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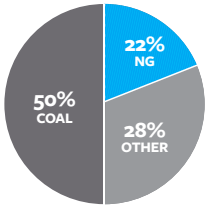

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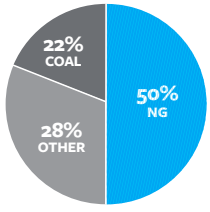

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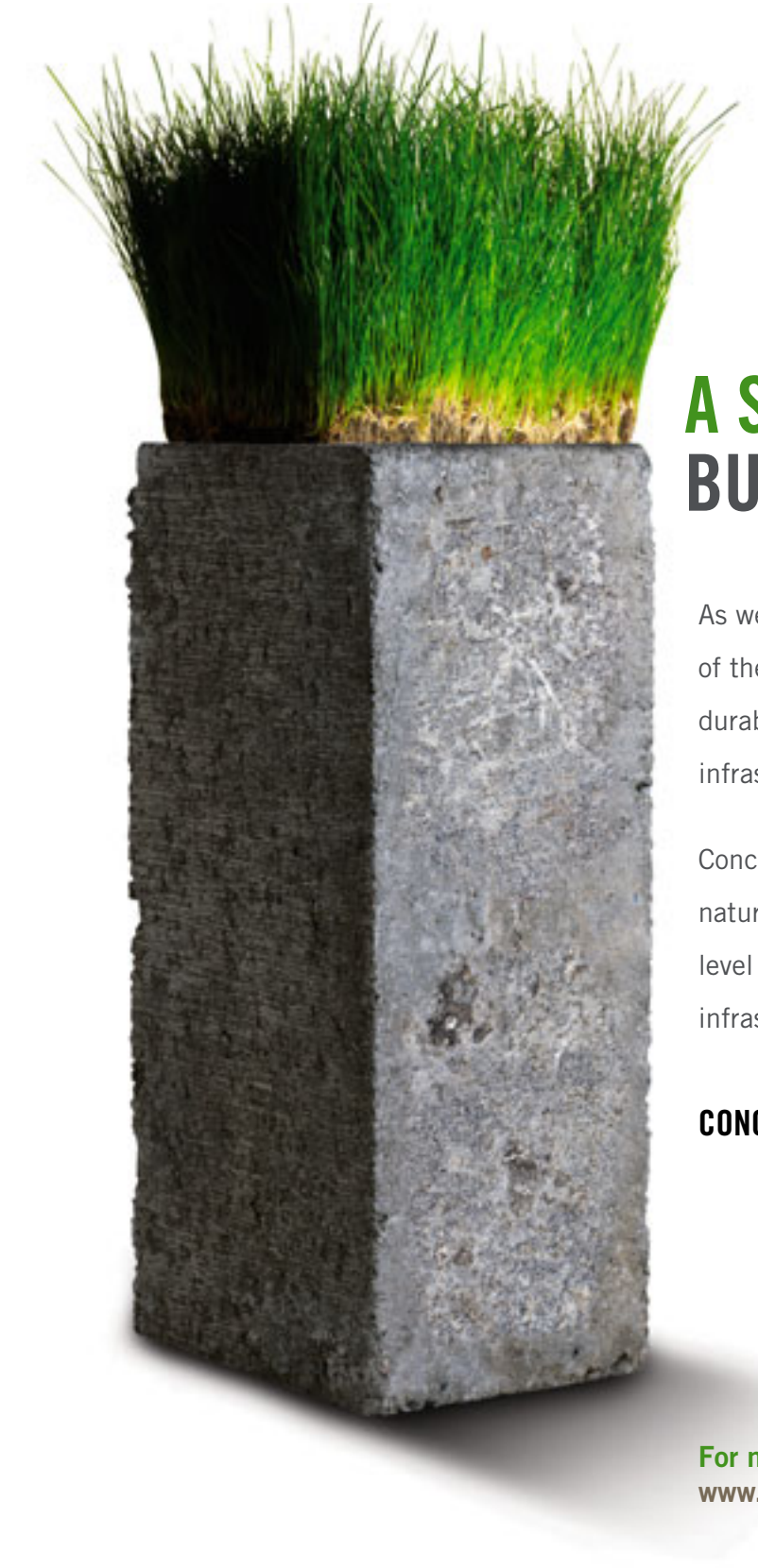

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the weekly Standard

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

Robert D. Novak, 1931-2009

The Scrapbook pauses in its labors to mourn the death last week of legendary Washington reporter and columnist Bob Novak. Fred Barnes memorialized his longtime friend on The Weekly Standard website last week:

"Robert Novak terrified Washington. Elected and appointed officials, Democrats and Republicans, lobbyists and self-styled defenders of the 'public interest'—few were comfortable when Novak had them in his sights. Nor should they have been. The reason was simple: Bob Novak didn't play political games. He wasn't partisan. If he came across useful information about anyone, it would appear in his syndicated column.

"It's not too much to call Novak journalism's last honest man in Washington. Ideologically, he was conservative, the more so the older he grew. He was quite up front about this. But he didn't cover for his allies or mistreat his adversaries. If a conservative Republican disappointed him, Novak would let you know.

"He was unique in another way: his reporting. His column, which he wrote for four decades with Rowland Evans, had a slant and plenty of analysis. Its strength, however, consisted of big scoops or nuggets of fresh reporting. No other columnist could match this. Appearing three days a week in the *Washington Post*, it was a column that couldn't be ignored.

"The relentless, remorseless reporter—the Prince of Darkness, as he fashioned himself publicly—was only one side of Bob Novak. The other was a kind man, a patriot, a doting grandfather, a pal of liberal and conservative journalists alike, and a mentor to many younger men in the media. . . ."

Novak was a frequent contributor to these pages over the years, usually on political topics. But The Scrapbook's favorite among the articles he wrote for us was probably his October 15, 2007, article on the demise of "Chief Illiniwek," mascot of the University of Illinois and victim of political correctness. It was a rare show of sentiment from the tough-guy reporter feared by the Washington elite. Wrote Novak:

> I had first been thrilled by the Chief's graceful and noble dance on October 10, 1942, when I was 11 years old and had finally talked my father, an Illinois grad ('22), into taking me to Champaign for a game. Since then I had seen him perform at dozens of games (I attended all of them in 1948-1951, when I was an undergraduate at the university). But liberal activists began to lobby against him around 1990 as an insult to Native Americans. Finally, the university capitulated to unbearable pressure from the NCAA and Illinois Democratic politicians. The Chief was really gone.
>
> But only in body, it turned out, not in spirit. I was advised to watch closely at halftime, based on what had happened three weeks earlier in the season home opener against Western Illinois. In the past, the magnificent Marching Illini band would end its halftime performance playing the school's marching songs interspersed with the Chief's war hymn. The band would form ILLINI in block letters and march down the field. Hidden until then by the ranks of the marching band members, the Chief would suddenly appear and—cheered on by 70,000—would begin the stylized dance that had started in 1926.
>
> And now the band was going through that time-honored routine, the same music and the same marching routine—without the Chief! From the capacity crowd and especially the student sections, came shouts of "Chief! Chief!" It was an eerie spectacle. Illiniwek without the Chief was a little like Hamlet without the prince. A chill went through my body, and tears came to my eyes. . . .

Washington without Bob Novak makes us feel the same way. ♦

Friends of Dodd

If readers have any questions about the validity of the Obama broom sweeping through Washington—clearing out the corruption and changing the way things have been done, putting the status quo and the special interests and the bad old ways on notice—The Scrapbook suspects the U.S. Senate has given them a definitive answer.

This month, after a yearlong "investigation," the Senate Select Committee on Ethics dismissed complaints against Senators Christopher Dodd and Kent Conrad. The two senior Democrats had been accused of using their positions to obtain sweetheart deals on home loans from Countrywide Financial Corp., the nation's largest purveyor of subprime mortgages, and whose ex-CEO Angelo Mozilo has been charged by the SEC with fraud and insider trading.

Dodd and Conrad had participated in a Countrywide program for prominent customers known as "Friends of Angelo," which furnished special deals on mortgage refinancing for their homes. Indeed, Dodd took advantage of his Countrywide deal to refinance his residences in both Washington, D.C., and Connecticut, which reduced his mortgage payments by some $75,000.

The ethics committee exercised some tough love here. To be sure, it saw nothing wrong with the connection between the Countrywide deals for specially selected customers and Dodd's status as chairman of the Senate Banking Committee or Conrad's position as chairman of the Senate Budget Committee and member of the Finance Committee. No, it didn't. But it did criticize the senators for not exercising "more vigilance in your dealings with Countrywide in

order to avoid the appearance that you were receiving preferential treatment based on your status as Senator."

More vigilance—or else! Then the ethics committee opened up both barrels—on itself, taking the blame for not providing better "guidance" to the chairman of the Banking Committee and the chairman of the Budget Committee "about issues surrounding mortgage negotiations."

The executive director of Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics, which filed the original complaint against Dodd and Conrad, commented that the ethics committee's astonishing action was "like a battered woman who explains she brought the beating on herself." Which is certainly true, although The Scrapbook would add, with a touch of cynicism, that this latest Capitol Hill whitewash confirms the fraudulence of President Obama's calls for "change" in Washington.

The Scrapbook would also add that the silver lining in this particular cloud is that Senator Christopher Dodd is facing reelection in Connecticut. Forty years ago his father, the late Senator Thomas Dodd, was sent into early retirement by the voters of Connecticut after censure by the Senate for corrupt practices. May the family tradition continue! ♦

Hammertime

Tom DeLay, the former Texas congressman and feared leader of the House Republicans—once known as both "The Exterminator" (because of his pest control business) and later "The Hammer"—may have yet another nickname: twinkle toes. Next month DeLay will join the likes of Kathy Ireland, Donny Osmond, and Michael Irvin as a contestant on ABC's ballroom competition *Dancing with the Stars*.

We had no idea things had gotten so bad for the former House majority leader, still under indictment on campaign-finance-related charges. But if DeLay makes it past the first few rounds with the help of his professional dance partner Cheryl Burke (who has taken two other celebrities to the finals and won), he could possibly net himself $200,000 or more—not to mention that mirror ball trophy! (The Scrapbook confesses it will be rooting for Chuck Liddell, ultimate fighting champion.)

Lisa DeMoraes of the *Washington Post* reports that "Conrad Green, the show's executive producer, said ABC had been trying for some time to get a politician to join the list of other celebrities who have competed. 'We very much wanted someone who was a household name, someone people had opinions about—someone who wasn't a wallflower,' he said."

And people certainly do have their opinions about Tom DeLay. In fact, there have been calls for a boycott from fans of the show. But The Scrapbook's main concern is the example it sets for our other public officials, past and present. If Tom DeLay does well, who will be next? Newt Gingrich and Madeleine Albright in matching sequins? ♦

Help Wanted

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A Dog in Full

I didn't realize before I married Jill that our union meant we'd always own a dog or two.

Our first was Max, a mutt we rescued from the streets of D.C. Max lived with us 16 years and was the dog our daughter Katherine grew up with. So when Max died, the precedent of our being a dog's home was well established. The only question was the kind of dog we'd have next. Jill and Katherine, I think because they had watched *Wishbone* too much, decided Max's successor should be a Jack Russell Terrier.

Daisy we named her, and she came from a farm in Loudoun County. Nine weeks old, she was full of energy, more than we'd expected, and we'd expected a lot. Unlike Max, Daisy wore us out, and Jill began lobbying for a second Jack: Better to have two wear each other out than to have the one exhaust us all.

Within a few months we found our second Jack, a male ten weeks old. Like Daisy, he was long-legged and smooth-haired. But where she was black and white, he was brown, really burnt orange, and white. He was from the city, and his parents' owners already had named him. They had followed the alphabet in choosing names, and because our boy was the third in the litter, his name had to start with "C." The owners had settled on "Claude."

From the start there was something unusual about Claude, besides his name. He was large, and I could see why he got stuck in his mother's birth canal. As a young adult, he weighed 30 pounds. Some fat he carried, but he was mostly muscle, a linebacker of a dog. He was the biggest Jack I'd ever seen.

