press conference performance "perfect."

Conservative Republican voters are the key to Schwarzenegger's election as governor. A moderate Republican, he has crossover appeal to independents and some Democrats. But to win in a Democratic state like California, a Republican must capture most of the conservative base. Schwarzenegger doesn't have to persuade conservatives he's one of them—which would be difficult, because he isn't—only that he's *conservative enough*.



Ismael Roldan

Arnold Schwarzenegger

The strategy Schwarzenegger is pursuing comes from Pete Wilson, not Ronald Reagan. Wilson, now co-chair of Schwarzenegger's campaign, was elected governor in 1990 and reelected in 1994 on basically four stands: fiscally conservative, tough on crime, pro-environment, and pro-abortion. Schwarzenegger is a Wilsonian on the environment and abortion, which is bound to displease conservatives. But neither is a critical issue in the recall election—nor is crime. That leaves taxes and spending as the defining issue of Schwarzenegger's campaign.

Here, Schwarzenegger showed himself to be a good conservative at his press conference. He fervently endorsed Prop. 13's limit on property taxes. He called for a "constitutional spending cap" on state expenditures. He used a medical analogy to support spending cuts: "Sometimes, as a surgeon will say, you have to cut to save the patient and this is what this situation is." Then he added, "Stop, stop, stop, with the spending." Schwarzenegger came close to ruling out any tax increases, insisting Californians "have not been undertaxed." (California is the second-highest tax state in the country.) Taxing "goes on all day long" in California, he said. "Tax, tax, tax, tax, tax."

But Schwarzenegger has declined to sign a blanket pledge of no new taxes. One reason, an aide said, was polling by his campaign that found a majority of voters didn't like a flat pledge. The problem is that candidates who balk at a no-tax pledge, once in office, often wind up hiking taxes. Thus some conservatives may avoid Schwarzenegger and stick with the two major Republican candidates who've taken the pledge—state senator Tom McClintock and Bill Simon, who lost to Davis in 2002.

The question is whether conservative instincts on taxes and spending will capture enough Republican voters. Wilson also had the crime issue, and Schwarzenegger may need a substitute. It won't be school choice. Schwarzenegger has already assured the California Teachers Association he's against vouchers. Ken Khachigian, an influential Republican, has suggested the death penalty, which is rarely applied in California. But, Khachigian concedes, Schwarzeneg-

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ger might not be comfortable hammering on that issue. Maybe it would be wise for the Terminator to steer clear of capital punishment.

What does that leave? Leadership, the Schwarzenegger camp says. I rolled my eyes when I heard this, but maybe it will work for Schwarzenegger. He does have a commanding presence. At his press conference, he had total control over the gaggle of reporters. And though he was flanked by two intellectual heavyweights, investor Warren Buffett and former Secretary of State George Schultz, he used them essentially as props. Reagan once said having been an actor came in handy in politics, and Schwarzenegger reenforced that point with his flawless performance.

Two final questions: How should he deal with the other Republican candidates, and is Schwarzenegger the new Reagan? The answers are, one, he should let Republican leaders handle the other candidates at an appropriate time and, two, no. The time for coming to grips with his Republican foes is mid-September. If Schwarzenegger has a clear but not insurmountable lead over Bustamante, a Republican troika—Brulte, Republican state assembly leader Dave Cox, and state chair Duf Sundheim—will visit McClintock, Simon, and Peter Ueberroth, and urge them to drop out. In one poll, their cumulative vote matched Schwarzenegger's. If that holds, he'll lose. Winning may require Ueberroth and either McClintock or Simon to pack it in and endorse him.

The new Reagan? The best answer I've heard comes from Limbaugh. "I am not buying the Reagan comparison," he told me. "Reagan did not need two weeks of meetings with what basically amounted to coaching sessions to establish his core beliefs. . . . Reagan informed his advisers, not the other way around." But, Limbaugh said, "Arnold has shown, at least publicly, that he can learn. . . . I am encouraged and just want Arnold to be who he really is. He will be unstoppable if he will just do that." Unstoppable perhaps, but not quite Reaganesque. ♦

What the Blackout Made Clear

Fixing the grid requires tradeoffs Americans may not want to make. BY IRWIN M. STELZER

THE SCRAMBLE IS ON. Politicians who have spent decades watching our vulnerability to power outages greeted the recent massive blackout with the plaintive cry, "If only you'd listened to me . . ."

New Mexico governor Bill Richardson, secretary of energy when Bill Clinton was cavorting in the White House, grabbed lots of airtime by claiming, "We are a major superpower with a third-world electrical grid." President Bush, without specifying who has been asleep at the switch, said, "We will use this rolling blackout as a wake-up call for the need to modernize our electricity delivery system." But the Republican mayor of New York, Mike Bloomberg, seems unlikely to be awakened from his slumber. "There are worse things than taking a summer Friday off from work," he told New Yorkers, many of whom had been trapped in elevators and subways, and were forced to sleep on the city's none-too-soft pavement before spending their delightful Friday off trying to get home for the weekend.

Environmental groups, of course, chimed in. If only Americans weren't so wedded to their air conditioners and electrical gadgets; or were willing to spend thousands of dollars on conservation devices that would save a few dollars' worth of electricity; or (more sensibly), if only the utilities would create economic incentives for some users to back off the system when capacity is strained, none of this would have happened. Not to be left behind in the race to write a prescription before the problem had been properly diagnosed was the gaggle of technopatriots who glory in America's technology. They rushed onto the air and into print to blame the Canadians, who they alleged started the blackout that took more than 100 power plants out of service and darkened 60 million consumers in New York, Detroit, Cleveland, and great swaths of the Northeast and Midwest. Alas, it turns out that the Canadians were co-victims, not perpetrators in this black comedy of errors: The failure began with a nine-second instability in power flows in the Midwest and cascaded into Canada, not the other way around.

Vice President Dick Cheney's much maligned National Energy Policy Development Group (the one that outraged Democrats by consulting in confidence with experts from the energy industry) can rightly claim a bit of foresight. The group's May 2001 report pointed out, "The transmission system is the highway for interstate commerce in electricity. . . . Transmission constraints limit these power flows [between regions], and result in consumers paying higher prices for electricity. . . . Federal law governing the responsibility for siting transmission facilities was written in 1935. . . . Much has changed since 1935." The report goes on to recommend that the president direct the secretary of energy to "identify transmission bottlenecks and . . . measures to remove transmission bottlenecks."

But, just as in 1965 and 1977, nothing much happened.

Those earlier blackouts, the latter of

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Times Square, August 15, 2003

Getty / Matthew Peyton

which led to a major breakdown of law and order in New York City, produced little change in the way we operate the thousands of miles of wires that bring power from generators scattered around the country to homes, farms, factories, and offices. The transmission of power is the issue, not its generation. A surplus of generating capacity has kept electricity prices down in most places, as suppliers compete with one another for customers in this partially deregulated industry. But excess generating capacity in upstate New York is of little use to New York City because of inadequate transmission facilities.

It is the transmission infrastructure that failed us in 1965, 1977, and again in 2003, just as the Cheney report and others predicted it would. But the gap between recommendation and effective legislative and regulatory action is as large now as it ever was. True, after the 1965 outage we did establish the North American Electric Reliability Council to set rules that would preclude another such incident. But as Michehl Gent, president and CEO of that organization, admits, "If we've designed a system for this not to happen, then how did it happen? I'm embarrassed I can't answer that."

It is also true that we have no reason to be surprised by the most recent collapse of the transmission grid. Five years ago, a panel of experts told the Department of Energy that failure to improve the grid "will leave substantial parts of North America at unacceptable risk." Two years ago, the general counsel of Gent's council announced, "The question is not whether, but when, the next major failure of the grid will occur." And, after digesting the Cheney report, the Department of Energy as recently as last month warned, "The nation's aging electromechanical electric grid cannot keep pace with innovations in the digital information and telecommunications network."

The task force set up by Energy secretary Spence Abraham and his Canadian counterpart will undoubtedly figure out precisely what went wrong this time. Not that the immediate cause of this incident, whether it be a failure of some bit of equipment or human error, is of great importance. The real fault, dear readers, lies not in our equipment, but in ourselves, and our fondness for the laws and institutions that make it difficult to construct a rational transmission policy. Solutions there are, but all involve costs we might not be willing to bear.

Start with "due process," one of the greatest of our institutions. We have an elaborate set of adversarial procedures and safeguards designed to prevent innocent people from being hanged or incarcerated. Over time, however, we have transplanted a good many of those courtroom rules into administrative and regulatory proceedings, such as the ones that approve new electricity transmission lines.

The predictable results include squabbling over how much time is to be allowed the parties to appraise the evidence; briefs on often obscure points of law; interventions by parties directly, indirectly, and often not-at-all affected by the planned facilities; and the host of lawyerly moves and countermoves that might be needed when a life is at stake, but go a long way towards hampering the expeditious and expert decision-making process that administrative tribunals were set up to deliver.

This adherence to procedural due process favors any party that opposes approval of a project, for delay adds to cost and may eventually discourage investors to the point that they withdraw their application. This fact is not lost on environmental groups, competitors who might be threatened by approval, or local folks most affected by the inevitably intrusive nature of many of these projects.

The solution seems simple: Change the rules under which these hearings are conducted. But that would mean sacrificing the principle that only vigorously contested adversarial proceedings can produce a just and reasonable result, and that everyone affected by an agency's decision has a right to be heard directly, or at least represented. Besides, the courts are ever on the alert for violations of procedural due process, and they are inclined to reverse the decisions of administrative agencies that do not give all parties an opportunity to be heard—and heard, and heard.

Even if we were willing to change the rules that govern siting in the interests of expedition, we would run into another cherished belief—that decisions affecting the lives of individuals should be made at the level of government closest to them. Although the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission has the power to grant rights of way to natural gas pipelines, it has no such power over electric transmission facilities. That power resides in

the states. And, as the Cheney report points out, "State decisions on where to locate transmission lines often do not recognize the importance of proposed transmission facilities to the interstate grid." Which is a polite way of saying that NIMBY (not-in-my-backyard) reigns.

Officials in Connecticut saw no reason to approve a transmission line that would run under Long Island Sound and bring much-needed power to Long Island. After all, local environmentalists opposed the line—something to do with oyster beds, if I recall—and Long Islanders don't vote in Connecticut. Similarly, a Vermont farmer sees no reason why he should stare at a transmission tower so that New Yorkers too dumb to move north can run their air conditioners all night.

There are two ways to solve this problem. Economists recommend bribes, or what they prefer to call market incentives. Pay the state of Connecticut a sum that will enable it to finance programs that its citizens value more than oysters. And pay the Vermont farmer for the intrusion on his view. A New York utility executive who managed to get high-voltage transmission wires strung across the state told me that he had gone from town to town asking each community what it wanted. He then distributed a fire engine here, a new swimming pool there, a skating rink in still another town. The line was built. Another executive tells me that the best way to get a town to approve the siting of some utility facility is to make a modest donation to the volunteer fire company. Whatever.

But such a market is not easy to organize. Which is why the Cheney group hit on an easier solution: federal preemption of state and local rights to approve the siting of new transmission facilities. "The siting process must be changed to reflect the interstate nature of the transmission system . . . with the goal of creating a reliable national transmission grid." If you love big and bigger government, you will love this idea. If you think that the folks who brought you an energy policy that enriches corn growers in Iowa (subsidized ethanol) and corrupt royals in Riyadh should determine the structure of our grid, you will love the federal preemption idea even more.

Fortunately, or unfortunately, depending on your point of view, most governors and mayors hate the idea. As do politically potent state regulators, who fear that the feds will approve expensive facilities, forcing major increases in the rates paid by consumers. As the state bureaucrats see it, the feds will get the credit for increased reliability, and the state regulators will get the blame for higher rates.

Then there is the small matter of where the estimated $50-$100 billion for upgrading the transmission system will come from. The government is the preferred source for those who have long believed that our interests would be served by nationalization of the electric grid. But even if the federal government could come up with the funds for such a project, it is not clear that we want to see a federal takeover of our transmission system, or even a part of it. Again, imagine a system operated by the long line of political has-beens who have been rewarded with the job of secretary of energy only because it would be too risky to make them postmaster general.

Which means that we must rely on private capital. Small problem: Private investors complain that the returns regulators allow on investments in transmission systems are too low to reward them for the costs and risks of financing such facilities.

I have been around electric utility executives long enough to know that many are the financial equivalents of nymphomaniacs—they can never get enough. Some will appear one day on Wall Street to regale analysts with glowing reports of current earnings, and will appear the next day in their state capitols or in Washington to share with regulators sad tales of impending bankruptcy. But ultimately, we need more investment in transmission facilities—perhaps not for the massive duplication of existing lines that excites the imaginations of engineers eager for something to build, but for the construction of lines around bottlenecks and, equally important, for investment in technologies and equipment that will enable us to isolate trouble spots by means other than plunging a good part of the country into darkness. Private investors' inaction speaks louder than words: There just isn't enough profit available to make the game worth the candle.

The solution might be to allow competitive bidding for the right to augment existing transmission systems with more capacity or improved technology, with the project to go to the bidder who offers to do the job at least cost to consumers. I understand that such a system is working well in Australia, and it certainly seems worth considering here before we turn more responsibility over to a federal government not famous for the efficient operation of such facilities as it now controls—think forest fires, undelivered mail, Iraq's electric system.

Unattended, the problem will get worse. The anemic economic growth of the past two years has reduced the rate of growth of electricity consumption, and therefore the strain on our transmission system. But thanks to the dynamic duo of Greenspan (low interest rates) and Bush (tax cuts), the economy is again growing, probably at an annual rate of around 4 percent. That surely means that we will be using more electricity in the near future, taxing the transmission grid beyond its ability to provide reliable service unless upgraded.

We will never eliminate the possibility of human error or equipment failure. But we can reduce both the frequency of such events and their consequences. All we have to do is surrender some due process protections, replace local with federal control of where transmission towers and lines may be sited, and add several billions to our electric bills. Perhaps an occasional blackout—it is, after all, 25 years since the last one of this magnitude—is the lesser evil, especially if we can arrange future outages for the summer Fridays that Mike Bloomberg feels we are entitled to have off. ♦

Drafting General Clark

Another slippery candidate from Arkansas.

BY MATTHEW CONTINETTI

GENERAL WESLEY K. CLARK is running for president. Maybe. With little over a year left before the 2004 election, NATO's former supreme allied commander hasn't announced his candidacy. But Clark sure is *considering* a run as a Democrat for commander in chief, as he tells any reporter who will listen to him.

Clark certainly acts like a presidential candidate. He appeared on NBC's *Meet the Press* in June. In July, he fielded questions from George Stephanopoulos on ABC's *This Week*. In August, he entered CNN's *Crossfire* and appeared on *NewsNight with Aaron Brown*. Media coverage of the general, a former Rhodes scholar who graduated at the top of his class at West Point, is positive. This isn't surprising. Clark, at 58, is an intelligent, articulate, and telegenic retired general who led a coalition of 19 often querulous nations to victory in the Kosovo conflict.

Clark's supporters like to compare him to Dwight D. Eisenhower. Both men were successful generals who led NATO. Most important, both were recruited to run for president. A group of "Draft Clark" activists has pushed the general to run through petitions and websites. Taking cues from Eisenhower's 1952 campaign, the activists want Clark to play the reluctant warrior who is called to serve his country in a time of crisis. They've even made a television commercial that has already aired in New Hampshire.

But the Eisenhower comparison breaks down on close inspection, for a couple of reasons. While few people outside politics have heard of Clark, Eisenhower was one of the most popular figures in American history. On television, Clark speaks as if there were a public outcry for a change in leadership today, just as there was when Eisenhower was pressured into running for president in 1952. But Clark's analysis flies in the face of President Bush's approval ratings, which hover around 60 percent.

Wesley Clark

Drew Friedman

Then there's the question of partisanship. Ike hadn't even voted for president when he first ran for the office, and he ran as a Republican largely by default. Clark strikes a similar pose. He refuses to admit that he's a Democrat. "I haven't said [that I'd run as a Democrat]," Clark said on NBC. "I've been nonpartisan. I'm a centrist on most of these issues, and I've got people after me from both sides of the aisle." He often mentions that he was a White House fellow in the Ford administration, though White House fellows aren't appointed by the president.

Aping Eisenhower, Clark would like to appear nonpartisan. But the truth is Clarke's a moderate Democrat. This isn't too hard to figure out: Speculation about a presidential bid started when Clark met with some Democratic fundraisers in New York City last October. Clark has encouraged Howard Dean's insurgency. And he's voted in Democratic primaries in Arkansas—an act that requires him to be a registered Democrat.

Clark's refusal to admit he's a Democrat points to his biggest liability. He's a slippery character whose public statements remind you of a fellow Rhodes scholar from Arkansas. It turns out that Clark's supporters compare the general to the wrong president. Clark is more Clinton than Eisenhower.

Just look at Clark's story, first told on *Meet the Press*, that he received a call on 9/11 from "people around the White House" urging him to publicly link the terrorist attacks to Saddam Hussein. On Fox's *Hannity and Colmes* two weeks later, Clark pinned the call on "a fellow in Canada who is part of a Middle Eastern think tank who gets inside intelligence information." When Hannity pressed Clark further, the general ended the line of questioning by saying he wouldn't "go into" his White House sources. A month after Clark's charge was picked up by columnist Paul Krugman, the *New York Times* published a letter from Clark attempting to clarify his story. This time, Clark said the only phone call he received was from a man at a "Middle East think tank" in Canada.

There's only one problem. There isn't really a "Middle East think tank" in Canada. "If there were any, I'd be able to come up with their names pretty quickly," says David Rudd, president of the Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies. "If Clark was contacted by any purported experts or scholars, chances are they would be connected to a university."