Claude was more relaxed than Daisy and far more content, a gentle little giant. And he made us laugh.

Jacks are known for their long, looping, and decidedly crazed runs. Daisy, a step faster than Claude, sprinted round our yard, a veritable blur. But it was Claude who caught your eye, bounding as he did in Daisy's wake. Sometimes he seemed airborne, his four legs stretched so as to carry him aloft. A flying Jack he was!

KATHERINE EASTLAND

Like Daisy, Claude loved to play with plastic balls the size of basketballs. You could actually play catch with Daisy, who, like a seal, used her nose to punch the ball back to you. Claude, though, never could get his nose positioned quite right; his punches were pitifully feeble. He preferred to chase the ball as though it were a rabbit, pouncing on it and holding it with a front paw while he went in for the kill. Then he stood over the deflated ball, in deep thought, or so it seemed, as to why it no longer held his interest.

Claude liked to eat, and he ate from all the food groups, even fruits and vegetables. I've had for years a raised garden out back, and green beans always do well there. Claude liked to hop up in the garden and look for what I suppose were for him the tastiest-looking beans. He'd pull one off a plant, taking care not to hurt the stems or leaves, and then chomp on it, as if it were a strip of meat.

Claude slept a lot, and he had a lot of sleeping spots, inside the house as well as out in the backyard. He often climbed into a chair at the kitchen table and sat there calmly, as though awaiting a meal, before he nodded off.

Claude liked to go on walks, but he was never the long walker that Max was and Daisy still is. While Daisy strained to go another block, Claude would tell you when it was time to go back simply by refusing to go forward. And once you turned around, he suddenly picked up the pace.

He knew we were going home. And he really liked being home, the place of food and rest and fun that it was. That also explained why, unlike the adventurous Daisy, he never particularly liked car rides. I'd really rather be home, his dark brown, expressive eyes would say, and he meant it.

Not long ago, Claude began to cut his walks even shorter, and he lost several pounds. But the vet, having done the blood work, saw no problems. So when the liver cancer presented itself, all of a sudden in July, we were shocked. Only nine years old, Claude died within a week.

The rationale for getting Claude never held up—no one can wear out Daisy. But what we learned was that Claude was quite a dog in his own right, as fine a companion as anyone could ever want. Katherine had the perfect name for him: Mr. Pleasant. And did I tell you he could fly?

Terry Eastland

the weekly Standard

A Loyal Opposition

Six months into the Obama presidency, conservatives and Republicans have occasion for some good cheer.

It's not simply that key and noxious elements of Obama's legislative agenda are in serious trouble. It's not simply that his approval numbers are down. It's not simply that the evidence is increasingly conclusive that 2008 didn't mark a sharp break to the left on the part of public opinion, and that "conservative" remains a term of approbation for much more of the electorate than "liberal." And it's not simply that the term "Republican" is less poisonous than many feared (or hoped): The GOP has recently improved its comparative position in most 2010 generic congressional polls.

The most heartening development in the Age of Obama so far is this: the impressive behavior of conservatives and Republicans. They have been principled in their major domestic and foreign policy positions, have opposed Obama and advanced their own agenda in a savvy and sensible way, and have begun to find new and fresh spokesmen. There are some conservative pundits and GOP talking-heads who've kept themselves busy with navel-gazing and fratricidal-sniping—but they haven't distracted most on the right from the job at hand.

In domestic policy, it's the American public who deserve much credit for slowing down and perhaps capsizing Obamacare. But Republican politicians and conservative policy analysts and polemicists have done their part. GOP senators and congressmen refused to be intimidated by claims that a victory of some version of Obamacare was inevitable. They therefore weren't suckered into foolish equivocations and compromises.

Conservative policy wonks helped to explode the false budgetary and health-improvement claims made on behalf of Obamacare. Conservative polemicists pointed out how Obamacare—conceived in the spirit of budget chief Peter we-spend-too-much-as-a-nation-on-health-care Orszag and adviser Ezekiel we-need-to-stop-wasting-money-on-extending-low-quality-lives Emanuel—means, in effect, death panels.

So good for them. And it's a sign of Obama's desperation that he seems unwilling to debate the substance of his own health care proposal or to discuss elements of reform on which there could be agreement if he would consider starting over. He prefers to spend much of his time attacking his critics as "naysayers." But his critics aren't his problem. His proposal is.

Meanwhile, as a decision looms for Obama on a new strategy requiring increased numbers of troops in Afghanistan, a *Washington Post*-ABC News poll last week discovered that "majorities of liberals and Democrats alike now, for the first time, solidly oppose the war and are calling for a reduction of troop levels." Conservatives and Republicans are far more supportive of the war—they "remain the war's strongest backers"—and a majority of conservatives don't merely support the war but say they approve of President Obama's handling of it.

So much for charges of knee-jerk or unprincipled partisanship. Conservatives support a president they generally distrust because they think it important the country win the war in Afghanistan. And despite temptations to make political hay out of a war that's getting more unpopular, and despite doubts about Obama as commander in chief, Republican political leaders remain supportive of the war effort. They are urging Obama to commit himself unambiguously to win the war and to approve General Stanley McChrystal's coming request for more troops. And in urging the administration to follow this course, they are willing to see the president get credit for doing the right thing.

In sum: In opposing Obamacare and supporting victory in Afghanistan, conservatives and Republicans are behaving as a loyal opposition. Those who were worried that partisanship would trump patriotism among conservatives, and that loathing of Obama would overcome loyalty to the country among Republicans, have so far been proved wrong. And those who were worried that timidity would prevent vigorous opposition where warranted in domestic policy have been so far proven wrong as well. The Republican party and the conservative movement are behaving in a way that can make Republicans and conservatives proud.

As for today's liberals: They just don't want America to win wars, do they? They're ready, willing, and able to see America lose in Afghanistan. Luckily, President Obama seems to understand that the United States can and ought to win. And the Obama administration will benefit from the support of a loyal opposition if it chooses to surge to victory.

—William Kristol

Still 'Crazy'—And Proud of It

Conservatives induce a case of the vapors at the *Washington Post*.

BY P.J. O'ROURKE

GARY LOCKE

Us right-wing nuts sure is scary! That's the message from the *Washington Post.* To put this in language a conservative would understand, the fourth estate has been alarmed once again by the Burkean proclivities of our nation's citizens. The *Post* is in a panic about (to use its own descriptive terms) "birthers," "anti-tax teapartiers," and "town hall hecklers."

If, last Sunday, you spent a profitless hour reading the *Washington Post* (itself not too profitable), you noticed the loud yapping and desperate nipping at those who disagree with liberal orthodoxy. It was as if top management were a toy schnauzer accidentally mistaken for a duster and traumatized by being run back and forth through the venetian blinds. The wise and prestigious broadsheet institution was so barking mad that it sent three (Three! In these times of hardship for the print media! When reporters are being laid off right and left—well, mostly right—and stories are going uncovered from rapidly warming pole to pole! Three!) journalists to do battle with "The Return of Right-Wing Rage."

That was the subtitle of Rick Perlstein's section B leader. The title was "In America, Crazy Is a Preexisting Condition." Perlstein wrote the book *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus* so you can intuit (or "grok" as Perlstein might put it, given his prose style) the contents of his article. Yes, Rick, right-wing rage has returned. It was up at my place for the weekend. But it's back, and it's not like right-wing rage ever really went away. It didn't, as you would say, Rick, "move on."

Accompanying the Perlstein screed was a sidebar by Alec MacGillis explaining how "health care reform is not that hard to understand, and those who tell you otherwise most likely have an ulterior motive."

All you town hall hecklers, calm down and go home. Never mind that Alec MacGillis is a rat, something that's evident by the sixth sentence of his piece: "Fixing [health care] could be very simple: a single-payer system." And never mind that his writing is more than uninformative, it is informationally subtractive. Read him and you'll know less than you know now about what the government is going to do to you and your doctor. Read him carefully and you'll know nothing.

But calm down and go home, because the *Washington Post* said so. This is exactly the joke that used to be told in the Soviet Union. An

P.J. O'Rourke is a contributing editor to The Weekly Standard.

old guy's wife tells him to go to the butcher shop and get some meat. He goes to the butcher shop and stands in line for hours. Finally the butcher says, "We're out of meat." The old guy blows his top. He yells, "I am a worker! I am a proletarian! I am a veteran of the Great Patriotic War! I have fought for socialism all my life, and now you tell me you're out of meat! What kind of a system is this?! You are fools! You are thieves! . . . " A big man in a trench coat comes up to the old guy and says, "Comrade, Comrade, not so loud. In the old days you know what they would do if you said such things." The big man in the trench coat makes a pistol motion with his hand. He says to the old guy, "Calm down and go home." The old guy shrugs and leaves. He comes back empty-handed, and his wife says, "What's the matter, are they out of meat?" "Worse than that," says the old guy, "they're out of bullets."

So there was Rick Perlstein calling everyone to the right of Nikita Khrushchev a candidate for the state psychiatric ward with Alec MacGillis playing his KGB Bozo sidekick, firing blanks and honking his "End-of-life care eats up a huge slice of spending" airhorn. Then, to add idiocy to insult, the *Post* sent Robin Givhan to observe the Americans who are taking exception to various expansions of government powers and prerogatives and to *make fun of their clothes*.

Givhan writes a column called "On Culture," and this is what passes for culture at the *Post*: "Of the hundreds of thousands of style guides currently for sale on Amazon, not one . . . was prescient enough to outline the appropriate attire for those public occasions when good citizens decided to behave like raving lunatics and turn lawmakers into punching bags." Meeting with Givhan's scorn were "T-shirts, baseball caps, promotional polo shirts and sundresses with bra straps sliding down their arm."

I've never seen Robin Givhan. For all I know she dolls herself up like Jackie O. But I have seen other employees of the *Washington Post* and—with the exception of the elegant and, I dare say, cultured, Roxanne Roberts—they look as if they got dressed in the unlit confines of a Planet Aid clothing-donation bin.

Perlstein, for all the highness of his dudgeon, doesn't catch the nuts saying anything very nutty. The closest he gets to a lunatic quote is from a "libertarian" wearing a holstered pistol who declares that the "tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time by the blood of tyrants and patriots." And those are the words of lefty icon Thomas Jefferson. I myself could point out the absurdity of protestors' concerns about government euthanasia committees. Federal bureaucracy has never moved fast enough to get to the ill and elderly before natural causes do. And what's with those "birthers"? Why their obsession with a nonentity like Obama? How about John Adams with his Alien and Sedition Acts choke-hold on the First Amendment? Or Jefferson? He could tell *his* Monica Lewinsky, "I own you," and he wasn't kidding. Or John Quincy Adams, pulling the original Blagojevich, buying the presidency from Henry Clay? Or that backwoods Bolshevik Andrew Jackson? Or William Henry Harrison, too dumb to come in out of the rain? Not one of these scallywags was born in the United States of America—look it up.

The closest Perlstein gets to a lunatic quote is from a 'libertarian' wearing a holstered pistol who declares that the 'tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time by the blood of tyrants and patriots.' And those are the words of lefty icon Thomas Jefferson.

But Perlstein couldn't be bothered. Instead he resorts to lazy fallacies of *post hoc ergo propter hoc* and *argumentum ad verecundiam* to try to prove that the Obama administration is a wise and prestigious political institution because nuts are attacking it the way nuts previously attacked other wise and prestigious political institutions, such as Adlai Stevenson. Even with the force of illogic on his side Perlstein cannot make his case. He tells about Stevenson speaking on United Nations Day in 1963. "Then, when Stevenson was walked to his limousine, a grimacing and wild-eyed lady thwacked him with a picket sign. Stevenson was baffled. 'What's the matter, madam?' he asked. 'What can I do for you?' The woman responded with self-righteous fury: 'Well, if you don't know I can't help you.'"