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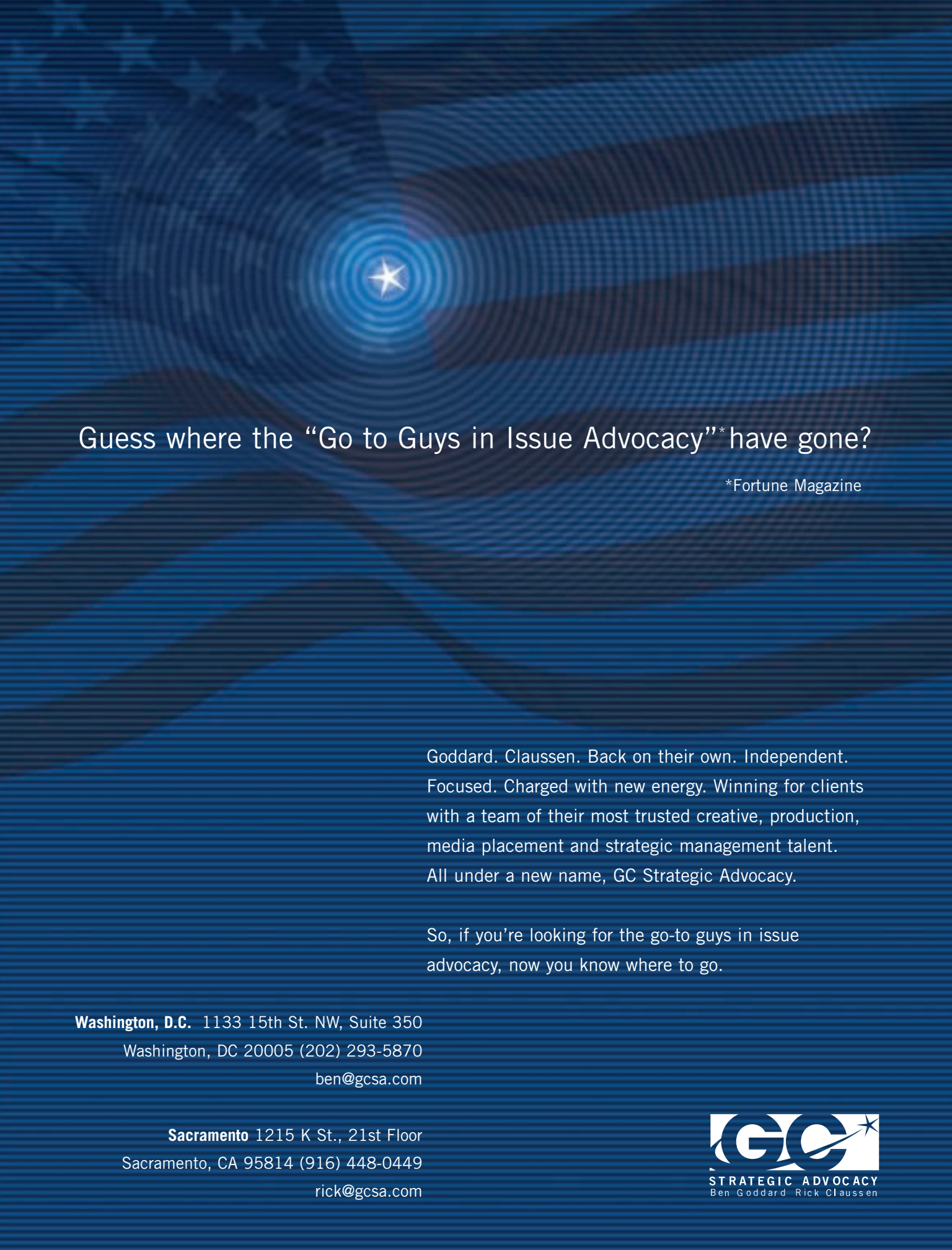

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There's also the question of Clark's involvement with the "Draft Clark" activists. Both Clark and the various groups encouraging his presidential ambitions say that there is no communication between the two camps. The record suggests otherwise. Two days after Clark told Tim Russert that he was "going to have to consider" running for president, "Draft Clark 2004" filed with the Federal Elections Commission to become a PAC.

According to *National Journal*'s politics *Hotline*, Clark recently told an "adviser" to "crank up" grassroots efforts in preparation for a Labor Day campaign announcement. Clark's message was also reported in the *Boston Globe*. But in the *Globe* report, Clark's "adviser" was said to be volunteers involved with the Draft Clark efforts. Susan Putney, New Hampshire coordinator of "Draft Clark 2004," says the message "didn't come to us directly," but "when he said it, we picked up on it right away." If Clark communicates with what might soon become his campaign staff, that's nothing to be ashamed of. Why does he pretend otherwise?

Clark's message to the Draft Clark movement isn't the only signal that he's moved closer to announcing his candidacy. Clark cancelled his gig as a military-affairs talking head on CNN in June, neutralizing any potential conflict-of-interest accusations. And while Clark's letter to the *New York Times* only further muddled his story (if he wants to be president, Clark is going to have to get better at dissembling on his feet), it was still a valiant attempt at damage control.

What happens if Clark enters the race? If he fails to capture the nomination, his supporters say the general would still make an attractive vice presidential candidate. Especially if the top of the ticket is someone who needs to burnish his national security credentials—someone like the current governor of Vermont. Get your "Dean-Clark 2004" bumper stickers ready. ♦

No Tax-Free Lunch?

Charities and the tax code.

BY CHESTER E. FINN JR.

THE SALMON-AND-RASPBERRIES world of private foundations is rattling its Pellegrino bottles over a tax bill that would alter a 30-year-old practice whereby most of the foundations' operating expenses—lunch included—are classified as "charitable activity."

A bipartisan cast in the House of Representatives, led by majority whip Roy Blunt of Missouri and Democrat Harold Ford Jr. of Tennessee, reportedly backed by the Bush administration, wants to bar foundations from counting "administrative expenses" toward their annual "payout" threshold. Please don't yawn. The terminology may be arcane, but the implications are sweeping and not necessarily welcome.

The mandatory payout rule for private foundations dates to 1969 when Congress—alarmed by donors who deducted large gifts to foundations that devoted little of the money to bona fide philanthropic activity—imposed a minimum annual spending rate on these nonprofits. At first, it was 6 percent of a foundation's assets, eased in 1976 to 5 percent.

Under current IRS regulations, almost everything foundations do with their money can count toward the obligatory charitable payout. This includes all overhead costs—which is what raised the eyebrows of Rep. Blunt and his cosponsors. It's no secret that some foundations live high on the hog, with big salaries for staff, generous stipends for trustees, and fancy offices—check out the Ford Foundation's soaring arboretum-atrium on East 43rd Street—not to mention comfy retreats in scenic places. Some also have sprawling public-relations staffs and innumerable consultants. In the name of philanthropy, foundations spend a lot of money on themselves and the upper-middle-class professionals they employ.

The bill's supporters hope that barring foundations from counting their overhead costs and various self-indulgences as charitable activity will ensure more of their money reaches the needy people they are supposed to help. For this reason, the new bill has been hailed by many charities that dream of gaining billions in additional grant dollars if it becomes law. (Let us not speak of the high-living and fat overheads that also characterize some of the 501[c]3 outfits on the receiving end.) Much editorial applause has followed. "Wealthy charities are most generous to themselves," scolded *USA Today*. "Bill promises billions to charities," shrieked a headline in the *San Jose Mercury News*.

The conservative opinion world has also supported the bill, drooling over the chance to stick it to Ford, MacArthur, and other major funders of the left wing. *National Review* and the *Wall Street Journal* have editorialized in favor. Most prominent right-of-center foundations welcome the measure or have declined to oppose it. They, too, would like to bring Ford and Carnegie and Packard down a notch. Of course the big liberal foundations are fighting back. The wealthiest of them banded together to hire former representative Bill Paxon, now an influential GOP lobbyist, to kill this feature of the bill.

But like most tax issues, this turns

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out to be more than a simple dispute between white-hat congressional crusaders and pampered moneyed interests. There is the awkward fact that America's 60,000-plus private foundations are so varied that these well-intended reforms cannot be uniformly implemented without crippling a lot of genuine charitable activity. Blunt's bill turns out to be, well, too blunt an instrument.

That's because its drafters assumed that all foundation expenditures split neatly into two categories: grants and overhead. Not so. Many of these organizations also engage in direct services that advance their charitable missions, but don't take the form of grant-making.

The Oklahoma-based Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation is such a hybrid. Besides making grants to (mostly conservative) charities, it has a sizable in-house scientific staff engaged in agricultural research. It devotes more than half its assets to such direct charitable activities. The Baltimore-based Annie E. Casey Foundation, besides making grants to (mostly liberal) causes, has an arm (Casey Family Services) that directly aids hundreds of needy kids and families, mainly in New England, with foster care, adoption, counseling, and such.

The far smaller Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, where I work, spends about two-fifths of its budget on direct education research (evaluating state academic standards and tests, for example), communication (an e-newsletter about school reform), publishing (our staff edits—and sometimes writes—the reports that we commission), and technical assistance, particularly to charter schools in Dayton, Ohio. Some of this we handle by making smallish grants to other organizations, but much is done via contracts (to expert researchers, for example) or by deploying our own tiny staff to work directly with schools, other education reformers, and policymakers. All of it conforms to our mission, which is to reinvigorate primary and secondary education, nationally and in Dayton, pursuant to academic rigor and school choice. Yet much of it wouldn't count as charitable activity under the new bill.

Hundreds of such hybrids inhabit the foundation world. How will they respond to the Blunt change? Some might spend more from principal, gradually shrink their endowments, and go out of business. (Although conservatives dream otherwise, the Rockefeller Foundation will certainly survive with the help of clever accountants and lawyers, while real pain awaits the family foundation with a staff of only one or two.) Others will shift from direct services to grant-making, though that won't necessarily make for a better world. (A troubled charter school, for example, may need expert advice as much as it needs cash.) Some will evade the payout requirement by transforming themselves into "operating" foundations, public charities, or other entities that are allowed to spend money pretty much as they see fit. Some could split into multiple organizations, giving much business to attorneys and accountants. It's possible that the net effect of all these changes will be a charitable wash, with little added money flowing to bona fide grantees and with those dollars even less well-monitored and evaluated than today.

In the Ways and Means committee, several compromises have been tendered to let direct charitable work count toward the annual payout. And in the Senate, Texas Republican Kay Bailey Hutchison has introduced a complicated alternative of her own. But while these variants would reduce the damage, their main achievement would be to create new opportunities for cagey foundation business officers, bookkeepers, and tax lawyers to disguise their overhead expenses as charitable activity. Council on Foundations president Dorothy Ridings has reportedly said as much to House members, but her message has not gone down well. Some members are now so eager to whack Ford and its ilk—and Ridings and her team as well—that committee aides don't mind telling hybrid foundations that it's just too bad they've been caught in the crossfire.

Is there an alternative? Yes, but not one that lets politicians claim credit for ending high living on East 43rd Street or pricking the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's balloon. The IRS has numerous enforcement tools for policing the nonprofit sector, beginning with audits. Yet it seldom wields those tools because private foundations and their 501[c]3 beneficiaries are not very rewarding places to hunt for federal revenues. Still, even the threat of random audits and other reviews of foundation activities would curb much abuse. Yes, the Blunt bill would block some fancy lunches and—maybe—the salaries of atrium gardeners from qualifying as charitable activity. But in the complex world of American philanthropy, it would also do more than a little damage to valuable work the bill's authors may have never even noticed. ♦

Among the Iowa Democrats

Dean's blues, Gephardt's dad, Lieberman's Twinkie, and other great moments in presidential campaigning

By David Tell

Waterloo, August 13

According to the piles of data released each month by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Iowa has weathered the recession fairly well. Its seasonally adjusted July unemployment rate was 4.6 percent, tied with Maryland for ninth lowest in the country, and markedly lower than the 6.2 percent national figure. In fact, among states with a labor force totaling more than a million, only Virginia (4 percent) is doing any better.

Dean plays the blues

Photographs by David Tell

Still, Iowa doesn't much *feel* like Maryland and Virginia at the moment—and not just because Iowa has endless corn and soybean fields no more than ten minutes from the center of even its biggest cities. Iowa feels straitened. If you drive around awhile with the radio on pretty much anywhere in the state, it's rare you won't hear a local news story about some company that may be closing a plant and laying off a few hundred workers, or a 30-second ad indicating that some other company might be willing to hire you for $7 an hour. You see things, too: If you find yourself on the northeastern outskirts of Waterloo, Iowa, for example, it's hard to miss the Paper, Allied-Industrial, Chemical & Energy Workers Union (PACE) strikers who are picketing the Eagle Ottawa Tannery over health insurance and wage proposals.

And if you happen to be continuing on into downtown Waterloo—on this or any other random day between now and next January, come to think of it—chances are excellent that you'll bump into a Democratic presidential candidate. Or several Democratic presidential candidates. Each of whom will talk you blue in the face about how the Eagle Ottawa situation is typical of Iowa's current economy. And how it's all the fault of a man named Bush.

There are no fewer than six such White House hopefuls here this afternoon, making back-to-back, half-hour solo auditions before a plenary session of the Iowa Federation of Labor's annual convention. It's a Q & A format, with the Qs coming from an all-star panel of union-movement bigshots led by AFL-CIO secretary-treasurer Richard Trumka and Service Employees International chief (and Democratic National Committee member) Anna Burger. Senator John Edwards of North Carolina gets to answer first.

It remains the collective wisdom of the non-traveling Washington press corps—an impression largely formed by a single, stumbling Edwards performance on *Meet the Press* back in May 2002—that, whatever his other talents, he isn't very good at interview-quiz affairs like this one. Maybe so, but today, at least, he more than holds his own. Edwards has a graceful, warm, and winning presence, switching back and forth easily and appropriately from smiles to seriousness. And his seriousness is impressive: thorough, crafty, and bite-sized all at once. He is canny enough to mention the Eagle Ottawa strike, announcing that he'll make a show-of-solidarity appearance with the PACE workers later in the day. He parries a tough, direct

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question about his past support for NAFTA by reeling off a long list of anti-free-trade votes he's cast in the Senate. And where a candidate like, say, Howard Dean sometimes makes fluent discussion of specialized, hot-button labor concerns resemble a spelling-bee contestant's mnemonic trick, there is nothing antiseptic about Edwards's presentation. Union interests are a "personal issue for me," he tells his audience. "My father was a textile worker."

The pappy reference—there'll be three of them before he's through—elicits snorts at the press table, where really earnest note-taking doesn't get underway until John Kerry enters the room. Edwards finished a distant fifth, tied at 5 percent with "Uncommitted," in an August 3 *Des Moines Register* preference poll of likely Democratic caucus-goers. And though he's since made a significant Iowa television buy (on a trio of ads which highlight his roots in a "family of sharecroppers") and taken a marathon bus tour of the state with his wife and kids, it's true his campaign still lacks that ineffable buzz that always surrounds a genuine contender. Nevertheless, several hundred Iowa Federation of Labor delegates like John Edwards a lot. He gets a standing ovation.

None of the men who follow Edwards to the podium does much to confound the little fog of reputational preconceptions each of them carries around with him. Kerry, dressed all the way down to a pair of well-worn sneakers, also wears his usual, effortless Brahmin grin and plays the tough, battle-tested veteran, in every sense of the phrase. Right off the bat, he tells the crowd that it's an honor for "an ex-Navy guy like me" to be appearing in a convention center named for the "Fighting Sullivan Brothers," five Waterloo natives who died in the November 1942 USS *Juneau* disaster off Guadalcanal. The legacy of men like the Sullivans belongs not to any particular political party or movement, Kerry intones, but to all Americans collectively. Except, apparently, when it belongs exclusively to the AFL-CIO: Those martyred World Trade Center rescue workers whom our Republican president likes to celebrate in his speeches? Well, by God, they "were all members of organized labor and they believed in the right to strike, the right to organize, the right to bargain." Kerry, too, believes in the right to strike; he's *already* visited the PACE picket line at Eagle Ottawa, he announces, deftly one-upping his colleague Sen. Edwards. And he very much looks forward to debating George W. Bush about these and other heroes, and patriotism generally—because I, John Kerry, Silver Star, Bronze Star, and three Purple Hearts, "know something about aircraft carriers *for real*."

The IFL people love this stuff; here's a man who can challenge those awful right-wingers on their own thematic turf. Kerry risks losing the room only when he starts pompously droning on about the details of his education and health care proposals—the good guys' thematic turf. "I have the first, biggest, best plan yet. *Time* magazine called it the best big new idea of this campaign." And so on. Think Ted Baxter from the old *Mary Tyler Moore* show, then add a handsome face, six inches in height, and 40 or 50 IQ points and you'll get the idea.

First as governor and lately as U.S. senator, Bob Graham has won five statewide races in Florida, which is no mean feat, and must have required some considerable skill. So how come Graham is such an unqualifiedly, amazingly, matchlessly incompetent presidential candidate? It is a mystery for the ages. Here in Waterloo he's several minutes into an incomprehensible—and practically inaudible—discussion of an economic-policy white paper he's released before the moderator, IFL president Mark Smith, finally and mercifully interrupts to remind the senator that he hasn't been speaking into the mike. Asked about health care, Graham wanders deep into the weeds, admits he hasn't fully refined his thinking on the subject, promises to make public the "rest" of his health care plan "soon," and then unaccountably blurts out that Dick Gephardt's already-released rival plan has "somewhat set the standard for this debate." By the time Graham starts reading his closing statement, hardly bothering to look up at his audience, there is coughing and chatter throughout the room.

Howard Dean hasn't won anything meaningful yet, but after a months-long run of fabulous publicity coups—including last week's Triple Crown of newsweekly cover stories—his natural air of thoroughbred superconfidence has become more pronounced. Or maybe just more noticeable.

Dean is making a major play for Iowa. He's spent more time here than any of the others. And given his mammoth, $300,000 television ad buy in June, he's spent exponentially more money, as well. The front-loaded spending strategy is risky and questionable. Federal law imposes a roughly $1.3 million limit on Iowa campaign expenditures by candidates who take matching funds, as Dean and the other principals likely will. And though that limit has a fair degree of loophole give in it, the same rules apply to everyone, so there's no way around the fact that Dean's best-financed and more conventional competitors, having husbanded their resources into the fall, will have leeway to outspend him as the caucuses, still five long months away, draw near. To put things in perspective: According to the FEC's most recent quarterly reports, by the end of June the Dean campaign alone had already gone through nearly twice as much money in Iowa as had the Kerry and Gephardt campaigns combined. It's something to keep an eye on.

In the meantime, though, he's *raising* the most money,

too, and the *Des Moines Register* poll has him on top, a within-the-margin-of-error hair in front of presumed favorite Dick Gephardt. So we might as well go ahead and call Howard Dean the Iowa front-runner—and take note of some subtle hints that he is adjusting his campaign pitch accordingly. His trademark, that lacerating, almost surreal contempt for Bush, remains in place: If the president had his druthers, Dean characteristically remarks at one point this week in Iowa, "you'd still have 12-year-olds working 12 hours a day in the cotton mills six-and-a-half days a week. . . . I honestly believe people like George Bush and Tom DeLay would go back that way if they could." Me, I don't honestly believe that Howard Dean honestly believes any such thing, actually. But I believe he figures it profits him to say so, just as I believe he simultaneously figures it's otherwise time for him to tone down his last-angry-man persona and concentrate on consolidating and protecting the early lead he's eked out for himself.

Dean has begun regularly attending to his rivals in a way he never used to, aggressively looking for opportunities to respond to their jibes and make light of their competing proposals. Here in Waterloo he uses a question about Social Security from Richard Trumka to knock down Dennis Kucinich's repeated—and accurate—charge that he's flirted with structural entitlement reform in the past. "I will not support" any increase in the Social Security retirement age, Dean promises, and "privatization will be off the table." Certain unspecified candidates whose health care blueprints are significantly more ambitious than Dean's—meaning Dick Gephardt—get the back of his hand: "It makes us feel good to take on the insurance companies and the AMA and all that stuff, but it doesn't get the plan passed," and "I want a plan designed to pass." A similar measure of self-conscious realism has even crept into Dean's conversation about foreign policy. Sort of. No longer does he describe his famous opposition to the war with Iraq as a matter of fundamental principle—that the invasion was unwarranted by any sufficiently grave threat to American security interests. Nowadays he claims to have opposed the war "because I didn't think the president was telling us the truth about why he was sending our kids over there." This is a pretty nifty trick of revisionism, since it precisely and not coincidentally echoes recent complaints against Bush made by Sen. Kerry and thereby complicates the Kerry team's ongoing whisper campaign to paint Dean as a military-averse defense weakling.

Only at the very end of his IFL appearance—with an obviously calculated, on-off-switch abruptness—does Dean let loose his crowd-pleasing Howard-the-Insurgent routine, turning red in the face and hollering that Democrats have to "go to the base first and get the base excited and not forget who put us here in the first place." Because, lookit, he says, much more quietly, the "most important issue" is "who can beat George Bush."

Meet Howard Dean, the betting man's safe-money, pole-position horse. It's a cool performance, on balance. Chilly, even.

Oh. Dennis Kucinich is in Waterloo, too. He, too, goes redfaced—and bounces up and down on his toes, and blows spittle all over the microphone, and makes the P.A. system fuzz over with earsplitting distortion. But Kucinich does this nonstop, the whole time he's on stage. He can't help himself. That's just the way he is.

Iowa Falls, August 13

A couple hours after the Sullivan Brothers convention center event wraps up, I'm 60 miles away to the west, in a cafeteria at Hardin County's tiny Ellsworth Community College, trying to puzzle out why it is that "Doubts Prevail in Iowa on Gephardt Victory," as the cruel but hard-to-argue-with headline in this morning's *Des Moines Register* puts it. Gephardt's been a familiar presence in the state for 15 years, ever since he won the 1988 caucuses. This time around, he alone among the Democratic wannabes has nailed down any formal labor-movement support: endorsements from 11 major union internationals to date, with a twelfth (from PACE, the Eagle Ottawa strikers' parent outfit) scheduled to come in about a week. All together, these unions represent more than 30,000 registered Iowa voters, fully a third—maybe even more—of the total number expected to participate in January's balloting. But still the Gephardt campaign finds itself upstaged by Howard Dean, lagging in the polls, lagging in fundraising, lagging in pizazz. How come?

Dean's staff aides will tell you that labor loyalty to Gephardt is purely a front-office phenomenon—that rank-and-file workers, actual voters, feel no special affection for the congressman. But that can't be right. Earlier this afternoon, when it was Gephardt's turn to speak in Waterloo, right after Dean and right before Kucinich, he was treated like the pope. He got a standing ovation merely for walking through the door, before he'd said a word. The rank-and-filest of convention delegates, dozens of them, left their seats carrying disposable cameras, walked quietly to the front of the hall, like it was the most important thing they'd ever done, and took memorial snapshots of the man. And then he began to talk, and the rank and file were rapt.

"I'm the guy that fought my own president, President Clinton, on trade," Gephardt reminded them. "I respect all the other candidates in this race," but "let me tell you something: Most of them were for those treaties when

they were in front of the Congress." So "before you come down on this race, check the record. I'm there. I've *always* been there." Even as a child he was there, Gephardt went on: "My dad was a Teamster and a milk truck driver in St. Louis," which was the "best job he ever had," a lesson Lou Gephardt regularly impressed on young Dick during dinner table devotionals about the priceless value of organized labor. Little of this story was true, as it happens. In real life it seems that Gephardt's father was a rock-ribbed Republican who hated driving the truck, hated Harry Truman, and hated unions, *all* unions, his own included; he'd joined the Teamsters simply because it was the only way he could get his dairy-delivery job after being laid off as an insurance company bookkeeper during the Depression. But the IFL conventioneers didn't know this history, and it might not have made any difference if they had. In Waterloo, Gephardt was boffo, a star. "I will be there" in the future, he swore at the close, to a second, thunderous standing ovation. "I will be there for you and your families and for the hardworking people of this country."

The question remains, then: What's the problem with Gephardt's campaign?

Seventy-odd people are with me in the Ellsworth Community College cafeteria at 7:30 on a Wednesday evening, here to "meet the candidate" and chuckling rather too indulgently over the antics of an entirely unexpected (self-professed) celebrity while they wait. This would be one Daniel R. Vovak of Greenwich, Connecticut, who's wearing a Halloween-costume colonial-patriot wig, and telling anyone who'll listen that "I'm running for president, too," though at age 31 he is constitutionally ineligible for the office—and even were he 65, he'd still be an obnoxious pain in the ass. Vovak clearly has a bad case of ariannahuffingtonitis: an unquenchable craving for undeserved fame. So he makes a beeline for the man standing next to me, ABC's George Stephanopoulos, who's already had the pleasure of making President Vovak's acquaintance. Whereupon, back on planet Earth, Dick Gephardt finally comes through the door, only to be set upon by Wig Man. "I'm running for president, too," Vovak tells the startled Gephardt. "I'm running for president, too," he repeats, when he realizes that the ABC camera crew hadn't had the sound on at first.

Fools happen on the campaign trail, and not every candidate suffers them gladly; Howard Dean, one imagines, would have barked Vovak's ears off. But Gephardt is not Dean. Gephardt is unusually, almost painfully *nice*. So he spends endless minutes chatting up this latest jerk to grab his hand. And he then spends endless further minutes chatting up all the other, comparatively ordinary people in the room. These people, too, are rapt, just as the IFL convention attendees were earlier in the day. Gephardt tells his "daddy was a Teamster" story again—and it works, again. Gephardt tells the story of how his then-2-year-old son Matt was diagnosed with a rare cancer and given just four weeks to live: Matt is alive today, more than 30 years later, only by "a gift of God"—and also through the grace of a generous health insurance policy that ought to be every American's birthright, and will be once Dick Gephardt is elected president.

Matt's cancer crisis shows up verbatim, right down to the heart-rending catch in dad's voice, in virtually every Gephardt stump speech, and . . . well, hell, I'll say it: The damn thing starts to feel just a wee bit creepy and exploitative after you've heard it the sixth or seventh time. But nobody else in tonight's audience appears to be put off in the slightest; maybe news of Matt Gephardt's triumph over the Big C is only now reaching Iowa Falls. For whatever reason, you can hear a pin drop while the elder Gephardt remembers aloud how he knelt down on the family's bedroom floor, "tears streaming down my face," and prayed with all his might for his little boy's life.

It goes on like this, minus the pathos, for 40-plus minutes: a serious major-party presidential contender who's effortlessly got 70 likely Iowa caucus-goers eating out of his hand.

And then, as Gephardt fields one final question from the floor, there emerges a first faint hint why Lou and Matt—and a down-the-line pro-labor voting record, and an undeniably attractive personality, to boot—might still not be enough to put him over the top. A man wearing a baseball hat, a pair of shorts, and sandals starts reading Gephardt a typewritten lecture he's prepared in advance. It's "perfectly clear, crystal clear" that George W. Bush "lied" us into war with Iraq, he says. But "none of that really matters, because Republicans *and* Democrats" in Congress banded together and gave the president "permis-

sion" for his dastardly adventure. "Why," the man fairly snarls at Gephardt, "should I vote for you—or any other Democrat?"

The atmosphere is suddenly tense. Chairs shuffle. People murmur. But Gephardt keeps his cool and very politely, very firmly, stands his ground:

> We had 15 years of intelligence, from the Clinton administration, from the CIA during the Clinton years, and I talked to lots of the former officials at the time from the Clinton administration. We had information from the U.N., from intelligence services of a bunch of European countries, that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction, had components of weapons of mass destruction, had the ability to quickly make more weapons of mass destruction. He had used weapons on his own people. In 1991, when we got into the country after Persian Gulf War I, he was one step away from a nuclear device. What we're worried about is an A-bomb in a Ryder truck in New York, in Washington, in St. Louis, in Los Angeles. . . . In my view it cannot happen. I'm going to do everything in my power to prevent that from happening. . . . And I'm not saying I'm right and everybody else is wrong. But I had to call it the way I saw it. And I believed that this was a step that we needed to take to keep our people safe. . . . [And] I will never back down from trying to do my best to keep this country safe.

There've been times in Gephardt's career when he's made significant position flips for political convenience. Back when he was a junior congressman he was a stalwart pro-lifer, for example. But there've been other times when Gephardt's proved himself admirably stubborn about his views—even when they threatened to cost him votes. And this may again be one of those times; Iraq may be costing him votes right now.

After the meeting breaks up and people are starting to make their way home, I ask Gephardt's questioner, 48-year-old Bruce Johnson, whether he could ever see his way clear to voting for a candidate who'd backed Bush on Iraq. "No," Johnson tells me. "I'm looking at Dean right now."

Newton, August 14

Needless to say, many Iowans are looking at Dean right now. And as many of them as could jam into Uncle Nancy's Coffeeshop here in Newton, 35 miles east of Des Moines, got a good close gander at him early this morning—but saw nothing much he didn't want them to see. Backslapping and schmoozing are not Dean's principal repertoire. He talks *to* people mostly, not *with* them. And he rarely departs from script, even while routinely faking his audiences into thinking he's a world's-greatest, virtuoso ad-libber. At 8:45 A.M. sharp, right on schedule, Dean strode briskly into Uncle Nancy's, all but ignored his Jasper County chairwoman's highly unorthodox introduction ("The candidates on most issues are pretty close," she acknowledged), and launched directly into his current, standard spiel.

There was the requisite splash of gratuitous acid to the president's face; it was here that Dean shot off his child-slavery sweatshop barb. There was the tactical repositioning on Iraq: Dean saying he'd objected to Bush sending "our brothers and sisters and our parents and our children to a foreign country to die without telling the truth to the American people about why"—but Dean never revealing what he thinks that "truth" might have been. Then there was some bragging about Dean's gubernatorial record in Vermont. And a piece of grand-finale red meat about how Democrats can only beat "the most conservative, right-wing president in my lifetime" by planting a defiant, unembarrassed bootful of traditional liberal-progressive principle right in Bush's keister.

And then Dean started slowly for the door, delaying himself only for an abbreviated session of handshakes and impromptu conversation with The People. During which he managed to slide away—instinctively, completely, and apparently quite successfully—from the only potentially dangerous encounter in his path. Norma Jean Sharp, a 70-year-old former nurse who now runs a small home-furnishings business on Newton's modest downtown commercial strip, wanted to know what Dean's positions on abortion and Israel were. Sharp is passionately committed to the state of Israel, she later told me. She's also passionately opposed to abortion, having been abandoned on a doorstep in Wyoming as a baby. And at least until recently, she's considered herself a very strong Republican.

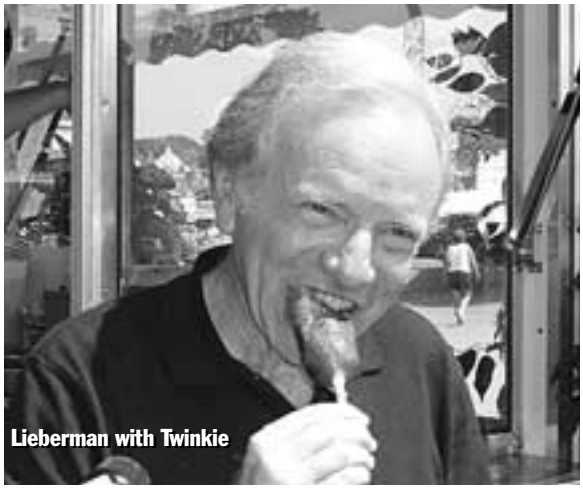
None of which Howard Dean had any reason to suspect when Norma Jean Sharp asked him her questions. But still he somehow divined that the best thing to do was fudge. Abortion: It's irreducibly a moral issue, and "we're never going to resolve that," and Dean prefers to move along to the "90 percent of stuff we agree on" in America, most of us anyway. Israel: "They'll be all right. . . . I'm not going to let anything bad happen to Israel. My wife is Jewish."

I asked Sharp what she'd thought of the governor's responses. And it turned out she'd been satisfied: Dean was just what she'd been looking for—"halfway intelligent" and "more for our country than what's happening now," President Bush having displeased her in various ways neither of us had time to explore. And was she aware that Howard Dean is an uncompromising, *Roe* v. *Wade*, pro-choice purist, I wondered? I immediately regretted the question: It sent a cloud of distress across this nice lady's face. "I did not know that," she whispered, shaking her head.

Later on, around noontime, in the basement of Des Moines's Corinthian Baptist Church, John Kerry attended

an invitation-only lunch meeting with "African-American leaders" convened on his behalf by Iowa civil rights legend Willie Glanton. And the contrast with Dean could not have been starker. Kerry is much the more personable, easygoing man, and he consequently makes the better first impression. For most of half an hour Kerry chomped down barbecue sandwiches, like he does it every day, while making casual, discursive chit-chat with his hosts—and thoroughly charming them, every last one. And yet before the lunch was through, Kerry had managed to partially un-charm a strikingly beautiful older woman named Catherine Williamson who complained to him that neither he nor any of the other Democratic would-be presidents was speaking to her "biggest concern." To wit: "This country that is based on Judeo-Christian principles has given in to the people who might be offended if we have the Ten Commandments someplace and if our children pray in school. And I think somebody better start talking about that."

Try as he might, Kerry just couldn't find a graceful way to retreat before this unhittable curveball. "Well, Catherine, I—I—you know, I'm not sure, I—I'm very understanding and very sympathetic to what you just said. I—I—I know where you're coming from, and I don't hesitate to talk about—when asked—my faith, or what I believe. Or don't believe." But "I do believe there's an appropriate separation where we are a nation of people of all faiths. And of no faith. That's who we are as a country." The poor fellow blundered on like this for quite some time. Catherine Williamson sat stony-faced with her arms folded resolutely across her chest.


Lieberman with Twinkie

In his more controlled, set-speech campaign appearances, Kerry likes to quote Bill Clinton on the only reason why Republicans are sometimes able to outmaneuver Democrats on Election Day: "Strong and wrong" beats "right and weak" every time. Well, here's a new one for you senator, try it on for size: Diffident and shrewd, like Howard Dean, is gonna beat amiable and relatively guileless, like John Kerry, more times than John Kerry can probably afford.

Kerry has an easier go of it this evening at his own Newton meet-and-greet, also in Uncle Nancy's Coffeehouse. And also with Norma Jean Sharp in attendance. She's back, almost 12 hours after her encounter with Howard Dean, to do a little side-by-side comparison shopping. And she decides she "much prefers" the amiable and guileless model. She "particularly" likes Kerry's answer on Israel: "I have always supported Israel. . . . In the end, Israel is the only democracy and Israel is our ally." The subject of abortion never comes up. I don't have the heart to tell Ms. Sharp that Kerry, too, is a pro-choice 100 percenter. That'll be President Bush's job, if and when the time comes. And if he dares.

Iowa State Fairgrounds, August 15

Yesterday afternoon, during the hours between John Kerry's encounters with Catherine Williamson and Norma Jean Sharp, there was another all-candidate cattle call at Drake University in Des Moines. It was structured as a single-issue policy seminar, a "Conference on Public Health" emceed by Iowa's Democratic governor, Tom Vilsack. And higher-minded spectators no doubt found all three-and-a-half hours fascinating. But a fair number of the rest of us might privately confess that we were bored out of our skulls, that we awakened only for a few rare moments of novelty—or outright gaffes—from the candidates. Most of which welcome distractions had nothing whatever to do with health care.

Kerry tried to get himself onto this morning's front pages by criticizing—demagogically and, it would later turn out, inaccurately—the Bush administration's role in a complicated dispute with Congress over Defense Department bookkeeping and supplementary pay for front-line troops in Iraq. That was fun. Dennis Kucinich first had to be verbally coaxed into taking his assigned seat next to Gov. Vilsack—and then had trouble finding his way out of the auditorium. No, not that set of stairs, Mr. Congressman; it leads to the balcony. At last Kucinich reached the stage-left curtain—only to pop back into view in search of a lost bottle of mineral water. Several hundred people laughed out loud. Which was even better fun.

Howard Dean was unremarkable—except when he attempted to explain how "one of the biggest problems" driving medical cost inflation "is us." He seems to have been talking about the need for "wellness" and prevention programs. But the analogy he adopted was bewildering.

Last year, Dean offered, his son needed an emergency appendectomy. And Dean, he ruefully admitted, had responded selfishly: He'd wanted the best of everything for his boy, and he'd expected the insurance company to pay the max. The lesson of this parable, Dean concluded, was that "we all have responsibility" for health care cost containment.

This was just plain weird. What "wellness" steps exactly, was Howard Dean's son supposed to have taken to ward off appendicitis? And what kind of father even thinks to blame himself in retrospect for automatically asking the world on behalf of a seriously ill child? Dean staffers have long known, all too well, that they're gonna have to find ways to humanize their less-than-lovable candidate. And late yesterday they made an initial stab at it, having booked him for an after-work, man-bites-dog musical performance at a blues-club dive not far from Dean-campaign headquarters on the western edge of Des Moines's downtown. There our hero removed his suit jacket, and even his tie, played two tunes' worth of reasonably accomplished though rudimentary guitar, and then closed, on harmonica, with a perfectly goofball anthem—"Dean for America"—written specially for the occasion by local bandleader Michael "Hawkeye" Herman.

It was a standard, 12-bar, I-IV-V chord blues in G, the easiest key for elementary and rusty middle-aged harp-blowers alike. And Dean did not embarrass himself, for the most part, though it wasn't clear he'd agree with that assessment; he seemed mighty uncomfortable to me.

Whatever. The only other interesting news from yesterday was that Sen. Joseph Lieberman would make a previously unscheduled appearance here at the Iowa State Fair this morning.

Lieberman's campaign is limping in lots of places around the country, but in Iowa it's a veritable shambles—mostly because the candidate can't seem to decide whether he should be bothering with the caucuses at all. Friends like John McCain tell him no, he shouldn't: The caucuses are a byzantine, insider steeplechase controlled by the most doctrinaire, party-regular activists—among whom Lieberman's moderate political profile, especially his uniquely dogged support for the Iraq war, is bubonic-plague-level anathema. It's the closest thing to guaranteed that Lieberman can't finish in the money here, so what's the point of trying? Better he should move on to New Hampshire, where the Democratic primary is an "open" one—open, that is, to the independent and crossover voters who would seem to comprise Lieberman's natural base of appeal.

And yet. There's that permanent and infernal pundits-in-the-greenroom, cable-news channel primary to consider: Abandoning Iowa, this early in the presidential calendar at any rate, would surely occasion a great lot of punishing, "Lieberman death watch" chatter on *Crossfire* and the *Capital Gang*. Also, the senator has close friends in Iowa, like his local campaign chairman, state attorney general Tom Miller. And Lieberman, a stand-up guy if ever there was one, can't be too eager to let friends like these down.

So he winds up spending very little time here; while most of his rivals were traipsing around the state doing push-ups on hog farms earlier this week, Lieberman was in San Francisco. And then, whenever, as inevitably and regularly results, the muttering about how he's "dissing Iowa" finally becomes too intense to bear—yesterday, for example—the senator scrambles to upend his schedule and pencil in a lightning-strike photo-op. As is the case today. It's the kind of compromise that satisfies nobody. Including, one suspects, the candidate himself.