And I can't help the *Washington Post*. Why is the paper intimidated by dissent that's tame even by Adlai Stevenson standards? Not that the *Post* has ever been exactly a "profile in courage." (A little joke there about the propensity to endorse anything with a Kennedy stuck to it.) No doubt it's always alarming to the know-it-alls when ordinary people decide they'd like some say in ordinary life, when regular folk tell the know-it-alls to take their fishwrap and go blog themselves. And the *Post* has been extra jumpy since it got caught trying to pimp Washington's power elite to K Street lobbyists at a pay-to-play bun fight in the publisher's manse. Personally I thought this was great—the first time the newspaper had shown any respect for the free market system since Eleanor Roosevelt was a pup. But terror, like the *Post*, is not a thing of reason. Dread lurks in wise and prestigious institutions across the land. Rick Perlstein has a phrase that gives poignant expression to this fear and trembling: "America, where the crazy tree blooms in every moment of liberal ascendency."

Oh, it's a crazy tree. And the taller it grows, the crazier it gets. And I roost upon the tip-top branch. Ye of the *Washington Post*, Don't park your SmartCar under my perch. ♦

The Angry White Liberal

He's back.

BY MATTHEW CONTINETTI

We've spent the month of August talking about alleged right-wing rage, but it's really time we started discussing the Angry White Liberal. When things aren't going his way, the Angry White Liberal wails and gnashes his teeth, rends his garments, and hurls invective at the opposition. His rhetoric and prose is so heated, it's gotten to the point where you need to put on oven mitts before opening the paper. He is so convinced of the righteousness of his positions that he lashes out uncontrollably at anybody who disagrees with him. For the Angry White Liberal, dissent is anathema. Antagonism is illegitimate. Only conformity to prevailing liberal opinion is enough to still his rage.

It's been awhile since the Angry White Liberal was spotted in the wild. He's been in hiding since 2006, when the electorate started handing victory after victory to the Democratic party. For a while there, whenever a liberal surveyed the political scene, it looked as though the country had finally come to its senses. Americans no longer deigned to elect conservatives to high office. In 2008 voters fell for the dulcet tones of a young, charismatic liberal senator from Illinois. A "new progressive era" was about to begin. James Carville's latest book, published earlier this year, promised to explain "how the Democrats will rule the next generation."

Then something bizarre began to happen. As Barack Obama's presidency unfurled, his approval ratings fell. The public showed skepticism at his major initiatives. The federal government bailed out GM and Chrysler over widespread public opposition. The costly economic stimulus bill appeared not to be working. The climate-change legislation that the House of Representatives passed on a party-line vote was D.O.A. in the Senate. And even though "health care" is not the top voter priority, even though the budget deficit stands at more than a trillion dollars, President Obama decided that this was the moment to remake one-sixth of the American economy.

The more Obama talked about health care reform, the further his numbers dropped. The country seemed caught in a time-warp. We'd been catapulted back to 2005, when another president attempted a major overhaul of the American welfare state. Then, too, the president deferred to Congress to come up with a plan. Then, too, as the president crisscrossed the nation, warning of the dangers of out-of-control entitlement spending, the public increasingly tuned him out. The innate conservatism of the American people—an instinctual resistance to sudden changes in existing social arrangements—came to the fore.

Such resistance became pronounced over the summer of 2009, when Congress went into recess and the people's representatives returned home to deal with actual people. Some of the constituents who showed up at the congressional town hall meetings behaved rudely. Some were kind of nutty. But, for better or worse, every oddball represented three or four or ten regular people who don't want to see another trillion dollars in federal spending, higher taxes, and page after page of mandates, not to mention likely cuts in Medicare and Medicaid. Regular people, in other words, who recognize that the unanticipated outcomes of government activity often outweigh the wished-for ones, and that the unanticipated consequences of the Democrats' current proposals may include (a) the end of the private health insurance market and (b) government rationing of health services.

The Angry White Liberal reaction? Outrage and calumny. Protest, which a few years ago was the highest form of patriotism, is now considered artificial, dishonest, misinformed, cynical, and mean-spirited. "An ugly campaign is underway," Nancy Pelosi and Steny Hoyer wrote in *USA Today* on August 10, "not merely to misrepresent the health insurance reform legislation, but to disrupt public meetings and prevent members of Congress and constituents from conducting a civil dialogue. . . . Drowning out opposing views is simply un-American."

Meanwhile, Harry Reid referred to the town hall protestors as "evil-mongers." Senate finance committee chairman Max Baucus preferred "agitators." Congressman Eric Massa, Democrat of New York, accused Iowa Republican senator Charles Grassley of "treason" for criticizing the health care plan.

The King of the Angry White Liberals, *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman, wrote on August 14 that Grassley is "flat-out despicable." Resistance to the Democrats' plans, Krugman continued, amounts to an "outpouring of hate," the result of "the paranoia of a significant minority of Americans and the cynical willingness of leading Republicans to cater to that paranoia." (For the record, more Americans disapprove than approve of Obamacare.)

Time magazine columnist Joe Klein wrote that, "to be sure, there are honorable conservatives, trying to do the right thing"—thanks, Joe!—but the typical opponent of health reform is a "nihilist" and a "hypocrite" exploiting "cynicism about government" in a "disinformation jihad" aimed at the "tight, white, extremist bubble" that is the GOP. On the *Rachel Maddow Show* on August 19, star *Times* colum-

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nist Frank Rich warned that the current debates surrounding health care resemble the "walk up to the Kennedy assassination."

Washington Post scribe Harold Meyerson, straight off the barricades, angrily denounced Baucus, who "persist[s] in the charade of bipartisan negotiations" despite the "increasing rigidity, insularity, and extremism of today's Republican party." When Whole Foods CEO John Mackey wrote a *Wall Street Journal* oped advocating sensible, market-based improvements to health insurance law, the response from the left was to organize a boycott of his grocery chain. Pretty rigid, insular, and extreme.

Charges of racism are never far from the Angry White Liberal's lips. In a July 22, 2009, *Huffington Post* entry—the website is a sort of pressure cooker for liberal rage—the "award winning columnist, author and Chicago radio talk show host" Ray Hanania wrote that:

> Although the Republicans and their so-called "Blue Dog" conservative Democrats claimed they oppose President Obama's health care plan because it would increase the nation's debt, the real reason is driven by racism and the fact that the majority who would benefit from health care reform are minorities, the poor and families burdened by uninsured health challenges.

How so? Explains Hanania, "I know this is true because these same conservatives were silent when President George W. Bush ratcheted up the nation's deficit to record highs without even a whimper." Ah.

On the *Diane Rehm Show* in August, *Newsweek*'s Eleanor Clift speculated that opposition to Obamacare was an expression of the "racism" that was "latent" in the 2008 campaign. Bewildered by a few cases in which a voter had safely, legally, and constitutionally brought a firearm to an anti-Obamacare rally, *Washington Post* columnist E.J. Dionne noted that "guns were used on election days in the Deep South during and after Reconstruction to intimidate black voters and take control of state governments." Guns also were used in the invasion of Normandy. What's Dionne's point, except to imply that the gun-carriers (and, by extension, adversaries of Obamacare) are just like Bull Connor?

The Angry White Liberal finds it simply incomprehensible that somebody might honestly and in good faith disagree with the Democrats' efforts. On August 14, blogger Steve Benen wrote on the *Huffington Post* that the "far-right apoplexy is counter-intuitive." After all, "Why would people who stand to benefit from health care reform literally take to the streets and threaten violence in opposition to legislation that would help them and their families?"

Forget Benen's exaggerated claim of threatened violence. Note, instead, that Benen *cannot conceive* that someone might actually think the costs to the Democrats' program outweigh the unrealized and perhaps unachievable benefits. Hence he divides Obama's critics into five camps: the "partisans," the "tin-foil hats," the "greedy," the "dupes," and the "wonks." The "wonks," we are told, compose the "smallest of the groups." In Benen's view, then, millions of opponents of health care reform have no reasonable grounds for their opinion. That may satisfy the liberal's attitude of intellectual superiority. But it's also awfully condescending.

The Angry White Liberal directs his fury not only at conservatives. Another target is the Obama administration itself. After all, the White House has been unable to convince a majority of Americans that liberals are right and their health care reform is necessary. Comedian Jon Stewart opened a recent *Daily Show* by saying, "Mr. President, I can't tell if you're a Jedi—10 steps ahead of everything—or if this whole health care thing is kickin' your ass." In the *Washington Post*, Robert Kuttner blamed Obama's economic team, which is "far too cozy with Wall Street." For columnist Richard Cohen, Obama's "klutziness" has hampered reform. MSNBC host Ed Schultz said the White House was "dazed and confused." His colleague Rachel Maddow thinks the Democrats are "too scared of their own shadow."

All this vituperation, this unrelenting urge to discredit opposing views, builds and builds. It's uncontainable. Inconsolable. First the Angry White Liberal blames conservatives, then Democrats, then Obama . . . before you know it, he'll be blaming the entire country for the failure to pass "comprehensive health care reform." Everyone, that is, but himself. ♦

A health care forum at Needham Broughton High School in Raleigh, July 29

Death of a Salesman

The more Obama talks about health care, the lower his approval rating goes. **BY FRED BARNES**

Between July 20 and July 30, President Obama was a busy man, barely out of the public eye while campaigning furiously for his health care initiative. He did four town hall events, spoke at two hospitals, delivered a radio address, was interviewed on two network TV news shows, and held a prime time press conference—all devoted to promoting his health care plan. On this issue as on no other, Obama personally took his case to the people.

Something else occurred during that time frame. The president's job approval rating fell 9 points, from 61 percent to 52 percent in the Gallup Poll. This was an unusually precipitous decline from which Obama hasn't recovered. In mid-August, after more weeks of barnstorming for his health care program, his approval rating remained in the low 50s. Only Bill Clinton among recent presidents had a lower approval after seven months in office.

For Obama, there's still worse news. Not only has he lost ground, but public support for his health care proposal has collapsed to the point that a majority of Americans prefer no reform at all to his plan. And the more he stumps for it, the less support it attracts. Rather than a peripheral phenomenon, the noisy opposition in congressional town hall meetings turns out to be a reflection of the deep national suspicion of Obamacare.

Two conclusions are inescapable. The first is that Obama is not Mr. Persuasive, a compelling orator like FDR, swaying public opinion with his words. Quite the contrary, he has failed to sustain public backing for his economic stimulus package, his decision to shut down Guantánamo, his proposed spending, the takeover of General Motors, bailouts in general, and now health care reform.

Health care is the big one for Obama, his signature program, the one that's most far-reaching and politically important. It's the real test of Obama. If he can't persuade the country to back it—and so far he's failed miserably—then he's not the spellbinding speaker or the master politician he's been cracked up to be. Yet the media won't acknowledge his failures. In the *Washington Post* on August 15, reporter Michael D. Shear wrote that Obama's "popularity and powers of persuasion may well make him the reform effort's most effective spokesman." If Shear is correct, then Obamacare is dead.

There's a corollary. The impulse at the White House to rely on Obama as salesman-in-chief, to put him on the road, is surely mistaken. For him, the bully pulpit has limited utility. In fact, presidential scholar George C. Edwards III argued in his book *On Deaf Ears: The Limits of the Bully Pulpit* that presidential speechmaking no longer moves public sentiment.

The second conclusion to draw is that Obama has been dragged down by his health care policy. The more he's identified himself with it, the less the public likes him. There's nothing irrational about this. Why should people without a partisan allegiance to Obama hang with him when they dislike his signature policy? There's no good reason.

Besides, it shows the public is paying serious attention to a national issue. This doesn't happen often. Democrats and Obamaphiles may not like the drift of the debate over health care, but it was Obama who

NEWSCOM

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prompted it. Now it's exposed his lack of persuasiveness.

What's wrong with Obama's rhetoric on health care? For one thing, he's lost control of his own message. He's all over the lot, one day zinging health insurers, the next blaming Republicans for impeding his plan, a day later suggesting that God wants his health care bill to pass Congress. More often than not, he plays defense, responding to what he says are false notions about his plan.