At 11 this morning, at the epicenter of the State Fair's crowd-thick "Grand Concourse," Joe Lieberman is supposed to hop up onto a bale of hay—bafflingly designated a "soapbox" by its official sponsor, the *Des Moines Register*—and manfully pretend that he doesn't think he's doing something ridiculous. To his credit, he fails. Lieberman shows up, takes a look at the haybale, curls his lips, and turns around to address the State Fair passersby at sea level, his feet on the ground. He works his way through a first-rate, typically thinking-man-style stump speech—but punctuates it with candid asides that no "natural" politician could ever bring himself to utter. He's the only one of the nine Democrats running for president who voted for—or has anything nice to say about—a piece of Bush-approved prescription-drug legislation that was recently before the Senate. "I don't know why" that is, Lieberman quizzically notes. "It was a good bill."

Fifteen minutes later, having announced himself, with undisguised irony, "the next president of the Yewnited States of America," he hands off his microphone and walks over to a firing squad of attending reporters, one of whom, a local, wants to know whether Lieberman will be attending yet another candidates' forum this evening, this one at a Teamsters hall in an industrial park southeast of Cedar Rapids, all the way across the state. No can do, he reminds her: It'll be Friday night—the sabbath and all.

And then it's time for the senator from Connecticut to walk over to a fast-food stand and get his picture taken eating—I'm not making this up—a "deep-fried Twinkie." Speaking of the sabbath, one wag quips to Lieberman, how can you be certain that the Twinkie is kosher? "They fry it in soy oil," the senator replies in a blink. "We actually checked that out ahead of time. Because I just knew some sonofabitch would want to know." ♦

The Charisma Tour

The Graham family "vacations" in Iowa

By Matt Labash

Des Moines, Iowa

Can you feel the excitement? I can. It's hard not to, here on downtown's Grand Avenue, as we assemble for the Iowa State Fair parade. Iowa-bred writer Bill Bryson once wrote, "I come from Des Moines. Somebody had to." Adding insult, he called Des Moines "the most powerful hypnotic known to man." But he obviously never went to the parade. Everybody loves a parade. Especially presidential candidate Dennis Kucinich. "This is it!" he says. "Where else would you want to be?"

Got me there, Dennis. I mean, just look at these parade exhibits. There's the WB frog, the Wal-Mart employees looking their blue-vested best, the umbrella brigade, twirling umbrellas in time to ABBA's "Take a Chance on Me." There's a herd of obedience-school puppies, the gals from Becky's Dance Studio, and the Roberts' Dairy truck, complete with giant plastic cow and mooing horn. But I have not come to see any of that. I have come to see Florida senator Bob Graham, or, as his family calls him, the "44th President of the United States."

It's pretty exciting, all right, meeting the man *Politics in America* says has a "studied quality" to everything he does, and whose "caution and attention to detail" mean that any mistakes he makes are "apt to stem from belated action rather than haste." Okay, so it's not that exciting. But there's Graham, kissing a girl full on the mouth.

I whip out my pad, prepared to document the first indiscretion of the campaign cycle. But it turns out to be his granddaughter Sarah. There are nine more grandkids where she came from, and they are all here, along with their mothers (Graham's four daughters) and fathers, as well as Graham's wife, Adele. That makes 20 in all, and they have come—and this is exciting—for the annual "Graham Family Vacation." Every year, the Graham family vacations together in places like the Grand Canyon, the Grand Tetons, or the Caribbean. But just five months before the Iowa caucuses, the Graham family coincidentally decided to pack two RVs, a couple of luggage vans, and a media bus, and take a tour of Iowa. One can almost hear the children begging, as children do everywhere, "Grandpa, take us to lunch with the Warren County Democrats, and then on to the John L. Lewis Mining and Labor Museum!"

There are only two actual candidates at the parade (Graham and Kucinich), but almost every campaign has a contingent marching. The Howard Dean campaign, like the candidate, is loud and slightly obnoxious, cranking James Brown's "Get Up" from speakers that they hold up to the windows of their pace car. But they are drowned out by a raspy and repeated hog call of "WHOOOOO! You got it Dad!" It comes from Cissy, the second of Graham's four daughters (who range in age from 34 to 40).

The Graham family, it should be noted, is a White House-ready family. They are the Kennedys without the extramarital affairs and bad livers. The grandsons are all buddies who easily throw their arms around each other. And the granddaughters are model-quality, many boasting ringlets of natural curls. The sons-in-law (Cissy is married to William McCullough, son of author David McCullough) are generous and quick-witted and don't mind reporters' flirting with their wives. And those wives—the entity known as the Graham girls—are all attractive and warm, the surest bet to become the sex symbols of the 2004 cycle, assuming their dad's around long enough. They are like the Gore girls of last cycle, only better. The Gore girls were girls. The Graham girls are women.

They are the same, but different. In girl-band archetypes, the oldest, Gwen, would be Posh Spice—smoldering and fashionable, and their nominal leader. Suzanne, number three, is the Ginger Spice-ish bad girl—"bad girl" being a relative term in the Graham family, meaning that she's the one who'll wear the non-uniform article of clothing (anything without Bob Graham's name on it). Kendall, the youngest, is Baby Spice. When I ask Cissy which one would be Strong and Silent Spice, she points to Gwen. "She's strong, but not silent. None of us are silent," which Cissy proves by letting out another ear-splitting "WHOOOOO!"

The politicians, stuck near the back of the processional, are all set to march. But in an unfortunate bit of stagecraft, they're forced to wait as clowns shovel horse droppings (from the mounted police) into a bulldozer bucket. The clowns miss a few, however, and Graham's striking wife, Adele, steps in one. It doesn't ruffle her. A lifetime political wife (married to Graham throughout his two terms as

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Florida governor and three terms as senator), she has encountered her fair share of manure. She maintains a regal bearing that is best conveyed not in words, but in song. Specifically, "My Beautiful Adele": *My beautiful Adele / You are more than words could ever tell.*

The song comes from the upcoming "Bob Graham Charisma Tour 2004" CD, with tracks written and performed by Graham's good friend Frank Loconto. The CD is not only the Graham soundtrack to the parade, but over the next week, the soundtrack of our lives. Graham, who is known for breaking into song (he once composed an Elián González operetta), lustily sings his campaign theme, "Friend in Bob Graham": *We've got a friend in Bob Graham / That's what everybody's sayin' / All the way across the good ole' USA / From Atlantic to Pacific / We all say that 'He's terrific!' / America needs Bob Graham today!* It may be the most hilarious campaign song since William Taft's "Get on a Raft with Taft." But the Grahams like it so much that the CD even features a Spanish-language salsa version called "Arriba Bob" (*Desde el Atlantico al Pacifico / Le dicen el magnifico!*).

Though he just had heart surgery this year, the thinner but still pillow-cheeked 66-year-old Graham keeps up a brisk pace, rolling his hips in a sort of speed-walking motion. "Zig-zag, Dad!" Cissy coaches. He does so, and as he does so, he points out random people in the crowd to an aide, commanding "Get them a sticker." While Graham sings along to the "G.W. Bushonomics Supply Side, Economic Blues," the Graham girls fill me in on their dad. He is the most popular politician Florida has ever had. He has never lost an election. "When America gets to know him, he'll pull away," assures Gwen. "He's the only choice," says Cissy. At the risk of being rude, I point out to Cissy that there are eight other choices. "Line 'em up," she says. "He's the best. WHOOOOO! I figure if I scream as loud as I can," she explains, "people will notice him."

Cissy needs to do a lot more screaming. Though conventional wisdom on Graham is that he is stuck on the stairwell somewhere between the first and second flight of candidates (he has one of the most impressive résumés, having served eight years on the Senate Select Intelligence Committee), he is, as Iowans like to say, sucking hind teat in the polls (1 percent in Iowa, 2 percent in New Hampshire). That doesn't matter, say the Graham girls. And who knows? At this point in 1991, Bill Clinton was clocking zero percent in Iowa polls. Still, the signs aren't encouraging. Several Iowans over the course of the week think Graham is Phil Gramm of Gramm-Rudman fame. Before hooking up with Graham, I asked a freckled woman with "Stub" tattooed on her arm whether Graham had come by. As she tended her baby, who was ripping a piece of Kucinich campaign literature to shreds, she said, "I wouldn't recognize him if he did."

The next day, at the Iowa State Fair, is a heart-stopping gustatory delight. Apparently, Iowans will only eat food if it comes deep-fried or on a stick. There are deep-fried Twinkies, fried candy bars, and "refreshing fried ice cream," pork on a stick, salad on a stick, and even "Mac & Cheese" wedges on a stick. Visiting politicians must be careful not to slight the local cuisine. Last year, says Graham spokesperson Kristian Denny, she saw Joe Lieberman refuse pork-on-a-stick, saying his rabbi wouldn't approve. "That's when I knew he was finished in Iowa," she says.

All over the place, Grahams are thick on the ground, enjoying their vacation. One of the Graham girls cautions her offspring, "Remember, if you get lost, say your grandfather's name." When I ask if the children are going on the rides, she says, "They have rides here?" As Graham works the room in the Varied Industries Building, making his way past the portable spas and Maytag dryer displays, he meets voters and displays several facets of his character.

Aside from the megalomaniacal impulse it takes to run for president, Graham, by all accounts, is a humble man—one of the rare politicians who would just as soon talk to voters about themselves as he would about himself. This is evident from his "workdays," a campaign gimmick he boosted from Iowa's own Tom Harkin back in the '70s, which has become more than a gimmick. At least once a month, Graham, throughout his political career, has worked an entire day alongside regular Americans, performing difficult and even humiliating jobs (horse-stable pooper scooper, KFC counterman, political reporter). Tallying 391 workdays and running, he has recently issued a "Working for America" calendar.

Along the way, Graham became a compulsive collector of minutiae. He interviews the people he meets, like C-SPAN's Brian Lamb, and often writes down the answers. At the fair, he approaches a booth manned by a director of alumni relations for Waldorf College. He asks not only about the most popular area of study, but about the preponderance of Norwegian-speakers in the college's area, and even how they got the name "Waldorf." At the *Field of Dreams* baseball field in Dyersville (the field carved out of a cornfield, used in the 1989 movie), I watch him corner an incoming Florida Gator, asking the kid everything from "When do you report," to "Do you know what dorm you will be in?" At a Dairy Center in Calmar, his grandkids complained of near asphyxiation when we walked past a manure lagoon. But Graham (whose family owns an angus farm) donned plastic booties and walked up to the pens, obliviously getting his nether regions nuzzled by a cow named Gretchen. As bored reporters chatted among themselves, Graham peppered our tour guides with hair-splitting questions, taking furious notes at the milking parlor, asking

AP/Wide World Photos

The Graham clan at church: grandkids, daughter Kendall, and wife Adele

about screw-worm flies, artificial insemination, and whether the dairy uses "all of its discharge." The beauty of covering a Graham campaign is that if you miss a name or fact, you can just ask the candidate to check his notes.

Surprisingly, Graham's staff doesn't dive-tackle him when he whips out his pocket-size spiral notebooks (he has over 3,000 of them, color-coded by season). At this point, his habit is arguably an act of political courage. For it doesn't take a conspiracy theorist to say that if Graham didn't log every minute detail of his life, Al Gore might well be president today. In 2000, Graham was on Gore's very-shortlist for vice president (as he was on Clinton's in 1992 and Dukakis's in 1988), which would have surely swung Florida Gore's way. But he fell out of contention after *Time* magazine published excerpts of his notebooks.

Not quite a diary, more like a log, the notebooks have been excerpted many places over the years (the Graham campaign has wisely stopped dispensing samples). Accounting for his time, sometimes down to the second, the jottings have what Graham apologists might call a James Ellroy-ish hardboiled economy: "9:05-9:10: Waiting room. Read *New York Times*, mingle." But other people might call it the work of a disturbed mind. When daughter Cissy went into labor, and he was preparing to go to the hospital, one notorious entry went: "1:30-1:45: Rewind *Ace Ventura*. 2: Adele ready to go. Drive to Baptist Hospital. 2:15: Stop at (video store) to return *Ace Ventura*." Another time, when his plane experienced mechanical failure over Brazil, a panicked Adele reached for his hand. But Bob was taking notes. Staring death in the face, the senator, reported the *Washington Post*'s Michael Grunwald, scribbled: "2:39 pm—pilot announces hydraulic failure, must make emergency landing."

Graham defends the practice by saying he is merely garnishing important details with prosaic ones to help him remember specifics (a line of defense buttressed by his meticulously observed out-of-print book *Workdays*). And several journalists have ridden to his rescue, by calling the appropriate obsessive-compulsive disorder experts to assure voters he doesn't have any sort of problem. Still, it is never a good day for a politician when reporters write stories about his mental health, even if it's to clear him. And consequently, the Graham curse is now to be labeled "quirky"—a nice way of saying somebody is eccentric without the benefit of being interesting.

Graham's compulsive attention to detail hurts him on the stump, and helps goose along his "boring" label. (When I spied some messages of the day, they read: "Waste Water Infrastructure" and "Ethanol As An Alternative Energy Source"—snoozers even if you're running for mayor of Bettendorf.) His speaking style could be labeled "Grandpa Gore." Like Gore's of old, his speeches take off down tributaries of policy arcana without always making it back to the main channel. His voice is slow and crackly, perfect for voiceover narration in a Spielberg film—one in which the codger is about to spin a yarn. Not good with eight other whippersnappers doing tapdances around your issues. While Graham says modified versions of the same things the other candidates harp on—the evils of Bush tax cuts, the need for something approximating universal health care—he takes twice as long to say it. If he were a VCR speed, he'd be "extended play." As one laborite I ran into at a candidate forum in Waterloo puts it, "He seems so elderly." Spying John Edwards working a nearby table, she turns dreamy: "He's like cream cheese. Very smooth."

Still, if you have the patience for it, Graham is knowledgeable on nearly any subject. Especially cows. At the state fair, he squares up in front of the "butter cow"—a lifesize Ayrshire sculpted out of butter, which, as of this writing, still had not been fried or put on a stick. Partly as a parlor game to see how long we can keep him talking about cows, partly because we couldn't stop him if we wanted to, we take notes as Graham shares on all matters bovine: from their four stomachs, to the lowest butterfat producers, to the descending sizes of breeds from Holsteins to Jerseys. "Any questions on dairy cows?" he asks at one point with a glint in his eye.

In front of the 4-H pen, we ask what kind of cow valve he received when his aortic valve was replaced in January. That would be a Holstein's, the breed he now holds so dear that he referred us to a song written for his "Charisma Tour" CD, the relevant part of which he now sings: *Oh, I'll forever have a black and white friend / Close to my heart / Everyday, 'til death do us part.*

If Graham can ever break out of second-tier purgatory, it might be no small advantage that he knows his cows. One day, floating on the Mississippi River near Dubuque, watching Graham fruitlessly trying to land a bass, we are joined on our pontoon by Graham's bubba-vote wrangler, Dave "Mudcat" Saunders. Not only is Mudcat the mastermind of Graham's foray into NASCAR sponsorship, but he—along with communications director Steve Jarding and road spokeswoman Kristian Denny—is one of the sunniest and savviest staffers on the trail. So appealing is the Graham campaign staff, along with the natural asset of the Graham family, that it prompted one reporter to remark, "There's only one thing wrong with this campaign—the candidate."

A rural Virginian, Mudcat is author, along with Jarding, of the "NASCAR Dad" strategy that worked so well for Gov. Mark Warner in rural Virginia. It is a neologism that is already getting as overworked as "soccer mom" in the last cycle, and it's shorthand for the theory that there are scores of disaffected rural white voters in traditionally Democratic hotspots who in recent years have voted Republican, but who are nonpartisan enough to be wooed back.

Mudcat, an avid outdoorsman, former sports reporter, and current real estate developer, wears a red "Motorcraft" hat, and dispenses fishing tips in his languorous drawl. Graham's boat, he says, has an oversized engine, because if "you hang a bass at 125 mph, it takes the fight right out of 'em." When asked what needs to happen in this race, Mudcat deadpans, "We need to get the most votes." When reporters nitpick him over Graham's soft spots, Mudcat, a self-described "eternal optimist," grows cranky: "I'm about to Bobby Knight y'all's ass." When asked what Graham needs to do more of, Mudcat looks over at Graham, aimlessly drifting in his bass boat. "Use dynamite while he's fishing," he says.

To some degree, the historically buttoned-down Graham has used dynamite against Bush. The only time he ever shows a spark on the stump is when he's kicking Bush's teeth in on Iraq or national security issues, which he tries to do three or four times per speech. Graham is the only member of Congress in the field (besides Kucinich) who actually voted against the Iraq war resolution. He was given a slight boost in his accusations of administration thumb-scaling and obstructionism when his Intelligence Committee's 9/11 report was first bottled up, and then heavily redacted, in what he charged was the administration's prostration before a terrorist-sponsoring ally (read: Saudi Arabia).

His critiques of the war have ranged from the constructive (the administration underestimated the difficulty of postwar occupation) to the hysterical (Bush's deceptions in making the case for war might rise to the level of an impeachable offense). The problem with Graham's antiwar critique, from a consistency point of view, is that he himself made some pretty categorical prewar assumptions about Iraq, having told *Face the Nation* last December, while still chair of the Intelligence Committee, that "We are in possession of what I think to be compelling evidence that Saddam Hussein has and has had for a number of years, a developing capacity for the production and storage of weapons of mass destruction."

But Graham's constant harping on the administration's overstating the imminence of the threat does not mean that he is a Kucinich-style, Department of Peace dove. Graham's primary line of opposition before the war was that Iraq was the wrong priority. Graham, for instance, has advocated throwing "a few cruise missiles" into Syria. But with the crazy-Bob impeachment talk, such nuances are mostly overshadowed, and Howard Dean has seized the antiwar momentum. Which these days—getting torched in the polls, suffering fundraising setbacks, struggling to define himself with sleep-inducing issues like increasing broadband access and transportation infrastructure—is the least of Graham's problems.

More pressing are his stump performances. On one recent night, he talked about the "bloody pulpit" of the presidency. On another, he told a story about a Civil War relative ("I'm not sure it's a good idea to remind voters he's only two generations removed from the Civil War," said one onlooker). After one tough night at a sparsely attended event, *Orlando Sentinel* reporter Mark Silva consoled the family. "Tonight was a bad night," he said. "But don't sweat it. You have 100 more bad nights ahead of you."

There is, of course, Graham's secret weapon: the Graham girls. He should take them with him wherever he goes. After the tour's last "Grillin' with the Grahams"—the nightly brat'n'burger cookout with potential Iowa caucus goers—the girls take their place for the evening sing-a-long in matching white overalls with embroidered picnic foods on their stovepipe pants. As they get a beat going—with lots of make-a-pancake clapping and oom-pah chugging—Cissy pulls out a piece of paper, from which she reads a call-and-response cheer: "When I say Bob / You say Graham / Bob! / *Graham!* / Bob / *Graham!* When I say 44th / You say president / 44th! / *President!* / 44th! / *President!*"—and on it goes, until Cissy concludes with another decibel-busting "WHOOOOO!"

Back on the press bus, we show enthusiasm our own way. Full of the Graham family's Budweiser and brats, we play the Charisma Tour CD on our laptop computers, until the *Sentinel's* Silva interrupts with his own call-and-response cheer: "When I say running / you say mate / Running! / *Mate*! / Running! / *Mate!*" ♦

Saddam's al Qaeda Connection

The evidence mounts, but the Bush administration continues to say surprisingly little about what it knows.

By Stephen F. Hayes

Kids know exactly when it comes—the point when you're repaving a driveway or pouring a new sidewalk, right before the wet concrete hardens completely. That's when you can make your mark. The Democrats seem to understand this.

For months before the war in Iraq, the Bush administration claimed to know of ties between al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein's Iraq. For months after the war, the Bush administration has offered scant evidence of those claims. And the conventional wisdom—that there were no links—is solidifying. So Democrats are making their mark.

"The evidence now shows clearly that Saddam did not want to work with Osama bin Laden at all, much less give him weapons of mass destruction." So claimed Al Gore in an August 7 speech. "There is evidence of exaggeration" of Iraq-al Qaeda links, said Carl Levin, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, who recently launched an investigation into prewar intelligence. "Clearly the al Qaeda connection was hyped and exaggerated, in my view," said Senator Dianne Feinsten. Chimed in Jane Harman, the ranking Democrat on the House Select Committee on Intelligence, as reported in the *National Journal*, "The evidence on the al Qaeda links was sketchy." Jay Rockefeller, the ranking Democrat on the Senate side of that committee, agrees. "The evidence about the ties was not compelling."

These are serious charges that deserve to be answered. If critics can show that the administration overplayed the al Qaeda-Saddam connection, they will undermine not only an important rationale for removing the Iraqi dictator, but the broader, arguably more important case for the war—that the conflict in Iraq was one battle in the worldwide war on terror.

What, then, did the Bush administration say about this relationship before the war? Which parts of that case, if any, have been invalidated by the intelligence gathered in the months following the conflict? What is this new "evidence," cited by Gore and others, that reveals the administration's arguments to have been embellished? Finally, what if any new evidence has emerged that bolsters the Bush administration's prewar case?

The answer to that last question is simple: lots. The CIA has confirmed, in interviews with detainees and informants it finds highly credible, that al Qaeda's Number 2, Ayman al-Zawahiri, met with Iraqi intelligence in Baghdad in 1992 and 1998. More disturbing, according to an administration official familiar with briefings the CIA has given President Bush, the Agency has "irrefutable evidence" that the Iraqi regime paid Zawahiri $300,000 in 1998, around the time his Islamic Jihad was merging with al Qaeda. "It's a lock," says this source. Other administration officials are a bit more circumspect, noting that the intelligence may have come from a single source. Still, four sources spread across the national security hierarchy have confirmed the payment.

In interviews conducted over the past six weeks with uniformed officers on the ground in Iraq, intelligence officials, and senior security strategists, several things became clear. Contrary to the claims of its critics, the Bush administration has consistently *underplayed* the connections between Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda. Evidence of these links existed before the war. In making its public case against the Iraq regime, the Bush administration used only a fraction of the intelligence it had accumulated documenting such collaboration. The intelligence has, in most cases, gotten stronger since the end of the war. And through interrogations of high-ranking Iraqi officials, documents from the regime, and further interrogation of al Qaeda detainees, a clearer picture of

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the links between Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein is emerging.

To better understand the administration's case on these links, it's important to examine three elements of this debate: what the administration alleged, the evidence the administration had but didn't use, and what the government has learned since the war.

What the Administration Alleged

Top U.S. officials linked Iraq and al Qaeda in newspaper op-eds, on talk shows, and in speeches. But the most detailed of their allegations came in an October 7, 2002, letter from CIA director George Tenet to Senate Intelligence chairman Bob Graham and in Secretary of State Colin Powell's February 5, 2003, presentation to the United Nations Security Council.

The Tenet letter declassified CIA reporting on weapons of mass destruction and Iraq's links to al Qaeda. Two sentences on WMD garnered most media attention, but the intelligence chief's comments on al Qaeda deserved notice. "We have solid reporting of senior level contacts between Iraq and al Qa'ida going back a decade," Tenet wrote. "Credible information indicates that Iraq and al Qa'ida have discussed safe haven and reciprocal non-aggression. Since Operation Enduring Freedom [in Afghanistan], we have solid evidence of the presence in Iraq of al Qa'ida members, including some that have been in Baghdad. We have credible reporting that al Qa'ida leaders sought contacts in Iraq who could help them acquire WMD capabilities. The reporting also stated that Iraq has provided training to al Qa'ida members in the areas of poisons and gases and making conventional bombs." In sum, the letter said, "Iraq's increasing support to extremist Palestinians, coupled with growing indications of a relationship with al Qa'ida, suggest that Baghdad's links to terrorists will increase, even absent US military actions."

That this assessment came from the CIA—with its history of institutional skepticism about the links—was significant. CIA analysts had long contended that Saddam Hussein's secular regime would not collaborate with Islamic fundamentalists like bin Laden—even though the Baathists had exploited Islam for years, whenever it suited their purposes. Critics of the administration insist the CIA was "pressured" by an extensive and aggressive intelligence operation set up by the Pentagon to find ties where none existed. But the Pentagon team consisted of two people, at times assisted by two others. Their assignment was not to collect new intelligence but to evaluate existing intelligence gathered by the CIA, with particular attention to any possible Iraq-al Qaeda collaboration. A CIA counterterrorism team was given a similar task, and while many agency analysts remained skeptical about links, the counterterrorism experts came away convinced that there had been cooperation.

For one thing, they cross-referenced old intelligence with new information provided by high-level al Qaeda detainees. Reports of collaboration grew in number and specificity. The case grew stronger. Throughout the summer and fall of 2002, al Qaeda operatives held in Guantanamo corroborated previously sketchy reports of a series of meetings in Khartoum, Sudan, home to al Qaeda during the mid-90s. U.S. officials learned more about the activities of Abu Abdullah al-Iraqi, an al Qaeda WMD specialist sent by bin Laden to seek WMD training, and possibly weapons, from the Iraqi regime. Intelligence specialists also heard increasingly detailed reports about meetings in Baghdad between al Qaeda leaders and Uday Hussein in April 1998, at a birthday celebration for Saddam.

In December 2002, as the Bush administration prepared its public case for war with Iraq, White House officials sifted through reams of these intelligence reports on ties between Saddam Hussein's regime and al Qaeda. Some of the reporting was solid, some circumstantial. The White House identified those elements of the reports it wanted to use publicly and asked the CIA to declassify them. The Agency agreed to declassify some 75 percent of the requested intelligence.

According to administration sources, Colin Powell, in his presentation before the U.N. Security Council, used only 10 or 15 percent of the newly declassified material. He relied heavily on the intelligence in Tenet's letter. Press reports about preparations for the Powell presentation have suggested that Powell refused to use the abundance of CIA documents because he found them thin and unpersuasive. This is only half right. Powell was certainly the most skeptical senior administration official about Iraq-al Qaeda ties. But several administration officials involved in preparing his U.N. presentation say that his reluctance to focus on those links had more to do with the forum for his speech—the Security Council—than with concerns about the reliability of the information.

Powell's presentation sought to do two things: make a compelling case to the world, and to the American public, about the threat posed by Saddam Hussein; and more immediately, win approval for a second U.N. resolution explicitly authorizing the use of force. The second of these objectives, these officials say, required Powell to focus the presentation on Hussein's repeated violations

of Security Council resolutions. (Even in the brief portion of Powell's talk focused on Iraq-al Qaeda links, he internationalized the case, pointing out that the bin Laden network had targeted "France, Britain, Spain, Italy, Germany, and Russia.") Others in the administration, including Vice President Dick Cheney, favored using more of the declassified information about Hussein's support of international terrorism and al Qaeda.

Powell spent just 10 minutes of a 90-minute presentation on the "sinister nexus between Iraq and the al Qaeda terrorist network." He mentioned intelligence showing that Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a known al Qaeda associate injured in Afghanistan, had traveled to Baghdad for medical treatment. Powell linked Zarqawi to Ansar al-Islam, an al Qaeda cell operating in a Kurdish region "outside Saddam Hussein's controlled Iraq." Powell told the Security Council that the United States had approached an unnamed "friendly security service"—Jordan's—"to approach Baghdad about extraditing Zarqawi," providing information and details "that should have made it easy to find Zarqawi." Iraq did nothing. Finally, Powell asserted that al Qaeda leaders and senior Iraqi officials had "met at least eight times" since the early 1990s.

These claims, the critics maintain, were "hyped" and "exaggerated."

What the Administration Didn't Use

If the Bush administration had been out to hype the threat from an al Qaeda-Saddam link, it stands to reason that it would have used every shred of incriminating evidence at its disposal. Instead, the administration was restrained in its use of available intelligence. What the Bush administration left out is in some ways as revealing as what it included.

⋆ Iraqi defectors had been saying for years that Saddam's regime trained "non-Iraqi Arab terrorists" at a camp in Salman Pak, south of Baghdad. U.N. inspectors had confirmed the camp's existence, including the presence of a Boeing 707. Defectors say the plane was used to train hijackers; the Iraqi regime said it was used in counterterrorism training. Sabah Khodada, a captain in the Iraqi Army, worked at Salman Pak. In October 2001, he told PBS's *Frontline* about what went on there. "Training is majorly on terrorism. They would be trained on assassinations, kidnapping, hijacking of airplanes, hijacking of buses, public buses, hijacking of trains and all other kinds of

operations related to terrorism. . . . All this training is directly toward attacking American targets, and American interests."

But the Bush administration said little about Salman Pak as it demonstrated links between Iraq and al Qaeda. According to administration sources, some detainees who provided credible evidence of other links between Iraq and al Qaeda, including training in terrorism and WMD, insist they have no knowledge of Salman Pak. Khodada, the Iraqi army captain, also professed ignorance of whether the trainees were members of al Qaeda. "Nobody came and told us, 'This is al Qaeda people,'" he explained, "but I know there were some Saudis, there were some Afghanis. There were some other people from other countries getting trained."

⋆ On February 13, 2003, the government of the Philippines asked Hisham al Hussein, the second secretary of the Iraqi embassy in Manila, to leave the country. According to telephone records obtained by Philippine intelligence, Hussein had been in frequent contact with two leaders of Abu Sayyaf, an al Qaeda affiliate in South Asia, immediately before and immediately after they detonated a bomb in Zamboanga City. That attack killed two Filipinos and an American Special Forces soldier and injured several others. Hussein left the Philippines for Iraq after he was "PNG'd"—declared *persona non grata*—by the Philippine government and has not been heard from since.

According to a report in the *Christian Science Monitor*, an Abu Sayyaf leader who planned the attack bragged on television a month after the bombing that Iraq had contacted him about conducting joint operations. Philippine intelligence officials were initially skeptical of his boasting, but after finding the telephone records they believed him.

⋆ No fewer than five high-ranking Czech officials have publicly confirmed that Mohammed Atta, the lead September 11 hijacker, met with Ahmed Khalil Ibrahim al-Ani, an Iraqi intelligence officer working at the Iraqi embassy, in Prague five months before the hijacking. Media leaks here and in the Czech Republic have called into question whether Atta was in Prague on the key dates—between April 4 and April 11, 2001. And several high-ranking administration officials are "agnostic" as to whether the meeting took place. Still, the public position of the Czech government to this day is that it did.

That assertion should be seen in the context of Atta's curious stop-off in Prague the previous spring, as he traveled to the United States. Atta flew to Prague from Germany on May 30, 2000, but did not have a valid visa and was denied entry. He returned to Germany, obtained the proper paperwork, and took a bus back to Prague. One day later, he left for the United States.

Despite the Czech government's confirmation of the Atta-al Ani meeting, the Bush administration dropped it as evidence of an al Qaeda-Iraq connection in September 2002. Far from hyping this episode, administration officials refrained from citing it as the debate over the Iraq war heated up in Congress, in the country, and at the U.N.

What the Government Has Learned Since the War

The administration's critics, including several of the Democratic presidential candidates, have alluded to new "evidence" they say confirms Iraq and al Qaeda had no relationship before the war. They have not shared that evidence.

Even as the critics withhold the basis for their allegations, evidence on the other side is piling up. Ansar al-Islam—the al Qaeda cell formed in June 2001 that operated out of northern Iraq before the war, notably attacking Kurdish enemies of Saddam—has stepped up its activities elsewhere in the country. In some cases, say national security officials, Ansar is joining with remnants of Saddam's regime to attack Americans and nongovernmental organizations working in Iraq. There is some reporting, unconfirmed at this point, that the recent bombing of the U.N. headquarters was the result of a joint operation between Baathists and Ansar al-Islam.

And there are reports of more direct links between the Iraqi regime and bin Laden. Farouk Hijazi, former Iraqi ambassador to Turkey and Saddam's longtime outreach agent to Islamic fundamentalists, has been captured. In his initial interrogations, Hijazi admitted meeting with senior al Qaeda leaders at Saddam's behest in 1994. According to administration officials familiar with his questioning, he has subsequently admitted additional contacts, including a meeting in late 1997. Hijazi continues to deny that he met with bin Laden on December 21, 1998, to offer the al Qaeda leader safe haven in Iraq. U.S. officials don't believe his denial.

For one thing, the meeting was reported in the press at the time. It also fits a pattern of contacts surrounding Operation Desert Fox, the series of missile strikes the Clinton administration launched at Iraq beginning December 16, 1998. The bombing ended 70 hours later, on December 19, 1998. Administration officials now believe Hijazi left for Afghanistan as the bombing ended and met with bin Laden two days later.

Earlier that year, at another point of increased tension between the United States and Iraq, Hussein sought to step up contacts with al Qaeda. On February 18, 1998, after the Iraqis repeatedly refused to permit U.N. weapons inspectors into sensitive sites, President Bill Clinton went to the Pen-

tagon and delivered a hawkish speech about Hussein's weapons of mass destruction and his links to "an unholy axis of terrorists, drug traffickers, and organized international criminals." Said Clinton: "We have to defend our future from these predators of the 21st century. . . . They will be all the more lethal if we allow them to build arsenals of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons and the missiles to deliver them. We simply cannot allow that to happen. There is no more clear example of this threat than Saddam Hussein."

The following day, February 19, 1998, according to documents unearthed in Baghdad after the recent war by journalists Mitch Potter and Inigo Gilmore, Hussein's intelligence service wrote a memo detailing upcoming meetings with a bin Laden representative traveling to Baghdad. Each reference to bin Laden had been covered with Liquid Paper. The memo laid out a plan to step up contacts between Iraq and al Qaeda. The Mukhabarat, one of Saddam's security forces, agreed to pay for "all the travel and hotel costs inside Iraq to gain the knowledge of the message from bin Laden and to convey to his envoy an oral message from us to bin Laden." The document set as the goal for the meeting a discussion of "the future of our relationship with him, bin Laden, and to achieve a direct meeting with him." The al Qaeda representative, the document went on to suggest, might be "a way to maintain contacts with bin Laden."

I emailed Potter, a Jerusalem-based correspondent for the *Toronto Star*, about his findings last month. He was circumspect about the meaning of the document. "So did we find the tip of the iceberg, or the whole iceberg? Did bin Laden and Saddam agree to disagree and that was the end of it? I still don't know." Still, he wrote, "I have no doubt that what we found is the real thing. We plucked it out of a building that had been J-DAMed and was three-quarters gone. Beyond the pale to think that the CIA or someone else planted false evidence in such a dangerous location, where only lunatics would bother to tread. And then to cover over the incriminating name Osama bin Laden with Liquid Paper, so that only the most stubborn and dogged of translators would fluke into spotting it?"

Four days after that memo was written, on February 23, 1998, bin Laden and his deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri, issued a famous *fatwa* about the plight of Iraq. Published that day in *al Quds al-Arabi*, it reads in part:

> First, for over seven years the United States has been occupying the lands of Islam in the holiest of places, the Arabian Peninsula, plundering its riches, dictating to its rulers, humiliating its people, terrorizing its neighbors, and turning its bases in the Peninsula into a spearhead through which to fight the neighboring Muslim peoples. . . . The best proof of this is the Americans' continuing aggression against the Iraqi people using the Peninsula as a staging post, even though all its rulers are against their territories being used to that end, still they are helpless. Second, despite the great devastation inflicted on the Iraqi people by the crusader-Zionist alliance, and despite the huge number of those killed, in excess of 1 million . . . despite all this, the Americans are once again trying to repeat the horrific massacres, as though they are not content with the protracted blockade imposed after the ferocious war or the fragmentation and devastation.

The Americans, bin Laden says, are working on behalf of Israel.

> The best proof of this is their eagerness to destroy Iraq, the strongest neighboring Arab state, and their endeavor to fragment all the states of the region such as Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Sudan into paper statelets and through their disunion and weakness to guarantee Israel's survival and the continuation of the brutal crusade occupation of the Peninsula.

Bin Laden urges his followers to act. "The ruling to kill all Americans and their allies—civilians and military—is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it." It was around this time, U.S. officials say, that Hussein paid the $300,000 to bin Laden's deputy, Zawahiri.

According to U.S. officials, soldiers in Iraq have discovered additional documentary evidence like the memo Potter found. This despite the fact that there is no team on the ground assigned to track down these contacts—no equivalent to the Iraq Survey Group looking for evidence of Saddam's weapons of mass destruction. Interviews with detained senior Iraqi intelligence officials are rounding out the picture.

The Bush administration has thus far chosen to keep the results of its postwar findings to itself; much of the information presented here comes from public sources. The administration, spooked by the media feeding frenzy surrounding yellowcake from Niger, is exercising extreme caution in rolling out the growing evidence of collaboration between al Qaeda and Baathist Iraq. As the critics continue their assault on a prewar "pattern of deception," the administration remains silent.