Yet his basic pitch is stale and uninteresting. You could argue this isn't true for the people at his town halls far from Washington. But you'd be wrong. He's been on TV so much that the folks who came to see him in New Hampshire, Montana, and Colorado—states he visited in mid-August—had already heard his spiel, probably more than once. Even some in the press won't stand for it anymore. They've finally begun to take note of the dubious assertions he repeats over and over and over.

He's suffering from a hardy perennial of presidential ailments: overexposure. Obama had four prime time press conferences in his first six months. George W. Bush had four in eight years. FDR, who actually *was* a great communicator, delivered fireside chats on radio every five or six months.

In our televised age, the public quickly grows tired of political leaders. When Obama spent a half inning in the broadcast booth at the baseball All-Star game in St. Louis on July 14, he was pressing his luck. Americans routinely boo politicians when they're introduced at sports events, where they don't belong. This is a healthy habit that Obama and his entourage may be unaware of.

Being president isn't easy. A candidate can get away with speeches that are glib and vague. A president can't. "It's easy to sell ice cream," says Don Stewart, the spokesman for Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell. "It's hard to sell rum raisin ice cream." Obama's problem is he hasn't learned the difference. ♦

Madison Checks Obama

The Founders foresaw the dangers of politicians in a hurry.

BY PETER WEHNER

Barack Obama is a young president in a hurry. He is a man of preternatural self-confidence and soaring ambitions. That combination, tethered to a liberal worldview, is inflicting considerable damage upon his presidency.

Like most presidents, Obama took office intending to bend history to his liking. This impulse, while understandable, leads to overreach. In the case of Obama, it has been abetted by two significant misjudgments.

The first was following the counsel of his chief of staff, Rahm Emanuel, who famously declared, "You never want a serious crisis to go to waste." The assumption being that the American public in the midst of a deep and prolonged recession yearned for government action—not just on the economy but on the environment and, especially, on health care. The Obama administration views this as a once-in-a-generation moment, plastic and rich with possibilities. It is Obama's chance to reshape the American political landscape through a series of bold initiatives.

It turns out the president reacted in precisely the wrong way to the situation he confronted. Most Americans—whose instinctive conservatism has been reinforced by the fear and uncertainty created by the financial crisis—long for stability. This argued for Obama *moderating* his aims; to say to the public that, in light of the economic situation he inherited, he was going to focus his energy on the economy and the exploding deficit and debt.

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This is the approach that Ronald Reagan adopted in 1981. His top domestic priority was to wring "stagflation" out of the economy. He achieved that primarily through large tax cuts and sound monetary policies. Reagan understood that until he restored the economy, very little else of lasting significance could be achieved. He dropped his efforts to cut entitlements and roll back the welfare state.

The second, and in some respects more fundamental, mistake Obama has made is attempting to ram through huge changes without respect for what James Madison called the "auxiliary precautions" of American government—meaning, in the words of Martin Diamond, "the self-restraining, majority-restraining principles and institutions of the Constitution, like the separation of powers, bicameralism, limited government, all the internal checks, etc."

Because of the Founders' views on the fundamental nature of politics—that it's conducted by people who are a mixture of virtues and vices, capable of nobility and altruism but driven mostly by self-interest—they set up a system of government that slowed things down, that prized sobriety instead of radical change, that put a premium on slow turns rather than on lurching shifts in policy.

The Obama administration decided to use the economic crisis to overcome these restraints. Hence the frantic quality of its legislative agenda, demanding the stimulus package be passed even before the legislation had been read by members of Congress and that an enormously complicated health care reform be approved

even before we are able to inspect and debate its particulars.

Indeed, we have had the spectacle of President Obama, a man who continually trumpets his ability to elevate our national debate, trying to forestall a thoroughgoing one in the interest of acting before his window of opportunity closes.

But Madison has thwarted others who possessed grand, even utopian, designs. And so we are now getting the debate on health care Obama desperately wanted to avoid—with the result that support for his plan is sinking like a stone in the sea. Whatever plan finally emerges, *if* any plan emerges, will be quite different from what Obama originally had in mind.

None of this is going down very well with our chief executive. The man who promised us a new style of politics, civil and uplifting, is now unleashing his top aides and congressional allies to "punch back twice as hard" against critics. They are attempting to paint opposition to Obamacare as the work of fringe elements, mercenaries, and automatons. If Team Obama actually believes this explains the groundswell of public concern about its health care plan, they are living in a White House even more hermetically sealed than usual.

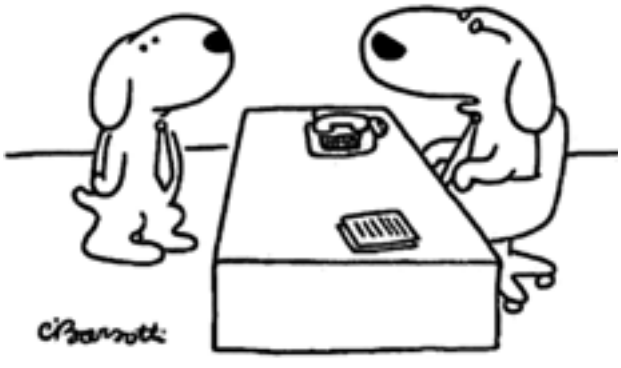
But the fundamental problem is the Obama view of politics—romantic and even quasi-revolutionary—in which men of zeal remake the world. This is not the American way. Ours is a system of government in which, as Madison noted, "ambition must be made to counteract ambition," where there are more brakes than accelerators, and where massive overhauls and centralized control are discouraged and most of the time defeated. Whatever its limitations, the Constitution remains, in the words of Gladstone, "the greatest work ever struck off at a given time by the brain and purpose of man." It does not bow before a president in a hurry—even a young, charismatic, and impatient one. ♦

Who Owns Your Body?

Under Obamacare, not you.

BY WILLIAM ANDERSON

We are berated, ad nauseam, with imprecations that America is the only advanced nation that fails to have universal health care. This statement is often followed by the rueful remark that the debate over government controlled health care has been going on without progress for 60 years and, ipso facto, it is time to settle it.



"And when the time comes, the company will put you to sleep at its own expense."

All right, let's do that. Let's look a little deeper. *Why* is there no settlement of the issue, and *why* is America unique in its obstinate reluctance to follow the example of our older cultural brothers in Europe?

When a debate continues for decades without resolution, it is prudent to consider the deeper underlying assumptions. Principles which underpin the arguments are likely being ignored and marginalized rather than addressed in a forthright manner.

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America is the only advanced country whose founding assumption is popular sovereignty. This is a proposition that stands with hardly a seconding voice throughout the contemporary international community. Yet it is the taproot of American exceptionalism.

Even here, however, the principle of government subordination to the people is by no means universally accepted. It has never been firmly ratified by our political class, those spiritual descendants of Europe's nobility. Our *soi-disant* elite appear to view with dismay their countrymen's continuing preference for self-rule.

Thus arises the question of corporal ownership. For Americans, the answer has been settled. Since the terrible bloodletting of the Civil War, and now excepting military service, ownership of one's body is a matter between the individual and God, with no intermediation by government.

Yet assertions are now being made that government should have responsibility for, and thus authority over, the maintenance of our bodies. It necessarily follows that government must have the power to approve or withhold care. This concept collides destructively with the founding principles of individual responsibility and autonomy upon which popular sovereignty depends.

This is the reason that the debate never ends. It is also the reason that any resolution of the question will

necessarily either confirm or deny the original intent of the Founders.

So let's make up our minds. Does the government, in the last analysis, own your body, or do you? If your answer is the former, be aware that you have opted for veterinary medicine, for you are now accepting the moral status of a domestic animal. If your answer is the latter, you must accept responsibility to make mortal decisions for yourself, and pay for the care that you want with money that you have reason to see as your own.

Such money is not out of reach. Medical savings accounts, amalgamated with catastrophic insurance, could take the place of the ad hoc hodgepodge of plans, schemes, dissimulations, and promises under which we are now burdened and threatened.

And there would be greater efficiency and encouragement of individual choice. We all have an enhanced interest in thriftiness and fair value when we, and not third parties, are the payers.

The wisdom expressed in the Federalist Papers began with the insight that men are not angels. The system that the authors designed placed liberty at the head of other considerations. The Founders were determined that concentrations of power should be confounded.

The system now congealing in Congress for health care is not informed by such principles. Access to the most intimate personal information, direct interaction with bank accounts, and mandated Procrustean protocols remain features of the various schemes under consideration. Such programs would be managed by impenetrable, impersonal, and unaccountable bureaucracies. Do we wish to place such profound coercive powers in the hands of *anyone*, much less those who now stand expectant and eager to receive them?

The view of human nature recognized by the Founders is now in grave peril. Whither goes America? Was liberty merely an 18th-century fad, or is there still something exceptional about our country? ♦

ASSOCIATED PRESS / JIM R. BOUNDS

Sabrina Boyd, her son Noah, and other Raleigh Muslims outside the federal courthouse, August 5

Tarheel Jihadist

The two faces of Daniel Patrick Boyd.

BY DAVEED GARTENSTEIN-ROSS

Raleigh, North Carolina

The Shadow Lakes subdivision, about 30 minutes south of Raleigh, is seamlessly surrounded by the trees and tobacco fields of Johnston County. God and country are conspicuous here. American flags hang from porches. Nevertheless, at the time of his arrest as the ringleader of an alleged jihadist plot, this is where Daniel Patrick Boyd was living.

Boyd, two of his sons, three other young men, and another adult were indicted on July 22 on charges of conspiring to provide material support to terrorists, as well as conspiring to murder, kidnap, and injure persons abroad. An eighth suspect is being sought in Pakistan. At the time of Boyd's arrest, his truck and home contained gas masks, 26 firearms, and 27,000 rounds of ammunition. The charge that a jihadist plot was centered here sent shock waves through Shadow Lakes.

In the course of nearly a week investigating the Boyd case in this area, I was struck by the contrasts in how the man is perceived. His neighbors have rallied around him, saying the indictment is inconsistent with the Boyd they knew; one called him "the best neighbor I've ever had." Spokespeople for some Muslim organizations in the area also quickly came to Boyd's defense. Yet others saw a different side of Boyd, a man who embraced Islamic militancy and spoke often of *jihad*.

Boyd, 39, is a convert to Islam. He was on a state high school football championship team in Virginia, and he remains a towering presence. He is known among local Muslims for his tales of fighting the Soviet Army

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beginning in 1989, when he was just 19. Though he was indeed in South Asia in the late 1980s and early 1990s, his account of this period is exaggerated: Boyd arrived in Pakistan only after the Soviets had withdrawn from Afghanistan, and some of his stories (including one about a 23-day Soviet siege of a *mujahedeen* training camp) do not stand up to scrutiny.

In Shadow Lakes, Boyd lived with his wife Sabrina in a two-story mocha-colored house near a glittering pond. A few doors down, I spoke briefly with a neighbor, who was wearing a cross. Apparently on the verge of tears, she said the Boyds showed "nothing but total acceptance and empathy" and described them as "the best welcoming committee" for anyone new to the neighborhood.

Boyd's neighbors generally seemed unfazed by his religion. "The only difference between him and me is that he's a Muslim," said a skinny young man with shaggy blond hair who lives across the street from the Boyds and introduced himself as Jeremy.

His admiration for Boyd was evident as he fidgeted his way through a couple of cigarettes. He described Boyd as the neighborhood "advice-giver" for young people. "He would always have an unbiased opinion," Jeremy said. "He'd give you a different perspective on anything you wanted to talk with him about, saying that maybe you could look at it in a different way." Without much prodding, he added, "The first time he met me, he tried to convince me not to run away from home. It didn't work."

Jeremy was certain of Boyd's innocence, describing the evidence against him as "circumstantial." "I can't wait for this case to be over," he said, "so they can be out."