This impulse is understandable. It is also dangerous. Some administration officials argue privately that the case for linkage is so devastating that when they eventually unveil it, the critics will be embarrassed and their arguments will collapse. But to rely on this assumption is to run a terrible risk. Already, the absence of linkage is the conventional wisdom in many quarters. Once "everybody knows" that Saddam and bin Laden had nothing to do with each other, it becomes extremely difficult for any release of information by the U.S. government to change people's minds. ♦

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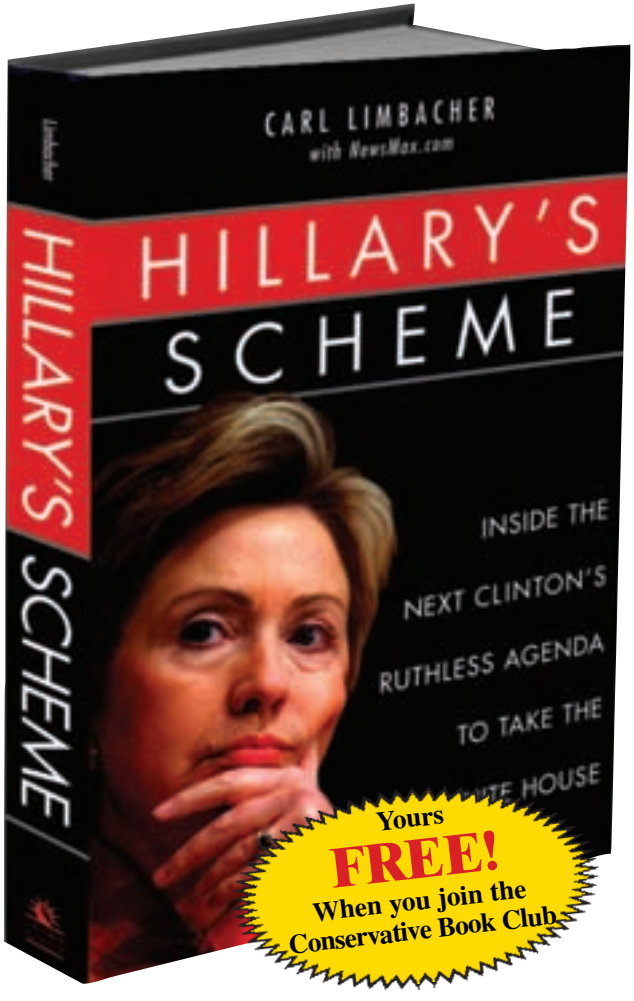

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Emerson and Us

The American scholar as American preacher

By Wilfred M. McClay

Emerson addressing Bronson Alcott's school in Concord

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The bicentennial of Ralph Waldo Emerson's birth on May 25, 1803, has come and gone, leaving surprisingly little in its wake. The occasion was duly noted. But the observances had a quiet, perfunctory air about them. There was a flurry of local celebrations in his native New England: special tours of his Concord home, conferences and exhibitions at Harvard, lectures at Boston-area Unitarian and theosophical societies, pleasant articles in the *Boston Globe*, *Harvard Magazine*, and a few other periodicals. At the elegant Emerson Inn in Rockport, where the master is thought to have vacationed, one could even acquire a bronze bust for $350.

But this admiring sentiment does not seem to have spread much beyond the region or stimulated a more sustained national reflection on his larger legacy. Americans know they're expected to revere Emerson. But they are not sure quite why. Some are not even sure they should.

The eminent literary scholar Harold Bloom has few doubts on that score. He did his bit for the bicentennial by proclaiming Emerson to be "the dominant sage of the American imagination," "the central figure in American culture," a thinker who, far from being a faded tintype stowed away in the national attic, is "closer to us than ever on his two-hundredth birthday."

Bloom has been promoting Emerson for years now, and such statements, though predictably overblown, have a certain plausibility to them. Still, it's hard to locate the particular points where Emerson's influence has been most strongly felt. Bloom finds Emerson popping up in so many places—Richard Rorty, Republicans, libertarians, John Dewey, Henry Ford, Henry James Sr., Pentecostals, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Hart Crane, Robert Frost, George W. Bush—that his vast claims begin to sound meaningless. Where *isn't* Emerson?

Emerson
by Lawrence Buell
Belknap, 397 pp., $29.95

Ralph Waldo Emerson
The Making of a Democratic Intellectual
by Peter S. Field
Rowman & Littlefield, 253 pp., $36.95

Understanding Emerson
"The American Scholar" and His Struggle for Self-Reliance
by Kenneth S. Sacks
Princeton University Press, 199 pp., $29.95

Yet one sympathizes with Bloom. There is something undeniably large and at the same time ineffable about Emerson's status in our culture, a quality of being both everywhere and nowhere that is somehow reinforced by his way of doing things: his defiance of conventional categories, and the flowing amorphousness of his highly quotable but rambling and unsystematic style.

He who learns to write in strings of aphorisms has something to offer every attention span, which is why Emerson has appealed to a variety of audiences. He has been held in awe by the nineteenth-century American literati, admired by the likes of Thomas Carlyle and Friedrich Nietzsche, embraced by twentieth-century scholars and intellectuals of nearly every rank and ideological persuasion—and equally so by a long procession of aspiring businessmen, all-American motivational speakers, human-potential psychotherapists, transcendental meditators, and get-rich gurus, all anxious to claim his sanction.

One of his most worshipful twentieth-century admirers was the American composer Charles Ives, a fellow Yankee individualist who not only memorialized Emerson with a movement of his legendarily formidable piano sonata *Concord, Massachusetts, 1845*, but was pleased to introduce advertisements for his life-insurance company, Ives and Myrick, with zingy Emersonian epigrams such as "I appeal from your customs; I must be myself!" (from the

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famous 1841 essay on "Self-Reliance"). Ives found it natural to embrace Emerson in both ways, even when to our ears they clash resoundingly, like the clanging countermelodies in Ives's own strange musical compositions.

So, it is not easy to know whether Emerson is best understood as the inspirational poet and prophet of a robustly independent American intellectual life, or as the spiritual father of contemporary narcissism, the über-Protestant who greased the skids from "Here I Stand" (Martin Luther, 1521) to "I've Gotta Be Me" (Sammy Davis Jr., 1969). But, as the example of Ives suggests, it may be helpful to start out by thinking of Emerson, first and foremost, as a peculiar product of New England culture, at a particular moment.

A century and a half ago, bucolic little Concord was a hub of the American literary and cultural universe, home to a small group of talented intellectuals, major figures in their own day who would go on to exert an incalculable influence on all subsequent American thought and culture. One could hardly think of a more illustrious circle of American writers than Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry David Thoreau, Bronson Alcott, and Margaret Fuller. All of them knew one another, lived in or near Concord at roughly the same time, and wrote many of their most important works there. Indeed, all of them (with the exception of Fuller, who died in a shipwreck) are also buried there today. There is perhaps no single location in all of American literary history more weighty in literary lore, and more alive with the sense of possibility—precisely the sense of possibility that has always been one of the chief glories of American life.

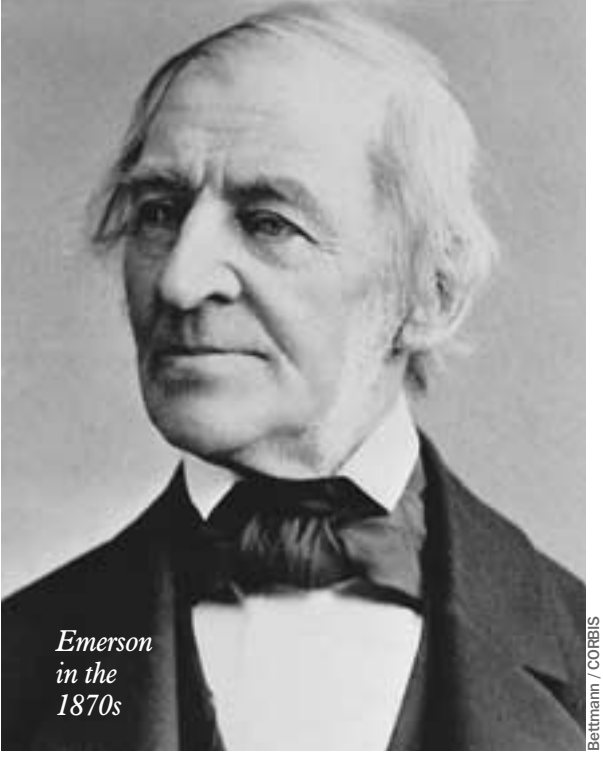
These writers shared a fascination with the cluster of ideas and ideals that go under the rubric of Transcendentalism, which stressed the glories of the vast, the mysterious, and the intuitive. It sought to replace the sin-soaked supernaturalist dogma of orthodox Christianity and the tidy rationality of Unitarianism with a sprawling romantic and eclectic form of natural piety that bordered on pantheism. It placed the ideal of the majestic, isolated, and inviolable Self at the center of its thought and the center of Nature itself. Indeed, Nature and the Self were two expressions of the same thing: "Nature is the opposite of the soul," Emerson wrote in 1837, "answering to it part for part. One is seal, and one is print. Its beauty is the beauty of his own mind. Its laws are the laws of his own mind." The vastness of Nature's external panorama was exactly matched by the vastness of the soul's interior estate. Both were part and parcel of the Universal Soul that superintended all things.

Needless to say, such a fulsome view of both Nature and subjective experience accorded little or no respect to older sources of commanding human authority and wisdom, except as raw material to be fed upon selectively, with only the needs of the moment (and of the feeding individual) in view. It also was rather sketchy on details of political and social thought. Emerson himself was notoriously contemptuous of "society," which he disparaged as a "conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members," and was distrustful of all social movements, even those for undeniably good causes. Instead, he held, the Transcendental Self enjoyed an absolute liberty, free of any external restraint or law other than that of its own nature. In the Transcendental utopia, individuals perfected themselves in unfettered liberty, in order that they might form a community that thrives without authority or traditions. Transcendentalism promoted a social and ethical theory that amounted to little more than the principle of self-trust.

Transcendentalism would have been unthinkable without its many transatlantic additives, including a selective appropriation of German romanticism, a misreading of Kantian idealism, and generous dollops of the Swedish theosophist Emanuel Swedenborg. But it was nonetheless a movement as American, and New England, as apple pie, a movement marking a distinct phase in the strange career of American Puritanism. In Transcendentalism, the anagogical mysticism of Jonathan Edwards was turned loose in an un-Edwardsian universe, one in which Nature had lost its fallen fearsomeness and the sense of sin itself had begun to evaporate. Transcendentalism became the evangelicalism of the New England intelligentsia. Like mainstream evangelicalism, it sought to overthrow the established authority of denominational hierarchies and social elites, and to ground religious affirmations in the authority of individual experience.

To be sure, in taking such a position, it subtracted such inconvenient evangelical distinctives as, say, a belief in the divinity of Christ, in born-again conversion, in the sacred and binding authority of the Bible, and in the imperative to work actively for social reform. It was too free-floating, skeptical, and self-satisfied for any of that. But still, the movement needs to be understood as part and parcel of the expansive, hopeful, experimental, and sometimes utterly cockamamie spirit of antebellum American reform—a moment when America seemed ready to reconsider all existing social arrangements and precedents, and try out everything from abolitionism, feminism, and temperance to diet fads, utopian socialist communities, group marriage, and group celibacy—a moment that has given us such disparate legacies as the revivalistic camp meeting, Seventh-Day Adventism, Mormonism, Shaker furniture, and Graham crackers.

The specific hierarchical establishment against which Transcendentalism was rebelling, though, was Unitarianism, itself an intellectually liberal (though politically conservative) rebellion against the old-line official Calvinism of the Congregational Church, and as idiosyncratic a New England institution as one could ever hope to find. Emerson's own family had faithfully traced the path of this portion of religious history. Emerson himself was the offspring of a long line of ministers in the Congregational tradition, including his Unitarian father William, whom Emerson followed into the ministry after first attending Unitarian-controlled Harvard College and Harvard Divinity School. Not long after moving into the pulpit, however, Emerson



Emerson in the 1870s

Bettmann / CORBIS

found himself restless and discontented with the airless rationalism and empty formalism of "corpse-cold" Unitarian theology and worship.

One can hardly blame him. Unitarianism, which itself started out as an insurgency, had with amazing speed become a byword for smug complacency. "Nothing," remarked Henry Adams, who knew that old Bostonian world well, "quieted doubt so completely as the mental calm of the Unitarian clergy. . . . [They] had solved the universe, or had offered and realized the best solution yet tried. The problem was worked out." Unitarianism had come to power with the promise of a greater theological freedom than that of hard-shell Calvinism, but failed to deliver on the expectations it had aroused. It would quickly be devoured by the revolution it had engendered.

In 1832 Emerson's restlessness finally led him to resign his clerical position at Boston's prestigious Second Church, even without any clear notion of what was to come next. But a substantial legacy left him by his recently deceased wife Ellen gave him breathing room and a chance to reorder his life. After a period of travel in Europe, in which he met Carlyle, Wordsworth, and some of his other intellectual idols, Emerson resolved to set himself up as an independent writer and speaker, whose efforts would gain support and sustenance from the widening public interest in self-improvement and unconventional religious and spiritual explorations.

Having stepped away from the established guidelines of a conventional ecclesiastical career, however, Emerson lacked a readily available model for his own new endeavors, and lacked access to occasions and venues in which he could establish himself as a public intellectual force. In *Understanding Emerson*, Kenneth S. Sacks shows how Emerson solved these two problems, focusing on a single crucial event in Emerson's life—his delivery in 1837 of the annual Phi Beta Kappa address at Harvard, a challenging, occasionally taunting speech that would become known as "The American Scholar" and would launch him in his newly conceived role. A memorable plea for American cultural independence and originality, a blunt challenge to the sodden academicism of Harvard, and a life plan for passionately independent minds like his own, "The American Scholar" would in due course become the most celebrated academic lecture in American history.

Sacks takes us behind the scenes, so to speak, to show us how Emerson was selected to deliver the speech, and to give us a more vivid sense of the various intellectual currents and constituencies Emerson found himself navigating, even within his own Transcendentalist circles. Sacks's Emerson is very much a man of his milieu, a stubborn and driven Yankee whose thoughts and deeds were inconceivable apart from his passive-aggressive ambivalence about the Unitarian elites staring back at him from the audience, including such dignitaries as Supreme Court justice Joseph Story and Massachusetts governor Edward Everett. The act of delivering such a speech before such an august group was a brave assertion of what Emerson would soon call "self-reliance," a deed of self-definition that validated Emerson's new role in the very act of presenting it to the world. Sifting through the record of Emerson's inner life contained in his voluminous journals and correspondence, Sacks reveals Emerson as a struggling, uncertain figure, whose hunger to achieve self-reliance warred constantly against his need for approval from other quarters. His great effort of self-assertion seems more sympathetic, and less self-indulgent, when seen in this light.

But it is, of course, not enough merely to peg Emerson as a New Englander. He went on to enjoy a national and international career of unprecedented proportions, effectively using the lyceum movement and the lecture circuit as a means of polishing his ideas, spreading his Transcendentalist gospel, and paying his bills. Harold Bloom is on target in claiming that the influence of Emerson and his group of antebellum Concord writers has been enormous and remains undiminished. For many Americans, educated and uneducated alike, something like the Transcendentalist vision of reality forms the core of what America is all about as a nation.

That doesn't mean they're right, however. And that is precisely the nub of the problem with Emerson. It is one thing to acknowledge his influence. It is quite another to propose that, in some sense, he *is* America, a proposition that is not only demonstrably false, but one that should arouse our suspicions, since it is an effort not only to define Emerson, but to define America. Anyone who proposes it needs to be reminded of the commanding presence in American life of a set of very different, and more sober, assumptions about liberty, moral authority, sin, human nature, and national identity—assumptions contained, among other places, in the theory and structure of the Constitution, and woven into the nation's Christian, republican, and liberal traditions. Indeed, a fair understanding of Emerson ought to depict him as a man thoroughly shaped by such assumptions himself, whose rebellion takes on a different meaning in a world in which—unlike ours—there were still plenty of prescriptive elites left to push against.

The questions raised by all this are full of import for our national life. Is

America best understood as a poetic land of possibility—a more wondrous affair than the mere "prose" of the Founders? Or is the American enterprise better understood as something far more sober and limited, grounded in a programmatic suspicion of human nature, and thereby in the very religious and moral traditions the Transcendentalists were challenging? Were the Transcendentalists the first to grasp the full dimensions of the American experiment, the first to embrace all the transformative possibilities inherent in what Emerson called the "unsearched might of man"? Or did they thereby seriously misconstrue the meaning of the American experiment? Did their work give rise to a fresh and expansive conception of human liberty, one that has underwritten much of what has been vibrant and distinctive about American life? Or did it underwrite the fatal hyperextension of our conceptions of liberty, undermining the solid social order that liberty must always presuppose?

If Emerson's bicentennial is to be more than an occasion for visiting his gaudy tombstone, we need to face these questions and ask frankly what Emerson's meaning is for us today. And at first glance, Lawrence Buell's *Emerson*, a quasi-official effort timed to coincide with the bicentennial, would seem to do just that. Buell seems to take a larger and more open-ended view of his subject than Sacks, and wants to insist upon Emerson as a cosmopolitan thinker—which is just how Emerson would want to be seen. It is also encouraging to see Buell begin by telling us of his concern that "canonical figures like Emerson have been oversimplified in being thought of as icons of U.S. national culture"—though the use of the modifier "U.S." in place of the more usual "American," and in conjunction with the word "canonical," alerts the reader to the possibility that a wave of academic babble is coming.

Sure enough, it soon emerges that the object of this exercise is something quite narrow and intramural, sadly reflecting the impoverished state of literary studies today. Buell wants to persuade his readers that Emerson is acceptable company for sophisticated literary scholars today, despite the unfortunate fact of his having been a straight white European male who said—or appeared to say—many laudatory things about "America." With the right reading, careful pruning, and creative qualifications, a suitably transgressive Emerson can be salvaged from the wreckage and perhaps even transformed into a "representative man" of a new epoch in human history. Such an Emerson might even be invited to address the Modern Language Association.

Given such objectives, Buell's *Emerson* could hardly help being a defensive, tedious book whose contents are twisted into a posture of near-constant genuflection before the idols of the present-day academy. Buell is less interested in our learning anything fresh from Emerson than he is in examining how well Emerson's ideas line up with the proper political and social desiderata. The chief theme to which Buell returns with obsessive-compulsive regularity is his insistence that, appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, Emerson was *not* parochial, *not* nationalistic, *not* chauvinistic. Instead, his Emerson "anticipated the globalizing world in which we increasingly live." This Emerson advocated a "'postnational' form of consciousness." He had "surprisingly little patience for nationalism as such." He was "notable" for his "refusal to wave the flag." He would have embraced current scholarship's emphasis upon the perspectives of "marginalized" and "subaltern" groups. And so on.

One can actually grant that some of this may be true, minus the jargon—but so what? Just who ever portrayed Emerson as the patron saint of the American Legion? Emerson may have been a provincial thinker in some respects, but he certainly never presented himself as one. He always spoke with the whole universe in mind as his audience. (The trees and plants, he averred, "nod to me, and I to them.") Even Harold Bloom would not have spent so many years promoting Emerson had he not believed that Emerson's work was deeply subversive of "official" American pieties. Since Buell does not bother to identify whom he is arguing against, one assumes that he is trying to assuage the concerns of his fellow "university researchers," who are convinced that Emerson is a dangerously patriotic "Americanist," and that that fact, along with his other manifest deficiencies of race, class, and gender, disqualifies him from being taken seriously.

There is some value in addressing such misconceptions—but not if it means merely substituting others for them. Buell's busy effort to decontaminate Emerson is not only a distraction, but a distortion. It goes to the extreme of insisting that there is nothing particularly "American" about "The American Scholar," that it is devoid of "cultural nationalism," and that Emerson's program is "nowhere" commended as an "American" program. This requires one to read the text with what can only be called willful selectivity. Buell quotes many lines from the address, but somehow neglects to cite these famous concluding words:

> We have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe. The spirit of the American freeman is already suspected to be timid, imitative, tame. . . . Not so, brothers and friends, please God, ours shall not be so. We will walk on our own feet; we will work with our own hands; we will speak our own minds. . . . A nation of men will for the first time exist, because each believes himself inspired by the Divine Soul which also inspires all men.

Buell's commemoration of Emerson's birthday gives us just what we didn't need: yet another book that tells us more about the reigning anxieties of American academia than it does about the subject at hand. Buell praises Emerson as a source of inspiration to those who wish to improve themselves and feel a "need to question arbitrary authority, official wisdom, and their own internalized dutifulness." But if this low-octane blend of uplift and antinomianism is the extent of the matter, one would be justified in wondering if Emerson is really worth the fuss. Can anyone seriously claim that American society at present has too few voices in it urging us to question authority and follow our bliss?

Fortunately, those are not the only claims to be made for Emerson. There are features of his thought that deserve to endure without requiring us to edit him for contemporary tastes, or contextualize him to death, or embrace his romantic individualism and New Age metaphysics.

To begin with, Emerson offers us a model of a fully engaged, whole-souled, and broadly democratic approach to intellectual life that has been largely lost in the context of the contemporary academy. It is often said—and the claim is supported persuasively in Peter Field's fine study, *Ralph Waldo Emerson: The Making of a Democratic Intellectual*—that Emerson was America's first "public intellectual." But Field goes further than that, seeing in Emerson an especially prophetic exponent of the possibilities of democracy itself, a lone voice attributing American intellectuals' famous "alienation from the crowd" not to the insufficiencies of the American people and the doleful effects of "democratic leveling" but to the failures of the thinking class itself. This is why "The American Scholar" so richly repays reading now. It reminds us that America's intellectuals have never been quite equal to the promise of American life.

Field also touches on a point rightly stressed two decades ago by the Emerson scholar David Robinson: Emerson is best understood not as a poet or a philosopher, but as a *preacher*. Indeed, one could claim that he was America's first secular preacher and that his homiletic gift was his most fundamental one. The content of his beliefs may have shifted dramatically during the course of his life, but his methods and rhetorical style changed only incrementally from what they were during his days at Boston's Second Church. It was always his aim to move his audiences and induce them to change their lives, rather than merely inform or persuade them. Whether speaking or writing, he was always performing, and his language was always charged with the force of exhortation.

This is more than just a question of Emerson's style. Much has been made of his sensitivity to the riches and intricacies of language, in ways that seem to anticipate Wittgenstein and the "linguistic turn" of much fashionable twentieth-century thought. But such an effort to polish Emerson's credentials surely misses something essential about him. His thinking about language is better understood in light of a saying formulated by the great anti-nominalist Richard Weaver: *Language is sermonic*. In this view, language always seeks to *move* us, in the same way a sermon does, and is most fully itself when permitted to realize that objective. Emerson wrote nothing that was not meant to be, in this sense, sermonic. He was a prophet of human possibility, who used his imaginative gifts to conjure new frontiers and flood the world with light.

Bettmann / CORBIS.

Emerson's home in Concord.

So what are we, at last, to make of those grand sermons of Ralph Waldo Emerson? It would be an error to imagine that Emerson ever divorced his understanding of himself from his understanding of America. The distinction Buell insists upon, between a bad "Americanist" Emerson and a good "cross-national" Emerson, would have meant almost nothing to Emerson himself. He saw no contradiction between the two, precisely because he understood the unfolding of the American experiment and the unfolding promise of humanity as two different expressions of the same historical phenomenon.

He saw the American Revolution as a beacon to all of humanity, and he believed that the embattled farmers of his beloved Concord had indeed fired a shot "heard round the world," in the words of his own patriotic "Concord Hymn"—the best-known words Emerson ever wrote. Hence, when he called for Americans to cease taking their cues from "the courtly muses of Europe," he was not advocating a withdrawal into insular provincialism. Instead, he thought that America was uniquely situated, by virtue of its history and current circumstances, to achieve something new under the sun—politically, socially, intellectually—and ought to do so for the sake not only of itself, but of all humanity.

Perhaps he was mistaken in this bold, immodest belief. Yet in the end, it is hardly a belief unique to Emerson, or exclusively the property of Americans, and it is a belief that has proved much more resilient than all the scholarly monographs arrayed against it. President Bush echoed it earlier this year when he declared that "the advance of freedom" is "a calling we follow," precisely because "the self-evident truths of our founding" are "true for all." And British prime minister Tony Blair neatly reinforced it in his magnificent speech to the United States Congress this summer, reminding Americans that "destiny put you in this place in history, in this moment in time, and the task is yours to do."

That was precisely Emerson's message—for his own time, and for ours as well. There was much in Emerson we would do well to set aside. But in this important respect he is, indeed, closer to us than ever. ♦

A Fix for Political Junkies

The latest editions of the standard guides to American politics. **BY DAVID LOWE**

A decade ago, Joseph Califano contrasted the "stunning ascendancy of congressional clout" with the submissiveness of Congress he had known while serving in Lyndon Johnson's White House. "Congress has become the King Kong of Washington's political jungle," he declared.

Califano should not have been so stunned. In explaining the need for a bicameral legislature in the *Federalist Papers*, Madison asserts that in republican systems of government, "the legislative authority necessarily predominates." Since the American Founding, congressional power has ebbed and flowed, but it is undeniable that the United States Congress has far more authority than the legislatures in the world's other democratic countries. It's also true that the period since Lyndon Johnson has been marked by extraordinary congressional assertiveness: impeaching one president, forcing another to step down, terminating the funding needed to continue a major war, and killing high-priority nominations to both the cabinet and federal judiciary.

During this same period, a heightened decentralization of power within both the Senate and the House of Representatives has raised the profile and influence of individual senators and congressmen. As a result, no longer is it just a handful of committee barons who can hire their own experts, initiate investigations, exercise control over executive branch personnel, and play a role in policy-making. Today, very few, if any members at all, owe their electoral victories to the president.

Since Califano's White House days, moreover, members have seen their offices besieged by a growing number of lobbyists, whose ranks began to swell in the late 1960s with the emergence of a broad array of "citizens' groups." It was largely in response to the needs of these groups for a road map to Congress and its members that *National Journal* commissioned *The Almanac of American Politics* in 1972. As the book's authors noted at the time, up until then there had been no single source "to help the interested citizen make sense of the flux and confusion of Capitol Hill politics."

The Almanac of American Politics 2004
by Michael Barone with Richard Cohen
National Journal, 1,836 pp., $59.95

Politics in America 2004
The 108th Congress
edited by David Hawkings and Brian Nutting
Congressional Quarterly, 1,196 pp., $75

So they developed a framework for explaining not so much how Congress works as the forces that shape the individual member, and they have updated the information in volumes that have appeared every two years. The young Michael Barone was the driving force behind the original edition, as he remains today, and it was an astonishing piece of work. Using an array of electoral and census data, the *Almanac* offers descriptive political analyses of each state and congressional district, which become the backdrop for introducing all five hundred and thirty-five voting members of Congress. (It also includes those nonvoting delegates representing Washington, D.C., and the four insular American territories.)

The district and member analyses contain both hard and soft data. District statistics include area, population (broken down into urban and rural), median income, percentage of military veterans and those below the poverty level, occupational percentages (white, blue, and gray collar), and race and ethnic origin. Key electoral information is also provided, including the 2000 presidential vote, the statistical results of the previous two elections, and a new index, attributed to election analyst Charlie Cook, that expresses the relationship between the last congressional and presidential vote. There is additional demographic and political information for each state, including the all-important partisan composition of the legislature.

Member information for both the Senate and the House includes basic biographical data, voting percentages for each previous election, committee assignments, key votes, and ratings by labor, business, and ideological interest groups. But what gives the volume its character, and what sets it apart from run-of-the-mill statistical reference books, are the narrative descriptions. They convey—to the journalists, academics, and lobbyists who are the main consumers of the *Almanac*—the richly textured historical and demographic factors that influence local politics. What author Michael Barone and his original coauthors wrote over thirty years ago remains true: "Talking about a congressman without taking his district into account is like talking about Roosevelt without mentioning the Depression, or Henry VIII without talking about his wives."

Each entry begins with a brief political history of the state or district with a heavy emphasis on patterns of immigrant settlement and economic development. For obvious reasons, many have been lifted wholesale from previous editions, but they rarely fail to reward the political junkie. Take this description of Minnesota's fourth district, which encompasses St. Paul and surrounding suburbs:

> Above the Mississippi River bluffs, forested when the first settlers arrived in the 1850s and one of America's

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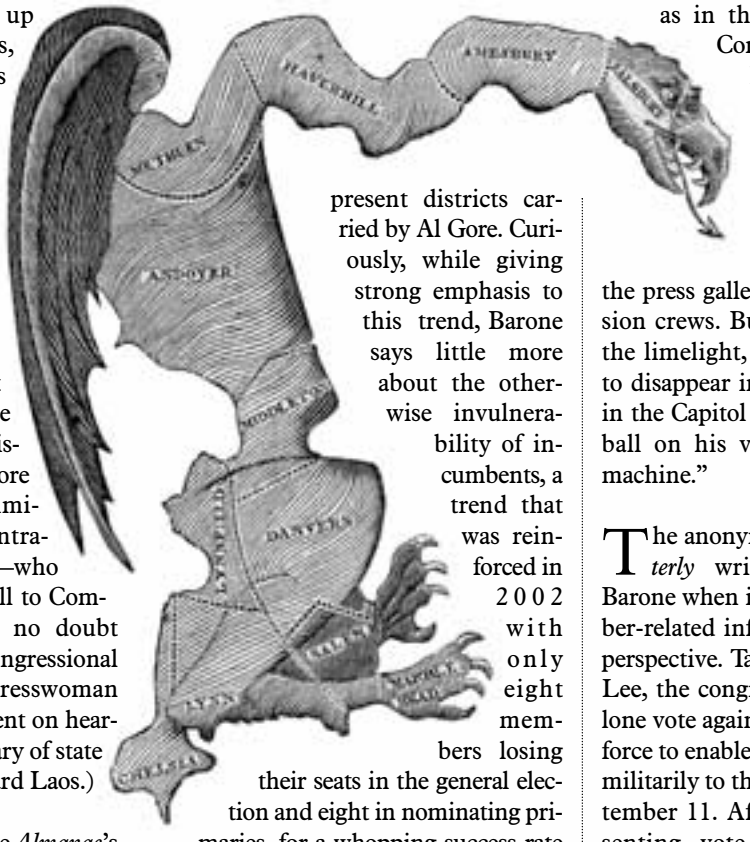
great urban vistas today, stand the two great landmarks of St. Paul: the Minnesota Capitol and Archbishop Ireland's Cathedral. This is the older and smaller of the Twin Cities, settled mainly by Catholic Irish and German immigrants, while Minneapolis was attracting Protestant Swedes and Yankees. St. Paul became a major transportation hub, a railroad center and river port, while Minneapolis, farther up the river at the Falls of St. Anthony, became the nation's largest grain milling center; both industries stoked the ire of farmers in the Dakotas who had no choice but to deal with them to make a living.

A comparison with the same entry a decade ago turns up several interesting updates, including the fact that this Democratic stronghold reelected Norm Coleman as its mayor in 1997, even after he switched parties, and the equally interesting fact that Coleman failed to carry a single precinct in the district in his successful run for the Senate against Walter Mondale last year. Additionally, the authors point out that the district has become home to more than 24,000 Hmong immigrants—the largest concentration in any American city—who resettled there after Laos fell to Communist insurgency. (This no doubt explains why at a recent congressional hearing, second-term congresswoman Betty McCollum was so intent on hearing from an assistant secretary of state about American policy toward Laos.)



The original Gerrymander, from the *Essex South District*, January 1812.

Since the 2002 edition, the *Almanac*'s congressional profiles have profited from the addition of Barone's coauthor, *National Journal*'s veteran congressional expert Richard Cohen, author of a first-rate biography of former Illinois congressman Dan Rostenkowski. In the current volume, the state and district descriptions have been updated and, in some cases, rewritten to reflect the political impact of the redistricting that resulted from the 2000 census. In his introductory essay analyzing the current state of American politics, Barone argues that for the first time since 1952, redistricting worked against the Democrats election by creating more favorable districts for Republicans and by diminishing the number of competitive districts through the implementation of numerous "bipartisan incumbent protection plans."

Barone's essay identifies those districts most susceptible to partisan change in 2004 in this era of straight-ticket voting: the thirty-two (down from forty-six in 2001) in which Democrats represent districts carried by George Bush in 2000 and the twenty-six (down from forty) in which Republicans represent districts carried by Al Gore. Curiously, while giving strong emphasis to this trend, Barone says little more about the otherwise invulnerability of incumbents, a trend that was reinforced in 2002 with only eight members losing their seats in the general election and eight in nominating primaries, for a whopping success rate of 96 percent.

Although members of Congress, and the influences that help shape their behavior, are still the primary focus of the *Almanac*, the book contains lengthy entries on internal state politics, along with individual profiles of governors. The new volume also looks at the contribution of each state to presidential politics, offering accounts of recent primary and general election campaigns and their relevance to the upcoming race for the White House.

A decade after the *Almanac* was first published, *Congressional Quarterly* entered the reference-book sweepstakes with *Politics in America*. Playing to its strength—a stable of knowledgeable reporters who cover Capitol Hill—the *Congressional Quarterly* volume focuses on individual members, with less emphasis on the state or district they represent. The result is a volume that only partly overlaps with the *Almanac of American Politics*. For the most part *Congressional Quarterly*'s member profiles are informative and crisply written.

And there is the occasional nugget, as in this description of Rules Committee chairman David Dreier: "The telegenic Dreier is at his best when playing to an audience, whether on the talk-show circuit, in the well of the House, or kibbitzing in the press gallery with radio and television crews. But though he is often in the limelight, Dreier has been known to disappear into his private hideaway in the Capitol for a quick game of pinball on his vintage 'Voltan Woman' machine."

The anonymous *Congressional Quarterly* writers concede little to Barone when it comes to placing member-related information into historical perspective. Take the profile of Barbara Lee, the congresswoman who cast the lone vote against authorizing the use of force to enable the president to respond militarily to the terrorist attacks of September 11. After comparing that dissenting vote to those of Jeanette Rankin, the Montana Republican who was the only member of Congress to vote against entry into both world wars, the profiler adds: "But while Rankin left the House one year after each of those votes—she lost a Senate bid in 1918, and she did not run for re-election in 1942—Lee's vote did nothing to weaken her political standing. She won her third full term in 2002 with four-fifths of the vote."

The institutional focus of *Politics in America* is underscored in the editors'

introduction. Unlike Barone's sweeping analysis of the 2002 election and its implications, the editors of the *Congressional Quarterly*'s volume, David Hawkings and Brian Nutting, offer a relatively unimaginative overview of recent member-related trends, pointing out that for the first time Baby Boomers hold a majority of seats in both Houses, the number of lawyers has dropped to just over 40 percent, and the percentage of those with state legislative experience has grown steadily (from 32 to 51 percent) over the past decade.

If there is a theme that can be gleaned from these two massive volumes of maps, charts, statistical tables, and disjointed narratives, it is the growing partisan homogeneity both in and out of Congress. In a second introductory essay to *Politics in America*, Gregory Giroux observes that the number of "split" districts in the House (those in which a majority voted for different parties in the 2002 congressional election and the 2000 presidential) has dropped from 192 in 1972, when Richard Nixon inherited a solidly Democratic Congress, to 62 in the current Congress. (Note the discrepancy with Barone's count of 58.) It should therefore come as no surprise that the party unity voting scores for both Republicans and Democrats now push 90 percent. As such partisan voting increases, the impact of district-related factors is likely to diminish.

Much of this growing partisanship is the result of redistricting, and little can be expected to change on that front until the next census in 2010. Given how few House members have announced plans to retire, that body can expect little change in the short term. Coupled with a closely balanced and increasingly partisan Senate, in which the Democratic minority is prepared to obstruct at will, the congressional ascendancy of the past thirty years could soon be on a reverse course.

How all of this will affect the relevance and popularity of these two volumes is anyone's guess, but it can only be hoped that they will continue to grace the political scene for years to come. ♦

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The Real Empire

The once and future China.

BY GARY SCHMITT

How telling is it that critics (and even some advocates) of the Bush administration's foreign policy routinely refer to "the American empire" and Washington's "imperial burden"—while ignoring the fact that the People's Republic of China is the sole major multicultural empire left in the world? More than a third of China's territory is populated by non-Chinese. Its three largest provinces—Tibet, Inner Mongolia, and Xinjiang—are home to non-Chinese civilizations. And, throughout the People's Republic, a cacophony of languages are spoken, many of which are as far from Chinese as English is. What's more, China openly expects to expand its rule to include ocean areas far beyond its coast and the strategically central island of Taiwan. The fact that Taiwan is home to a separate and democratic state doesn't seem to make the slightest bit of difference to Beijing. Whatever difficulties lie in describing America's global preeminence and the character of its foreign policy, there should be no philological impediment to calling China what it is: a large empire with even larger imperial ambitions.

The New Chinese Empire
And What It Means for the United States
by Ross Terrill
Basic, 432 pp., $30

China's New Rulers
The Secret Files
by Andrew J. Nathan and Bruce Gilley
New York Review, 150 pp., $21.95

Chinese Military Power
Report of an Independent Task Force
Council on Foreign Relations, 104 pp.

Annual Report on The Military Power of the People's Republic of China
Department of Defense, 52 pp.

There are, of course, any number of reasons for the inability to see China clearly. In part, it's because China has made remarkable economic progress since the mayhem of the Cultural Revolution, and analysts get overly focused in tracking the ups and downs of China's modernization. But this kind of political myopia is nothing new. For much of the last half of the Cold War, an amazing number of scholars and commentators had a difficult time bringing themselves to conclude that the Soviet Union was a qualitatively different animal from the states that populated the free world. Ultimately, that was because they couldn't acknowledge that the West was home to decent and just states, and the Soviet Union was, in fact, "an evil empire." If there was a problem then in seeing what was self-evident, it's hardly a surprise that it continues to be a problem today.

Looking past what is right in front of them, far too many Sinologists and foreign-policy strategists fail to take account of the essential character of the Chinese state. The result is a serious misunderstanding of how the People's Republic of China rules, how it relates to other states, and what its behavior might be in the years immediately ahead. To long-standing China-watcher and journalist Ross Terrill's credit, he reminds us in his new book, *The New Chinese Empire*, what the obvious is: "Repeatedly, American and other officials, commentators, and scholars skip over the fundamentals of the authoritarian Chinese state. Often there is a plau-

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sible reason: *culture* is destiny, or *economics* is destiny, worthy analysts believe; politics will take care of itself as society evolves. . . . But, for the coming years, *politics* is destiny for the PRC." Let others describe the nuts and bolts of the present regime. Terrill sees his task as setting out China's governing architecture.

And China's politics is that of an imperial state: governing over Chinese and non-Chinese alike largely by fiat; seeking to extend that rule over even more people, if necessary by force; and insisting on its right to do so by a modern version of a mandate from heaven.

Royalty Free / CORBIS

Terracotta soldiers from the tomb of Qin Shihuang Di, circa 220 B.C.