Boyd's neighbors were unaware of the time he'd spent in Pakistan/Afghanistan until it was reported in the media and said he didn't speak with them about hot-button political issues such as Israel or the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Not everyone who knew Boyd had such a positive impression. Ramona McWhorter owns the Community Thrift Store in Garner, which occupies the space where Boyd once operated an Islamic shop. When I visited her there, the Muslim influence was apparent in the interior architecture and design, including four archways near the back. McWhorter complained that Boyd illegally entered the property and stole a number of storage shelves shortly before his arrest, an account corroborated by the owner of a store in the same strip mall. McWhorter suspected that Boyd had kept a key.

Daniel Patrick Boyd

Larry Schug, a superintendent for Crawford-Dunn General Contractors who hired Boyd as a subcontractor, spoke to me on the porch of his red brick house in Zebulon. Schug was frustrated by Boyd's poor communication, complaining of unanswered calls. When Boyd did respond, he apparently preferred to phone Schug's brother or boss rather than Schug himself.

More interesting than this relatively minor complaint, Schug was aware of Boyd's militant orientation. Schug said he always assumed Boyd had been in the Special Forces, in part because of his enthusiasm for guns and apparent survivalist streak. This didn't bother Schug, an ardent supporter of the Second Amendment; in the past he discounted one electrician's suspicion of Boyd, dismissing the electrician as "an anti-gun liberal."

But the reservations these acquaintances expressed about Boyd do not begin to capture the other side of the man.

A few Raleigh-area Muslims had spoken to the press before my visit, prompting the *News & Observer* to claim that "anyone who knows Boyd in the context of his faith agrees that he was extreme." Bosnian immigrant Jasmin Smajic told the paper Boyd "often talked of jihad."

I interviewed at length one active local Muslim who knows Boyd well. "It's hard to dispute anything in the indictment," this source said.

The reverence with which Boyd's neighbor Jeremy spoke of him brought to mind the claim in the indictment that some of the defendants had "radicalized others, mostly young Muslims or converts to Islam, to believe … that violent *jihad* was a personal obligation on the part of every good Muslim." The Muslim source with whom I spoke extensively confirmed that Boyd was quite sociable and liked by young people. Noting that the young men indicted along with him came from "dysfunctional homes," this source said they developed a bond with Boyd and saw him as a father figure.

The source, moreover, saw much more of Boyd's political views and religious ideology than his neighbors did, describing him as having "very strong feelings" about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. "He believed in *jihad*," the source said, adding that Boyd's time in Afghanistan was his "entry card," something he would use to gain street cred in certain circles.

The source's view of Boyd aligns with some of the statements he made while under investigative surveillance, as revealed in the government's exhibits during his detention hearing. Boyd was recorded speaking of the need for *jihad* and claimed that Muslims who "think it is all right to just sit here, chill in America, make some money" are "tripping and have left Islam." This is the *takfiri* view:

that those with a different opinion of armed combat have left the true faith and become apostates.

Boyd's exhortations to *jihad* are scattered throughout the government recordings that have been made public. Ironically, he told one government witness that "if you live amongst the *kufar* [nonbelievers] and they are comfortable with you, you have left Islam."

If Boyd held extremist beliefs, that does not make him a terrorist. Nor is holding such beliefs illegal. The government's surveillance does reveal plenty of suspicious behavior: The defendants tried to ensure that their conversations were not being monitored, spoke in code, discussed their desire to rob banks and support the *mujahedeen*, and implied that they were on the verge of a great mission. But the indictment does not make clear what actions they actually planned. The *News & Observer* reported that FBI Special Agent Michael Sutton, when cross-examined at the detention proceeding, could not name specific targets.

The government always faces a dilemma in terrorism cases: When to make an arrest? If it waits too long, the suspects may strike. But if it apprehends suspects in the talking stage of a plot, they "can claim that they were only talking and never had serious intentions," wrote terrorism expert Brian Michael Jenkins in his *Unconquerable Nation*. Expect to hear that argument from the defense if the Boyd case goes to trial.

Perhaps in part because of concerns about this defense argument, the government also brought a number of lesser charges against Boyd, including firearms violations and false statements to federal authorities. As the case proceeds, it will be interesting to watch the government's theory unfold as to what Boyd and his cohorts were planning—and to try to discern why the authorities decided to move in July, rather than waiting to gather more evidence. Given his neighbors' trusting attitude, Boyd probably thought he was in little danger of being found out. ♦

REUTERS / JASON LEE

The Thrill Is Gone

Australia falls out of love with China.

BY ANDREW SHEARER

Premier Wen Jiabao and Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in Beijing, October 2008

In 2007 China overtook Japan as Australia's largest trading partner. Australia has been selling raw materials to China as fast as it can dig them up and load them onto ships, generating jobs and revenue. More recently, demand from China has cushioned Australia from the worst effects of the global economic downturn. Just last week state-owned PetroChina signed up to buy around $41 billion of liquefied natural gas—the biggest resources deal in Australian history.

No surprise then that Aussies developed something of a crush on China. The 2005 Lowy Institute Poll of Australians' views on foreign policy found that 69 percent had "positive feelings" towards China (while 58 percent had "positive feelings" for the United States). A year earlier former foreign minister Alexander Downer sent a tremor through U.S. defense circles when, visiting Beijing, he seemed to question whether Australia's alliance obligations would apply in the event of a U.S.-China conflict over Taiwan. There was palpable concern in Washington that a moonstruck Australia had succumbed to Beijing's "smile diplomacy" and was drifting into China's arms. The advent in Australia of a Mandarin-speaking prime minister must have looked like consummation of these fears.

Suddenly, however, this budding romance is in trouble. A massive resources grab by Chinese government-owned giant Chinalco ended

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in mutual recriminations and the arrest of mining giant Rio Tinto's senior Australian executive in China on unspecified and still unexplained espionage charges. Chinese officials brushed off requests for consular access and dismissed Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's public statements of concern as "noise." Beijing reacted sharply to the Rudd government's defense blueprint, which questioned the intent behind China's rapid military modernization and committed, quite reasonably, to a build-up of Australia's maritime capabilities.

More recently, Chinese diplomats have tried to intimidate organizers into canceling appearances by Uighur exile Rebiya Kadeer at an international film festival in Melbourne and Australia's National Press Club in Canberra. Mysteriously, untraced hackers managed to take down the film festival's website. Beijing's diplomats were less successful. Both events went ahead, with vastly more media attention than they would have received otherwise. Beijing retaliated by canceling a high-level visit and sanctioning a wave of criticism of Australia in China's state-controlled media.

Previous ham-fisted attempts by Beijing to constrain freedom of speech in Australia have backfired badly. In 2007, Chinese diplomats in Canberra were warned that Australians took a dim view of being lectured by another country—any country—about who their elected leaders could and couldn't see. They were specifically advised against publicly calling on former prime minister John Howard to boycott a meeting with the Dalai Lama. Sure enough, the Chinese foreign ministry did just that, guaranteeing high-profile meetings took place not only with Howard but also with then opposition leader Rudd. During 2008, Chinese diplomats organized massive, threatening counterdemonstrations in support of Beijing's indefensible policies in Tibet, triggering serious unease in the wider Australian community and concern inside government security agencies.

China-boosters like to laud the Middle Kingdom's soft power, contrasting it with barely disguised glee with America's supposed loss of "moral authority" and fading influence. But what China is exercising vis-à-vis Australia looks much more like old-fashioned authoritarian hard power.

Rudd's predecessor, John Howard, in Tokyo, March 2007

And it's clear that Aussies don't much like Beijing's thuggery. Lowy Institute polling in 2008 showed that while Australians continue to acknowledge China's importance to the Australian economy, they are increasingly aware of, and concerned about, the darker side of China's rise. Nearly 90 percent of Australians believed that China will become the leading power in Asia; almost 60 percent of these people expressed discomfort with the prospect. Just over half of all Australians agreed that Australia should join with other countries to limit China's influence.

So is this a passing lovers' tiff or something more serious?

Many in Australia's self-appointed foreign policy, academic, and business elites—often themselves direct beneficiaries of the relationship—would like to kiss and make up, whatever the price. They tend to malign the public for its supposed naïveté and ignorance about the world. China is changing, they argue. Sure it's not a democracy, but it's no longer really a Communist dictatorship. Its political leaders are more interested in stoking economic growth at home so they can cling to power than they are in outward expansion. So the Australian public should put aside their scruples about human rights and the rule of law in China and let the foreign policy mandarins get on with the grand national project of building a special relationship with Beijing.

For this crowd, Australian business people need to get with the program, too. Granted, China's companies aren't quite like ours, and we tend not to lock up their negotiators when they visit. But if they want to pay less than the market price for our commodities, surely we need to take a long-term view and cut them some slack? Preemptive capitulation to China is widespread. Australian business people and commentators alike often declare that Australia will have to get used to Beijing setting the terms of the relationship. The Rudd government hasn't helped, sending haphazard and conflicting signals that have confused and frustrated China and the business community.

Putting in place a durable framework for the relationship is becoming more important and—as recent tensions grow—more urgent. Australia's relationship with China is undergoing profound structural change. It is becoming much more complicated and much more difficult to manage. An increasingly powerful and assertive China is feeling its oats. Previously in Australia's history, our political, strategic, and eco-

REUTERS

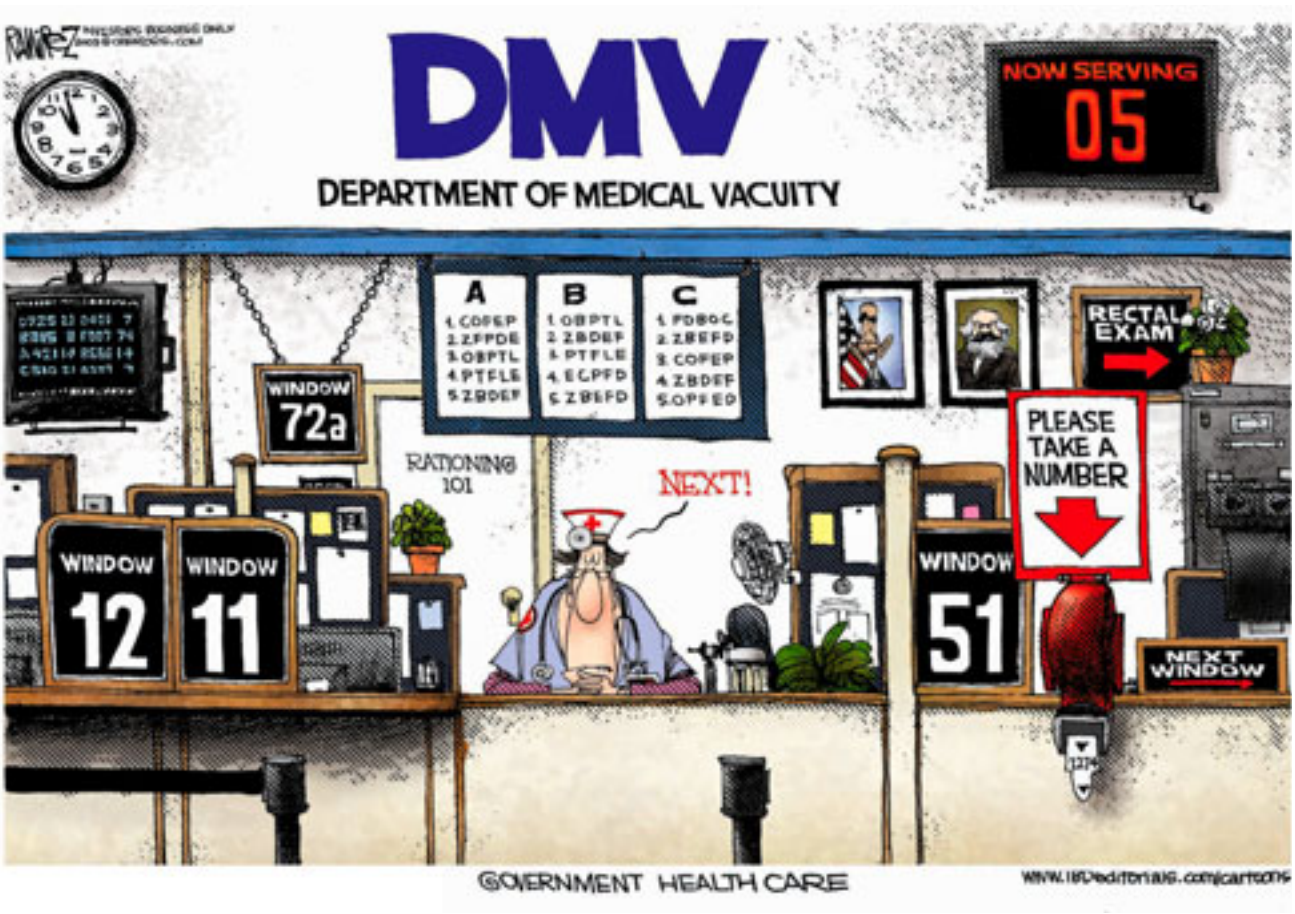
nomic interests have been aligned. Initially Britain was both our security provider and our major economic partner before it was supplanted by the United States during the Second World War. For several decades Japan—democratic, developed, and a U.S. ally—took over. Now Australia's most important trading partner is an increasingly open strategic competitor, particularly in our region, to our major ally.