According to Terrill, the ugly truth of Chinese history is that China has never abandoned the empire. Even after the demise of the last Chinese dynasty in 1911, China's new "republican" rulers, Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek, reverted to imperial form. At the end, both tossed aside the ideal of a federal and democratic China in favor of the top-down ways of traditional China. And, of course, once Mao came to power, any hope that China would shake off this legacy died. Mao did not create a new China, let alone a "new man" as many in the West claimed. Ruling as a "neo-emperor"—issuing deadly edicts from above, surrounded by a "court" of family and political eunuchs, and receiving homage from the nation's workers, who bowed before his picture at the start and end of each work day—Mao left a legacy that amounts to nothing short of "a counterrevolution against the 1911 revolution."

As Terrill points out, the death of Mao did nothing to bring an end to the imperial-style rule. Indeed, imperialism became more necessary than ever, from the Chinese Communist party's perspective. As the economic reforms of the Deng and Jiang era took hold, and with them, the centrifugal forces the reforms were creating, the Communists needed to maintain a strong central authority to justify their rule—and revived Chinese nationalism was the cultural glue they used. The new mandate—establishing One China and its sovereign sway over the region—required, like previous mandates, an omnipotent state authority to keep heresy at bay.

To sustain its legitimacy, Terrill points out, the new Chinese empire even pretends to be the heir to the old Chinese empire—revising history books, anthropological studies, museum exhibits, and maps to support its claims for Greater China. Contrary to expectations in the West that economic reforms would eventually lead to substantial political and civic reforms, China maintains a firm, and if need be, an iron grip on the media, the Internet, and political, labor, and religious organizations.

The result is a strange brew of economic dynamism on the part of individual citizens, political apathy among the population as a whole, a muted civic culture, and a form of Chinese racism. Accepting a paternalistic state, China's political and economic elites have little tolerance for notions of rights-bearing, consent-giving individuals. From this, as Terrill notes, it follows that Beijing still routinely refers to Chinese-Australians or Chinese-Americans as "Overseas Chinese," as though the decision to become citizens of some other country were nothing more than an inconvenient convention. And it follows as well that Taiwan must be part of One China—regardless of the fact that the island has never for any extended period been under China's control—because what matters is race, not popular consent.

Even in the area of the economy, where China has made the most progress toward becoming a modern state, reforms have been shaped and ultimately constrained by the political system in which they operate. According to Terrill, as of 2003, "the party-state still controls the economy, . . . considerably more than any non-Communist state in East Asia." The Chinese currency is still not a free-floating currency. And "*all* big industry" remains "intimately linked with the banking-bureaucratic apparatus of the state," typically living off the banked household savings of Chinese citizens rather than real profits.

In such an environment, there are limits to what progress can be made. "So long as your business is below a certain size," Terrill quotes a successful businessman, "you're pretty much left alone. But when you get big enough to attract the attention of the authorities, they soon come knocking on your door with their hands out." Power and connections now dominate China's economy, where, according to Terrill, one percent of the population owns forty percent of the country's wealth. Obligations under international-trade agreements notwithstanding, China still behaves like a mercantilist state in which political calculations rule more than the market.

This does not mean that "the new Chinese empire" is a stable one. Terrill argues, as others have, that China's effort to sustain its economic growth does not rest easy with its system of governance. Toss in huge demographic, ecological, and societal problems, and one can see how the marriage of convenience between Leninism and the Chinese autocratic tradition may not be sufficient for holding the country together.

Fleeing Figures from the 12th-century Adventures of Kibi in China

Burstein Collection / CORBIS

How soon this regime crisis occurs is a matter of speculation, and Terrill wisely, if somewhat disappointingly, punts on predicting how it will be resolved. By his lights, in the decades ahead, China might become a powerful fascist state, a fragmented and chaotic country of mini-states, or even a relatively stable federal democratic nation.

Of course, Washington and the rest of the world have to deal with the Chinese regime that is here now, not what it may become in the years ahead. And the question that always arises when a change in leadership has taken place, as it has over the past year in China, is whether the new leadership is open to changing the fundamental character of the present state. The short answer is we don't know, and we can't know. History is replete with leaders who, when faced with unexpected crises or opportunities, took policy turns no one could have ever predicted.

Nevertheless, we do know a few things about the new Chinese leadership. As opaque as decision-making normally is within the Chinese leadership, we were given some insight into what to expect from last November's turnover in the Chinese Communist party's leadership with the publication of *China's New Rulers: The Secret Files* by Andrew Nathan and Bruce Gilley. Based on leaked, confidential dossiers prepared internally for the party leadership on each of the candidates for the Politburo's Standing Committee, Nathan and Gilley's book provides a rare and illuminating look into policy perspectives of the new set of leaders, their histories, and (to a more limited degree) how they got to be the "chosen ones." The picture that emerges is that whatever the discrete policy differences among them might be, they share one overriding concern: continuation of the Communist party as the governing body of China.

Paradoxically, this is perhaps best shown by the predictions *China's New Rulers* gets wrong. Published shortly before designated-heir Hu Jintao replaced Jiang Zemin as party general secretary (and eventually China's president), the book forecasts a new standing committee of seven, with Li Ruihuan, then a member of the Politburo's standing committee, moving up to the number two slot and becoming chairman of the standing committee of the National People's Congress. What in fact happened was nine were picked for the Politburo's standing committee, and Li Ruihuan not at all. Of the three unexpected new members, two have had strong ties to Jiang Zemin, and one seemingly close relations with both Hu and Jiang. More significantly, Li Ruihuan was known to be the candidate with the most forward-leaning reformist views, notably the belief that greater media freedom and competitive elections were necessary to force better and more accountable performance from the party in governing.

To be sure, the so-called "Fourth Generation" (following those of Mao, Deng, and Jiang) is fully aware that all is not well with the party or the country. Based on the materials analyzed by Nathan and Gilley, however, Hu Jintao is firmly in the camp of those who believe "strengthening internal party mechanisms to rectify the behavior and quality of cadres" is the correct path to take. Whatever he may become, right now Hu is not a Chinese Gorbachev.

Proof will almost certainly be on exhibit as Hu and his colleagues deal with the current crisis in Hong Kong. Hu's predecessor, Jiang Zemin, picked the widely disliked Tung Chee-hwa to be Hong Kong's chief executive. Under normal circumstances, and owing Tung nothing, Hu might have found a reason to "retire" Tung from his post. But that is not likely to happen now. In the wake of the mass march by Hong Kong's citizens in protest against the government's effort to push through laws on subversion and treason, shelving Tung at this point would suggest that Beijing was buckling to public pressure. Whatever Hu's views about Tung, this is one message he and the rest of the Politburo are not about to send to Hong Kong or, more important, the rest of China.

Instead, the residents of Hong Kong have seen the normal purge of ministerial underlings, praise from Beijing about Tung's leadership, and warnings from central government officials to Hong Kong's democrats about the "painful historical lessons" of the Cultural Revolution when people took to the streets as well. The fact that Beijing would equate the recent peaceful march in Hong Kong with the bloody, Mao-directed rampage of the Red Guard shows just how little reform there is in Hu's "reform" agenda. Whatever Tung's ultimate fate, "stability" will remain Beijing's final word when it comes to domestic affairs.

And what about foreign affairs? Is China a "status quo" power or at least cognizant that it needs a peaceful international environment and good relations with the United States to be able to address its domestic problems?

According to Nathan and Gilley's analysis, Hu and company do not view China as a "dissatisfied power" or a country looking to challenge the United States. But this first impression is somewhat misleading. As the authors also point out, China's new leaders are convinced that America's "strategic eastward movement has accelerated" and, as such, created "a great change in our

geopolitical environment." From Beijing's point of view, it is not China that is causing difficulties but, rather, the United States. Expanding NATO, throwing its weight around in the Balkans and now in Iraq, establishing bases in Central Asia in the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11, tightening defense ties with Japan and Australia, creating a new relationship with India and, of course, continuing to support Taiwan—all of this is seen by China's elite as part of Washington's design to keep China in check. From "the leaders' statements," it appears they believe "China and the U.S. must inevitably come into conflict" and that statements by successive administrations that American "interests are served by a stable and prosperous China" are, from their point of view, "too obviously deceptive to deserve attention."

Of course, there is some basis for China's paranoia—but not much. By any objective standard, China's security situation is remarkably good. It no longer faces a hostile nuclear-armed Soviet Union; it no longer has to worry about nearly four-dozen divisions of the Red Army sitting just across its border; it has normalized relations with South Korea; it has put the open conflicts with India and Vietnam in the past; and it has established new ties itself to the Central Asian states. And, finally, Taiwan's "Republic of China" no longer claims sovereignty over the mainland and its military can do little more than defend the island of Formosa.

The fundamental problem is that China's leaders have convinced themselves—and a large part of their population to boot—that China's identity is, as Terrill argues, tied up with a fiction of their own making: One China. If Terrill is right, this fiction cannot be readily given up since it is intimately linked to the Communist party's justification for holding onto power. No issue, he points out, so "starkly focuses" the jumble of iffy historical claims, theology of One China, and thwarted national ambitions as the mainland's claim to Taiwan.

According to Nathan and Gilley, China's new leaders apparently consider Taiwan's independence from China temporary. They "optimistically believe that the rise to power in Taiwan of the independence-minded Democratic Progressive Party . . . will be a passing phenomenon." Growing economic and existing cultural ties are simply too strong for Taiwan to resist the mainland's pull. Or so they and any number of American Sinologists hope.

But Beijing is not counting exclusively on this "soft" approach to integrating Taiwan with the mainland. Behind the somewhat restrained rhetoric coming from the mainland about Taiwan these days is the continuing modernization of China's military capabilities. No other major power in the world has increased its military spending, in terms of percentage, as much as China over the past decade. And those increased capabilities are directed almost exclusively at Taiwan and deterring or defeating an American intervention on the island's behalf.

Archivo Iconografico / CORBIS

A 19th-century Chinese riot

Too large to ignore, China's improved military posture is beginning to worry even America's foreign-policy establishment. In May, a Council on Foreign Relations task force, led by former Carter defense secretary Harold Brown, issued *Chinese Military Power*, an assessment of China's military modernization. Buried behind the reassuring general finding that China was "at least two decades behind the United States in terms of military technology and capability" are several important warnings. The first is that China might use its new capabilities "not to invade Taiwan outright but rather to achieve political goals," such as forcing Taiwan into unification talks. Second, if Beijing thought the trend lines in cross-Strait affairs were not headed in the direction it wanted or expected, it "could decide to utilize force against Taiwan even if the balance of forces across the strait favored the United States and Taiwan." And, finally, the Chinese military is working to develop the means to impose "serious risks and costs on the U.S. military" if it should attempt to intervene in a cross-Strait conflict. The goal would be to deter Washington from the initial decision to intervene even if the United States believed it would ultimately come out on top in a prolonged campaign. In short, Washington policymakers should take little comfort in traditional war-planning assessments when it comes to China and a conflict over Taiwan.

That is certainly the underlying message as well of the Pentagon's most recent report on China's military, *Annual Report on the Military Power of the People's Republic of China*, issued in July. In addition to cataloguing the improvements in China's land, air, naval, and missile forces, the report brackets these findings with the general point that, although China is interested in maximizing its national power primarily by continued economic growth, this goal takes a backseat to issues of "national unity" (read: Taiwan) and "strategic configurations of power" (read: American preeminence).

To this end, China's military, driven by Jiang's frustration with the limited

A Chinese military parade, July 21, 2003.

Agence France Presse

military options he had on hand in the mini-crises of 1996 and 1999, is hard at work devising military plans that rely on "surprise and shock," allowing, as they repeatedly say, "the inferior [force] to defeat the superior." Nor is this a case of bluff. As Nathan and Gilley report, Generals Cao Gangchaun and Guo Boxiong (the two new vice chairmen of China's ruling defense structure, the Central Military Commission) have emphasized precisely the kind of high-tech, combined arms approach to military operations that are seen as essential in any Taiwan-directed campaign. General Cao, in particular, apparently believes Taiwan "could be overwhelmed through a carefully planned and quickly executed high-tech attack from the mainland," leaving the United States with a *fait accompli*.

The danger of course is not only that China might obtain this capability—last year's *Annual Report* listed 350 short-range ballistic missiles deployed across from Taiwan; this year's lists 450—but also that the military will convince themselves and China's leadership that it can pull such a strategy off. It's difficult to deter military planners who believe that they can overcome shortfalls in real capabilities by being cleverer than the opponents or who believe that their opponents are weak willed.

Conventional wisdom, as expressed by the report from the Council on Foreign Relations, holds that the way to avoid a crisis in the Taiwan Strait is for America to "reassure China and Taiwan" that "their worst fears will not materialize." For China, this means making sure Taiwan doesn't assert formal independence from the mainland. And for Taiwan, it means maintaining an ability to counter any use of force by China against the island.

The result would be diplomacy's version of suspended animation. But this presumes both countries will be satisfied with the "status quo" for the indeterminate future. Certainly, in the case of China, it runs counter to past threats to use force if progress isn't made on unification. As last year's party congress reiterated, "the Taiwan issue must not be allowed to stall indefinitely." If Terrill is right about the character of the

Pablo San Juan / CORBIS

present regime in Beijing, this stance on Taiwan is virtually hard-wired into the Chinese body politic.

In *China's New Rulers*, Nathan and Gilley report that "since possible military action against Taiwan is a national security matter, there is no specific discussion of it in the investigation reports" that form the basis of their book. Yet, in a footnote, they point out that in a book published in 1999 by the same source that gave them the classified materials for *China's New Rulers*, there are quotations from Chinese military leaders about China's ability to conduct an assualt on Taiwan. Their assessment was that they were not ready then but would be in a position to guarantee a military victory by a set deadline—a deadline "which is X'd out" in the manuscript. Interestingly, in 2000, just before Clinton left office, the Pentagon produced a report on China's military power that suggested, if current trends in China's buildup continued, the balance in the Taiwan Strait would begin to turn in 2005 in China's favor, and could well be sealed by 2010. The buildup has continued, while Taiwan's own modernization plans have stalled. In the meantime, in the Pentagon's most recent *Annual Report*, those dates have disappeared. It would be worth knowing whether they did so because they no longer fall into the category of speculative judgments but have become classified intelligence facts.

Conventional wisdom among Sinologists and even America's own military is that Chinese talk of conflict with Taiwan is just talk. China's leaders are, at the end of the day, sober realists who understand the great gap in military capabilities between their own country and the United States. Moreover, they know, we're told, the great cost they would inflict on both China's economy and its international standing by creating a military crisis.

But such assessments assume that China is well on its way to being a normal state and its leaders are not all that different from those in Paris or Moscow. Yet, if these recent publications on China are accurate, China is hardly a normal state: It doesn't rule like one; it doesn't pick its leaders like one; and it doesn't assess its strategic affairs like one. To assume it is and ignore the obvious is a dangerous conceit. ♦

"Debussy's 'La Mer!'"

Books in Brief

Winning Smart after Losing Big: Revitalizing People, Reviving Enterprises **by Rob Stearns (Encounter, 150 pp., $16.95).** He's been my friend for over thirty years, from the time we were roommates at Harvard and spent hours comparing the ingenious techniques Radcliffe girls used to tell us to get lost. But having disclosed my bias, let me say that Rob Stearns has written one heck of an interesting book. Part autobiography, part reflection on the human condition, part hard-headed and insightful advice, *Winning Smart after Losing Big* is an unusual work.

For obvious reasons, losing—to say nothing of losing *big*—is an underanalyzed phenomenon. Perhaps all the dreck in "self-help" publishing has driven out the potentially good stuff. Perhaps I just don't know about other good writing in this area. Whatever the case, I started reading Rob's manuscript as a duty, continued as a pleasure, and ended up revisiting it more than once to reflect on it with profit.

Given my limited credibility on Rob, I suppose I'll just say this: Read *Winning Smart after Losing Big*. It's a quick read. You'll enjoy it. And I think you'll find it more than fun, more than interesting, but really thought-provoking—and, yes, deep.

—William Kristol

The Wrong Side of Brightness **by Austin Bay (Jove, 231 pp., $6.99).** Desert Storm is over—as decreed by Washington. Peter Ford, a battalion operations officer, is in his tank on the bank of the Euphrates in Iraq after the U.S. ejection of Iraqi troops from Kuwait. Across the river is a Shia village. As Ford and his fellow troopers watch, a contingent of Saddam Hussein's thugs begins to slaughter men, women, and children—and the "Rules of Engagement" forbid the American soldiers from intervening.

Ford nearly disobeys his orders, seething as he bears witness to the Iraqis' carnage through his tank's gunsights. But as a disciplined soldier he resists. He agonizingly watches the jumpsuit-clad leader of the killers shoot a nurse to death, a murder that awakens a horrific memory of another nurse's slaying in another country years before.

Austin Bay, a public-affairs columnist, WEEKLY STANDARD contributor, and colonel in the Army Reserve, unwinds a tale of evil across four continents. With "Jumpsuit" as a major player, this vivid thriller pivots on the illicit African traffic in diamonds and weapons that fuels corruption. Greed and power, idealism and evil, weave a lethal series of circumstances that Ford, now an ex-Army officer, must navigate and which illuminate his own scarred youth and family.

Austin Bay's plot is alarmingly plausible in the vicious landscape of the past dozen years. His cast varies from the military to investment banking. These characters and their international settings are terrifically convincing. This is a gritty tale with an ethical core, neatly executed.

—Woody West

Twentieth Century Attitudes: Literary Powers in Uncertain Times **by Brooke Allen (Ivan R. Dee, 241 pp., $26).** What's most likable about Brooke Allen's essays is how smoothly they shift from literary journalism to literary criticism. She briefs the reader with some biographical background on her subject—and, two seconds later, we're in the middle of a fine discussion of the farcical elements in Iris Murdoch's fiction.

It is not the critic's only task to drive the reader down long roads of philosophical speculation; there is also the necessary work of simply singling out writers and even making introductions if necessary. Allen develops a compelling case for the mastery of Henry Greene, for instance—and, because I trust her, I've ordered three of his novels to read.

Her observations about Evelyn Waugh (to take an author I do know) are important and true. She notes that Waugh's early novels are better than his late work and his very best novel was his first: the peerless *Decline and Fall*. She concludes that Waugh was far more than some jazz-age figure; he was a truly singular comic genius like Jonathan Swift.

Allen can be quite bold in her opinions (see especially the spanking she delivers to feminist academics in her essay on Virginia Woolf). But she fills her writing with intelligence and equanimity, making her boldness seem really not so wild after all, but the logical conclusion of good sense and an orderly mind.

—David Skinner

A Davis Apology Turns into Defiant Attack —News item

Parody

Gray—
Here's the radio script for Monday, plus some campaign items. The Teachers' Union folks can't get enough! —H

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DAVIS HE'S NOT DEAD YET

I know I've made some mistakes. I was wrong to inherit this energy crisis. I should have told you sooner about the right-wing conspiracy to ruin our state. And I confess that I failed to more fully blame Dick Cheney for California's problems. But that's in the past and this election is about the future ... my future.

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Over the next few weeks, I'll lay out a plan to prevent both unemployment and homelessness -- by making sure that I keep my job and my gubernatorial mansion.

My fellow Californians, if you'll give me another chance, I promise that I'll keep the promises I made during my reelection campaign.

NARRATOR: On October seventh, keep the governor with the real American name -- Governor Davis.

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