This development will place Australia's international policy settings under increasing strain. A trade surplus in Australia's favor, a Westminster political system, and the absence of any equivalent to the Taiwan Relations Act make this balancing act easier for Australian governments than it is for American administrations. But there are parallels: As Australia's economy becomes more integrated with China's, relations with Beijing are set to become much more sensitive and politically contested.

Ironically, this is likely to strengthen Australia's alliance with the United States and with its other most important regional partners, democratic Japan, India, and Indonesia. After a period during which strategic judgments about China's rise tended to drift apart, Canberra's assessments of Beijing's rapid military modernization program—particularly its acquisition of blue-water naval capabilities—are reconverging with Washington's. Australia signed a historic joint security declaration with Japan in 2007 and is moving to strengthen its strategic ties with India and Indonesia. The Rudd government has committed to acquiring cruise missiles, a larger, more capable submarine fleet, and larger surface ships.

If he is serious, Rudd will follow these welcome steps by participating fully in U.S.-led missile defense cooperation in Asia, pressing ahead with stronger defense links with Japan, and lifting the Labor government's counterproductive and hypocritical ban on uranium exports to India, paving the way for a bilateral security agreement with New Delhi. Rudd will recognize that China has an insatiable demand for strategic raw materials that Australia has in abundance—iron ore, uranium, coal, and gas—giving Australia leverage, too. The fact that this week's liquefied natural gas deal came at a time when diplomatic relations are strained only serves to underline that China needs Australia at least as much as Australia needs China.

Rudd will also need to stop sending mixed messages and signal clearly to Beijing, the Australian people, and the international community that while Australia values its economic ties with China and is committed to building the strongest possible economic relationship, it will not compromise on its core national interests—including the U.S. alliance and our strategic partnerships with Asia's democracies—or its values. ♦



MICHAEL RAMIREZ

Wheat heading to Iraq, 2007

Help That Helps

A new business model for foreign aid.

By Carol C. Adelman & Nicholas Eberstadt

Over six months into President Obama's term of office, there is still no head for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), America's main foreign aid agency. Nor is there yet a CEO at the Millennium Challenge Corporation (Washington's newer, arguably more flexible foreign assistance organization). The Obama White House has not even forwarded the names of nominees for those positions to Congress, and our major aid programs are being run on autopilot by caretakers.

There is, moreover, no tangible indication of any new thinking on aid from the Obama team. Halfway through the president's first year, no position papers—much less white papers—on how to improve our foreign assistance programs have emanated from his halls of government.

But this has not kept the president from saying a few words about aid to Africa, fittingly in Ghana—one of the few African success stories. In an address televised across Africa after the G8 Summit in July, the leader of the largest aid donor to Africa acknowledged the continent's troubled colonial past. But this son of an African refuted the standard mantra that the West is still responsible for Africa's economic and social woes. In an interview with AllAfrica.com, Obama pointed out that Kenya's GDP was actually higher than South Korea's in the early 1960s and credited South Korea with putting into place successful policies that promoted foreign investment,

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PHOTOS COURTESY OF USAID

exports, a skilled workforce, and homegrown industries.

Emphasizing rule of law, trade, institution building, good governance, and anticorruption, Obama's message was a breath of fresh air, especially as he underscored self-reliance, saying "wherever folks want to help themselves, we want to be there as a partner." Obama's apparent preference for a performance-based aid approach could not be more different from the traditions of the foreign aid business, which emphasizes how much (or little) we give and how poor (and getting poorer) they are. That traditional focus implies that aid is the engine of economic growth in developing countries and that it is mostly the responsibility of Western aid agencies.

Obama's comments on foreign aid make it all the more surprising that the only real change in our foreign assistance programs under his administration so far is in indicated spending. In the president's first budget (FY 2010), outlays for "international assistance programs" were ratcheted up by over half from the level of the final year of the Bush administration ($18.9 billion vs. $12.4 billion—not a trivial difference, even in Washington these days). Proposed outlays for FY 2011 are even higher. President Obama may well be on track to keep his campaign promise of doubling overall foreign assistance.

Over seven months into his term, President Obama has yet to nominate heads for USAID and the Millennium Challenge Corporation, and our major aid programs are running on autopilot.

The lack of any substantive—or even superficial—effort to improve the functioning of our aid apparatus, in conjunction with the evident determination to shovel massive new amounts of money into our aid programs, can only suggest that the key thinkers in the Obama administration regard the primary shortcoming of existing aid programs as a lack of funding. Such sentiments are shared at the United Nations, where the U.N. Millennium Project has been beating the drum since 2005 for a doubling of rich nations' aid to poorer countries, under the argument that these new transfers are both necessary for and instrumental to the reduction of global poverty in the years immediately ahead.

But if the Obama administration believes it can simply scale up foreign aid and muddle through with the structures and approaches that underpin our current international assistance programs on ever higher funding levels, it is setting course for a terrible failure. The U.S. foreign aid system is broken and must be overhauled. This is not some well-concealed secret, and it is not a position particular to a limited segment of the political or ideological spectrum. In Washington today, there are few policy conclusions that elicit such bipartisan agreement. More money will not change the delivery of foreign aid on the ground. And President Obama knows this. In his interview with AllAfrica.com he warned of how "Western consultants and administrative costs end up gobbling huge percentages of our aid overall."

A new business model is manifestly required if development assistance is to avoid endlessly repeating past mistakes and if it is to capitalize upon important emerging opportunities.

Like many other bureaucratic organizations, foreign aid institutions are geared to fighting the last war. Social, economic, and demographic changes in the developing world over the past several decades have been rapid, and they have transformed the low-income landscape in obvious respects, but these realities have yet to be internalized by our international development assistance agencies and programs. There are not just new problems to be faced; there are important new opportunities to be grasped. Three major changes in particular need to be recognized immediately.

First, in much of the developing world, especially in Latin America and Asia, economic and demographic changes—including declining fertility and infant mortality and rising life expectancy—are producing a "grayer" population structure and more affluence. These trends have tilted the locus of health problems in most developing countries to such chronic illnesses as cancer, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes, and away from the traditional problems of infectious diseases and child survival. While "traditional" health problems are still predominant in sub-Saharan countries, the chronic disease burden is significant even in Africa, affecting the working-age population so vital to productivity and growth.

Second, there has been an increase in the skill-based talent pool as millions of people who have studied in developed countries have returned home to start businesses and NGOs. The rise of this pool of trained professionals and entrepreneurs in developing countries means that there are steadily increasing opportunities for aid organizations to partner with local talent. They have an enhanced opportunity to promote local ownership, self-reliance, and sustainability through their projects.

Finally, there are major streams of international financial resources available today (some of them entirely new)

that were not present when foreign assistance was conceived after World War II. Some 83 percent of total financial flows from the developed to developing world are private resources, in the form of investment, remittances, and philanthropy. These private flows dwarf government aid to the developing world. Most important, they have opened up new ways of addressing problems. Increasingly, private philanthropists are taking a venture-capitalist approach to aid, viewing themselves as problem-solvers and partners rather than simply as donors. Private resources are flowing through new channels: the Internet, cell-phone transfers, cause-related marketing, remittances, and social networking sites. Economic growth in emerging economies is creating considerable wealth. Large NGOs such as the Aga Khan Foundation (which focuses on needs in South Asia, Central Asia, and East Africa) have now been joined by thousands of community foundations in the developing world that are solving local problems with local funding from wealthy individuals and companies.

What's needed today is more flexibility in aid programming. Aid can be tailored to each country's evolving conditions and development opportunities. It should also be premised on leverage—that is, linking U.S. public resources to the myriad emerging streams of private endeavor that characterize global development and encouraging the emergence of more innovative and efficient ways of delivering assistance and better evaluating the aid's ultimate impact.

An Afghan child with cooking oil provided by USAID, 2007

Countries are much more likely to grow when they embrace policies that create open economies, and encourage trade, private investment, business creation, savings, and innovation. Good governance and the development of a sturdy institutional domestic framework, including rule of law, individual rights, and property rights, are critical to prosperity.

Since the early 1950s, scholars and students of development have debated to what extent, if any, foreign aid helps countries. Their studies have been strikingly inconclusive and have certainly failed to demonstrate that official development assistance makes a regular and predictable contribution to overall macroeconomic growth. We reviewed nine major studies, and the majority of them show no categorical relationship between aid and growth, with only one asserting an unqualified positive relationship. The two most dramatic and consequential modern cases of rapid growth and poverty reduction in the Third World—post-Mao China and India during the last two decades—are not attributable in any appreciable measure to flows of official aid. On the other hand, the ratio of aid to GDP is generally quite high in sub-Saharan countries, but more foreign aid has not resulted in increased per-capita GDP in the region.

Among the reasons adduced in the literature for the lack of identifiable macroeconomic impacts of development aid are that state-to-state transfers inhibit competitiveness, create dependency, and absorb or misallocate political resources or energies in recipient countries; that aid is motivated by nondevelopment donor and contractor interests; and that aid engenders a lack of feedback and accountability, encouraging host country graft and corruption.

Since recipient countries' policies are almost always far more important than the volume of foreign assistance in hastening the pace of material advance in recipient countries, we need to ask where and how our foreign aid can matter? This requires a shift in focus from macroeconomy to projects on the ground. We in the West have transferred nearly $2.7 trillion in official development assistance since 1960. What evidence of program-level success do we have? Why have some projects been successful? Even if the macroeconomic impact of aid transfers is debatable, aid projects could still be justified by policymakers, and perhaps even by taxpayers, if they have generated high and sustained returns of other sorts for their beneficiaries in low-income countries. Determining these characteristics of how foreign aid has positively affected the lives of individuals and communities in poor countries can inform our approach to future aid programs.

In recent years, many donors have begun to examine the effectiveness of their foreign assistance. By and large, their findings have not been encouraging. In its evaluation of Canadian foreign aid, the Canadian Senate's foreign affairs committee concluded that Canada's development agency had failed to make a difference in sub-Saharan Africa

despite $12.4 billion in aid expenditures between 1968 and 2007. The failure was attributed to slow, unaccountable, and poorly designed development assistance and ineffective foreign aid institutions in Africa. Maintaining that vibrant economies and good governance are the path to prosperity and that these can only be generated from within African countries themselves, the committee recommended that Canada move to a foreign aid model similar to the U.S. Millennium Challenge Corporation, which provides assistance only to those countries that can demonstrate progress in building strong private sectors, creating jobs, and strengthening governance. Australia, Ireland, the Netherlands, and Sweden have also completed assessments of their aid programs that call for improved evaluation, more local ownership, and better institutional capacity in governments.

Other donors, particularly the World Bank, have attempted to measure programs for results such as poverty reduction. The bank's evaluation unit found that its poverty reduction record is problematic. In a 2006 evaluation of 25 World Bank-assisted countries, only 11 were said to have reduced the incidence of poverty between the mid-1990s and early 2000s, with poverty either stagnating or increasing in the remaining 14 countries.

Afghans receiving training on USAID-provided computers, 2007

We reviewed projects by USAID, the World Bank, foundations, and corporations that have been identified as having measurable impact and analyzed them for their shared characteristics. Our examination identified nine principles of foreign aid projects that work:

Local Ownership and Initiative. Successful programs and projects reflect the actual needs of the recipient countries as expressed by local actors, rather than simply reflecting what projects and programs may be available for local recipients from USAID. Local "ownership" increases the prospects of long-term success and can, indeed, lead to the continuation of institutional relationships between American and partner leaders long after the end of USAID funding. The Rotary Club campaign to eliminate polio succeeded because of the ownership and financial commitment of local Rotary Clubs throughout the developing world.

Partnership. Successful projects and programs are a collaboration between American and developing-country institutions, especially private institutions. Indeed, such collaboration seems virtually essential for a sustained engagement that brings benefits valued by all. The U.S. government should always attempt to ensure partners are committed to a program before it makes an investment. As a general rule, the U.S. contribution should be the second or third dollar on the table, not the first. When everyone is committed to common priorities and has made an investment, then everyone will be accountable for the results. With mutual accountability comes sustainability. The Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research, which spawned the Green Revolution, was a partnership among governments, foundations, and the private agribusiness sector.

Leverage. The U.S. government can take advantage of the myriad new sources and techniques of global support for developing countries, including foundations, private voluntary organizations, corporations, universities, and remittances. USAID alliances with new American philanthropic activities overseas can help leverage resources that far exceed those contained in federal budgets. Such partnerships can recognize the priorities and expertise of philanthropic leaders and their institutions. Similar strategies can be used to link U.S. programs to emerging local business leadership in developing countries. Within this framework, USAID would become not a controlling taskmaster of U.S. development programs, but a facilitator, the creator of syndicates of resources targeted at self-reliance. USAID's Global Development Alliance, for example, has successfully leveraged government funds with contributions from private companies, foundations, charities, and universities. This type of partnership should constitute the model for virtually all U.S. foreign assistance in the future.

Flexibility. Efforts by today's aid projects to tackle new problems are often hampered by decades-old legislative mandates. USAID's popular child-survival program began with a legislative earmark in 1986 and has spent over $15 billion providing education and preventive services for childhood communicable diseases. Today, however,

non-communicable diseases in adults such as cardiovascular, cancer, and diabetes have overtaken infectious diseases as the leading causes of death in most of the developing world. Child-survival funding dominates USAID's health budget, leaving little to help with diseases that are sapping adult productivity and economic growth. Where the nature of the problems and opportunities for change are evolving, aid must be able to anticipate and respond to such changes.

Peer-to-Peer Approaches. Long after USAID's financial role has ended, U.S. foreign assistance can help America's professionals and institutions to build relationships with their developing country counterparts on the basis of perceived professional self-interest. Such opportunities are exemplified in USAID's Hospital Partnerships Program, through which U.S. physicians volunteered their time to work directly with physicians in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. This peer-to-peer approach is patently superior to the contractor model that currently dominates USAID programming and which, as President Obama noted, takes up inordinate percentages of our overall foreign aid.

A Kenyan woman with USAID-provided food, 2007

Technology Adaptation and Adoption. Some of the most widely acknowledged foreign assistance successes, like the Green Revolution, have at their core the application of technology to improving the human condition. As the scientific and technological capacity of developing countries expands, so does the potential for technology partnerships. Local ownership is also important in this context, as integration of technology such as bed nets and oral rehydration salts is vital to ensuring their effective use within the communities where they are introduced. Local foundations' growth and social entrepreneurship's successes in developing countries have shown how technology can work for poor people throughout the world.

Self-Reliance. The most important steps taken to improve the long-term success of developing nations will come from within those countries. In successful and self-sustaining projects, local leaders are the engines of change. Conversely, encouraging leadership and good policies may mean ending or reducing aid to a country. We must not be afraid to withdraw funds to ensure that assistance does not result in dependency in recipient countries.

Continuous Information Feedback. The best evaluation systems are not simply signposts that demand reports. They are continuous loops that give information to managers in real time so programs can be constantly adjusted to improve performance. Success comes from a sustainable process, not a single event, and it requires flexibility to adjust programs to changing situations.

Risk. A partnership and venture-funding culture implies a tolerance for risk and a willingness to recognize failure. Such a tolerance is, unfortunately, widely lacking in our aid programming (for all-too-understandable political reasons). But USAID must be willing to experiment with new approaches to development assistance. If it hopes to increase the likelihood of project level successes, USAID will need to develop a mechanism for rewarding the willingness to take calculated risks within its own personnel and programs.

The pervasive lack of convincing evidence of significant benefit from past foreign aid efforts, the changing nature and capabilities of the developing world, and the emergence of new sources and approaches to resource transfers for development all point to the need for a fundamental rethinking of the objectives, strategies, and instruments of U.S. foreign aid.

Project earmarks, directions, and limitations in foreign aid legislation are a "design for failure" and should be removed—with the exception of those deemed essential to U.S. national security. U.S. foreign assistance programs should be able to respond fully and flexibly to demand-driven opportunities emerging within developing countries.

With again the exception of expenditures deemed essential to U.S. national security, the United States should avoid distributing foreign aid without monetary or monetized resources co-invested in and by the developing country itself. Appropriate partners include local affiliates of NGOs and corporations, indigenous foundations, local businesses,

and public agencies. Allocations of U.S. development aid should favor sustainable public-private partnerships in the host country.

The main competition for U.S. foreign assistance dollars should involve not contractors but rather ideas—more specifically, ideas coming from the multiple actors now involved in foreign aid and philanthropy, particularly on the demand side of the equation in developing countries. Those who wish to attract U.S. resources should bring to USAID their best ideas and their own resource contributions from the private sector, explaining their goals in terms of economic and social impact, local ownership, partnership with local institutions, and achievement of community self-reliance. USAID should operate more like a foundation (and less like a disbursement agency), articulating areas or problems of interest and inviting competition for new approaches.

One fruitful avenue for USAID might be to create a venture fund through which any individual or organization with a new idea about how to solve a problem in development in an innovative way can apply for a seed grant. In this scheme, the grants would be for limited duration and limited amounts of money and risk would be welcomed. Grantees would report directly to a panel consisting of all government agencies contributing to official development assistance.

USAID-donated medical supplies being delivered in Iraq, 2006

America's private charitable donations to low-income areas of $36.9 billion are over one and one-half times greater than government aid of $21.8 billion for the same year. Thus, USAID should provide for regular, substantive consultations with private-sector players involved in global development, including foundations, charities, corporations, religious organizations, universities and colleges, and individuals. (Beyond the philanthropic sector, millions of migrants throughout the world sent $281 billion in remittances back to their lower-income home countries—a sum two and one-half times greater than all donors' official development assistance in 2007, the latest year for which comparative data are available.) USAID must not only be aware of but also work with the vast array of new players in global development who are transforming the ways in which resources are reaching low-income regions.

The new model for foreign aid proposed here departs from the past in at least three important ways.

First, it is based on flexibility. The programs pursued, the opportunities seized, the partners aligned, and the ways in which funding creates self-reliance are driven not by earmarked legislation, not by the capacities of contractors, not by the world of 1970, but by the nature of the problems and the presence of opportunities from the promises of a changing world.

Second, it reduces centralized control. USAID becomes not the taskmaster of U.S. development programs but an aggregator or facilitator of efforts and a creator of syndicates of resources targeted at self-reliance.

Third, it emphasizes innovation. USAID should seek fresh faces, new approaches, new technologies, and new mechanisms for allocating its resources. It should seek out and link its activities to new streams of resources, looking for leverage for every dollar it dispenses—or, better, invests—and constantly searching for emerging cofinancing partners. This business model transforms USAID from a passive funder of projects to an investor in innovation.

Too often, the talk of "fixing" foreign aid is dominated by discussions of organizational structure, the volume of resource commitments, and the configuration or harmonization of objectives and players in the U.S. government. Such preoccupations are easy to understand: They reflect the force of habit. Such thinking, however, is conceptually trapped within a world that existed 30 or 40 years ago, when the public sector was the leading player in financial flows to poor countries. Today, the U.S. government's official development assistance constitutes just 9 percent of total U.S. financial flows to developing countries.

It is time to give serious thought to making our foreign aid expenditures work more effectively. What matters is less a redrawing of organization charts than a serious consideration of how these dollars are delivered and whether they are responding to local ideas and actually reaching partners with stakes in the outcome of the investments. A new business model for foreign aid is the main hope—perhaps the only hope—for fixing a broken system. ♦

Pay Day

Why it makes sense to worry about executive compensation.

By Irwin M. Stelzer

Bliss is it in this dawn to be alive, but to be a banker is very heaven—with apologies to Wordsworth. The Federal Reserve Board's monetary policy gurus are making cash available to banks at almost no cost, it can be relent to desperate borrowers at mouthwatering margins, and if anything goes really wrong, the government stands ready to bail you out. Free cash, or almost; high and rising charges to borrowers and consumers; bailouts if assets become toxic—what more can a bank president and his board want in this best of all possible worlds?

Freedom to set compensation, that's what. But that is not to be: The government has decided that it shall be the final arbiter of just how much banks that depend on it for their existence can pay their 5 senior executive officers and 20 "most highly compensated employees" in bonuses, and the compensation of the "100 most highly paid employees that are not subject to the bonus restrictions." Exempted are employees whose total annual compensation is not more than $500,000, and to whom any additional compensation is paid in the form of stock that can be sold only in the "long term." In its broadest terms, compensation packages must be "performance-based." Indeed, even those firms that have paid back bailout loans might well find themselves caught in this new regulatory net, since Kenneth Feinberg, the designated "pay czar," has taken the position that he has the discretion to claw back any compensation received by employees not only in firms that still owe the government money, "but in any company that received federal assistance," even those that have paid all their loans in full. Once a debtor, always in debt.

Feinberg contends that his discretion is complete and not subject to review—by anyone. "The [bank] officials can't run to the secretary of the Treasury. The officials can't run to the courthouse or a local court. My decision is final."

Irwin M. Stelzer, a contributing editor to The Weekly Standard, *is director of economic policy studies at the Hudson Institute and a columnist for the* Sunday Times *(London).*

The pay czar does not have the field of compensation-setting all to himself. The ever-active Barney Frank has persuaded his House colleagues to approve legislation that is designed to control executive compensation—sort of. But not directly. Instead, it seeks to introduce pay restraint by sprucing up corporate governance. Shareholders are to get the power to have a "say on pay" by casting advisory votes on proposed pay packages, and compensation committees are to be given somewhat greater power to do their job properly. Unless the very thought of Barney Frank trying to curb management's ability to set its own pay without regard to shareholders' interests offends you, nothing much here to worry about. After all, it is over 60 years since Adolf A. Berle and Gardiner Means, in their classic *The Modern Corporation and Private Property*, wrestled with the problem created by the inability of scattered shareholders to make certain that the managers of their businesses pursued the owners' interests, rather than those of the management group.

Since the current financial upheaval spread to the real economy, we probably have thought harder and learned more about the problem of compensation in the banking sector than at any time since Berle and Means put pen to paper. The first and easiest lesson is that when the government is a major shareholder, or the source of the financing that provides life-support for any company, it will want to have a say in how much of the dependency's revenues go into executive pockets. It's hard to quarrel with the modern version of the old British notion that he who takes the king's shilling is obliged to render service to the king. No self-respecting private equity guy would allow the executives of a company he has just rescued with a major investment to set their compensation without giving him something to say about it. Neither will, or even should, the government. So pay czar Feinberg is busily reviewing the detailed executive compensation plans plunked on his desk by the not-so-magnificent-seven companies still beholden to the government: AIG, Bank of America, Citigroup, Chrysler, Chrysler Financial, General Motors, and GMAC. Feinberg has 60 days from receipt of the plans (submitted to him on August 14) to decide whether to approve or

demand modifications of plans to compensate the employees of the seven firms. The entire financial services industry, even those that never heard of TARP or accepted any government aid, knows that what Feinberg decides will affect it. J. Mark Poerio, co-chair of the executive compensation group at consultants Paul Hastings, advisers to hundreds of financial firms, tells the *Washington Post*, "What Feinberg eventually approves will essentially serve as an outer boundary for what the law allows."

The rationale for government intervention on the widest possible scale is simple and, to some, persuasive. Compensation systems that encourage excessive risk-taking by firms that are too big to fail are not in the public interest—they contain the seeds of systemic collapse, as almost occurred at the start of the present crisis. So the government must have a say in the structure of bonuses of all banks to prevent excessive risk-taking.

Note that this argument applies to the risk-inducing nature of bonuses, hence the government's relaxed attitude towards bonuses in the form of restricted shares, which cannot be sold for several years, giving employees a stake in the long-term health and performance of their firms. Note, too, that the level of compensation is not supposed to affect whether the government approves any particular scheme, a distinction that might get lost in the hurly-burly of congressional hearings and White House press conferences.

Nor is the government certain to be deterred, in the end, by the presence of contracts setting compensation. After all, contracts that contravene public policy—think of agreements to fix prices, or a mob contract to "hit" a member no longer considered trustworthy—have long been held to be unenforceable. It is not a great stretch for the government to argue that contracts embodying compensation plans that encourage behavior so risky as to create systemic risk are null and void. After all, the government had no compunction about negating the contractual right of Chrysler's creditors to preferential treatment when it went bankrupt, in effect transferring such preference to vote-delivering trade unions. All in the public interest, of course.

The reasonableness of the government's claim for a seat at the compensation committee table doesn't mean that the government will do a good job of setting executive compensation. Populist and egalitarian pressures emanating from the Hill and the Oval Office will undoubtedly mount when Congress returns, and considers—if that is the right word—its reaction to the multimillion-dollar payouts planned not only by highly profitable firms such as Goldman Sachs, but by money-losers such as Citigroup, a bank that has received $45 billion in government aid in exchange for a 34 percent share in the company. Feinberg already has approved an $8.5 million pay packet, largely in the form of stock grants, to AIG's new president. He also is likely to approve plans such as those recently adopted by Wells Fargo—increase base pay and cut bonuses that might provide incentives to reckless lending and trading. And he must consider the impact of any decision on the ability of the firm involved to retain its top guns—although if his writ runs as widely as observers believe it will, unhappy bankers might have nowhere else to go—except perhaps to the new boutique advisory firms that are already wooing away bankers eager to find a niche below the government's radar.

'[Bank] officials can't run to the secretary of the Treasury. The officials can't run to the courthouse or a local court. My decision is final.'

'Pay czar' Kenneth Feinberg

ASSOCIATED PRESS / JOSH REYNOLDS

Because Feinberg has refused to acknowledge that the provision protecting contracts signed before February 11 of this year puts them beyond his reach—the rules provide for a claw back of "any bonus based on materially inaccurate performance criteria"—he now has to deal with Citigroup's One Hundred Million Dollar Man.

Actually, Andrew Hall, the trader with Citigroup subsidiary Phibro, is entitled under his pre-February 11 contract only to $98 million, but a mere $2 million shouldn't be allowed to come between a fact and a good headline. Hall earned many times $100 million for Phibro and hence its parent, Citigroup, so his payout—Citigroup refers to it as a share of profits—is clearly performance-related, one of the stated goals of pay structure reformers. Absent Feinberg's ability to find some way around that contract, or a willingness by Hall to adjust his bonus (there is a rumor that he might be prepared to spread receipt over several years), Hall should whistle a happy tune en route to the bank while Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner hopes the congressional hearing at which he will be called upon to explain this provision of the law—something about con-

stitutional protection against ex post facto legislation—does not last too long.

The sums involved aside, it is not unusual for loss-making banks such as Citi to feel it necessary to pay substantial bonuses to employees working in profitable divisions such as Phibro. None of this all-for-one-and-one-for-all stuff for traders, who seem to have learned their lesson from the town beggar in that great musical *Fiddler on the Roof*. When offered one kopek by the town butcher, the beggar demanded his usual two kopeks. On being advised by the butcher that he had a bad week, the beggar responded, "So you had a bad week—why should I suffer?"

We have learned, too, that most Americans are unappalled by big pay packets, so long as they are at least arguably related to performance. No one is calling for the lynching of Warren Buffett, who made a bundle on his save-the-day investment in Goldman Sachs. Or Bill Gates, whose billions result from his having invented a company that changed the way business is done and daily life is lived. Even Barack Obama, who capped pay and perks for executives at "firms receiving extraordinary help from U.S., taxpayers," and who thinks that upper-income Americans had it so good in the Bush years that they are obliged to be enthusiastic supporters of his plan to raise their taxes, has said, "This is America. We don't disparage wealth. . . . We believe that success should be rewarded." Either he means it, or feels it necessary for political reasons to say it. No matter. The point is that if this president sensed a wave of revulsion at high incomes, he would surely ride that wave. He doesn't, so he hasn't.

The argument that incentives lead to excessive risk-taking is not a moral argument, or a political one, or an argument in favor of a more equal distribution of wealth. It is solely an economic argument.

The most important and troubling lesson we have learned is that it is not how much executives in the financial sector are paid, but how that pay is structured. "Incentives matter" has long been a mantra of conservatives eager to allow the invisible hand to work its magic, rather than rely on government to direct economic activities. It was that belief in the ability of proper incentives to produce socially desirable behavior that underpinned conservative plans for welfare reform. With incentives and the public interest properly aligned, markets, not men, should decide on the allocation of a nation's resources, and on the division of the rewards for economic effort. Unless . . .

As Stanford professor Roger Noll put it in a communication he has generously allowed me to quote:

> The financial whizzes did nothing illegal and were responding to the incentives they faced. The system of large cash bonuses for gains coupled with no penalty for losses leads them to play games in which the short-term probability of gain is high but the long-term probability of loss also is high. This is the basic underlying fact behind every financial crisis in the last 25 years. If we persist in a system in which a company makes X a year every year for ten years but then loses 25X in the eleventh, and we give Y in bonuses in the good years and zero in the bad, the whizzes will still prefer boom and bust.

When the pursuit of such incentives harms innocent bystanders, it is difficult to argue that there is no role for government to play in correcting what economists call market failure resulting from externalities, even at the risk of introducing government failure. We don't allow 8-year-old children to spend their days digging coal only because we are humane, but also because such an assault on the health and educational opportunities of these children imposes costs on society that are not borne by mine owners. We don't allow manufacturers to pollute if that damages the health of innocent bystanders, imposing costs on society. And we now know that the structure of financial incentives can lead to risk-taking that has serious consequences for society—for Main Street as well as Wall Street. If compensation is structured so that the rewards of risk-taking go to bankers and their shareholders, but the costs of failure are borne by a wider group, the bankers will take more risks than are economically efficient. And that is without giving weight to Adam Smith's shrewd observation that men tend to be excessive risk-takers even without a skewed reward system: "The overweening conceit which the greater part of men have of their own abilities, is an ancient evil. . . . The chance of gain is by every man more or less over-valued, and the chance of loss is by most men under-valued."

The argument that incentives and inclinations exist that lead to excessive risk-taking is not a moral argument, or a political one, or an argument in favor of a more equal distribution of income and wealth. It is solely an economic argument: Compensation structured as it has been in the financial sector results in an uneconomically excessive amount of risk-taking, just as a failure to make a polluter internalize the costs of pollution provides an incentive for him to produce more than if he had to pay all the costs he imposes on society.

Mortgage brokers have an incentive to write NINJA mortgages—no income, no job or assets—because they are paid up front, and then pass the risk on to banks. Banks immediately wrap these risky mortgages into securities, and sell them to investors who are reassured by the triple-A ratings conferred by the rating agencies—who earn a fee only if the deal gets done. Everyone has an incentive to do the wrong thing—no surprise that they do just that. Not because they are law-breakers, not because they are anti-social, not because they can't wait to see the undeserving evicted from their homes. Simply because they are following the incentives embedded in the compensation packages that do not reflect the costs to society of their errors.

Until now, economists held that the fear of "reputational consequences" would deter such behavior. But most of these transactions that originate with a broker paid up-front are one-off—the same customer is unlikely to return, or learn soon enough the consequences of his brokers' behavior to warn others. Executives who bring down their institutions leave with golden goodbyes and access to talk shows on which they unashamedly—shame being in short supply these days—justify their actions en route to a game of golf at a country club, dues paid by the company from which they departed but at which an office and staff support are still available to make their transition to a new life friction-free.

I exaggerate: Not all cases fit that description. But almost all have one characteristic in common: The cost of the pursuit of the incentives contained in a compensation package, when that pursuit leads to major loss, has not been borne by the pursuer, but by thousands of people he has never met.

Since society bears the cost, society, as represented by its elected officials and their appointees, must have something to say about how to eliminate or at least mitigate incentives that are causing such woe to the innocent. Translating that general conclusion into effective regulation is no easy chore. The House hopes to accomplish the goal by improving corporate governance, making executive compensation subject to more effective review by shareholders and boards of directors. No harm there, but neither the shareholders nor the compensation committees of boards have any incentive to internalize the social costs of excessive risk-taking. The solution is made no easier by political posturing by representatives of both parties. New York attorney general Andrew Cuomo continued his undeclared drive for the Democratic gubernatorial nomination by revealing his horror at discovering that nine banks that received government aid paid out nearly $33 billion in bonuses last year. Which is not particularly relevant if the bonuses were paid pursuant to contracts or to employees whose divisions turned a handsome profit.

Equally unhelpful are the Republican opponents of *any* interference in the structure of pay packages. Reacting to the House bill, Representative Spencer Bachus of Alabama said that the government should not interfere in the operation of private-sector companies, adding, "Government bureaucrats don't know what's best for America," which is undoubtedly true (cf. health care reform), but not particularly relevant in a circumstance in which private-sector companies exist only because the government has seen fit to pour billions into them, and private-sector bureaucrats have an incentive to ignore the public interest.

So, like it or not, we are faced with a situation in which government regulators will have to try to figure out how to align private with public interests. Here the watchword must be, "Get the incentives right, and if huge bonuses flow to the skilled or the merely lucky, so be it." Step one is to make sure that every player has his own skin in the game. Lenders at all levels must be made to bear some of the cost of loans they make that go sour. Recipients of bonuses must have their entitlements based on longer rather than shorter time periods. And be subject to recapture under certain conditions. Or perhaps the system adopted by Credit Suisse might be used: Five billion dollars in bonuses were paid in January from a fund consisting of the bank's toxic assets—a plan called "eat your own cooking" by one banker. So far, the value of bonuses is up 17 percent since the plan was instituted, far less than the 75 percent increase in Credit Suisse shares, in which bonuses were paid in the past.

Rating agencies must also be required to have skin in the game, perhaps by being forced to take part of their compensation in the securities that they are blessing, and better still, by being subjected to the competition from which government rules and practice now shield them by making entry into the rating business unnecessarily difficult. And it wouldn't be a bad idea to have a portion of the pay of regulators held in escrow, to be returned to the taxpayers if their regulatory schemes prove inadequate.

Will even a perfect scheme of forcing financial institutions to internalize the costs their pay schemes now impose on society eliminate future financial crises? Of course not. The "animal spirits" that John Maynard Keynes said animate capitalists will always at times result in excessively exuberant behavior. Absent a taste for structural reform on the part of the administration, the banks that are too big to fail will remain too big to fail, creating moral hazard that even the most wisely crafted compensation scheme cannot offset. But some progress is better than none, some reduction of systemic risk better than none, some correction of incentives that leave society holding the bag while risk-taking executives escape unscathed better than none. And, most important, ardent capitalists should agree that some reform, however imperfect, that restores faith in their preferred economic system is better than none. ♦

Sex, Drugs, Music, Mud

Woodstock at 40

BY P.J. O'ROURKE

Grandpa Woodstock, Queen Estar, August 14, 2009

STEPHEN CHERNIN / AP PHOTOS

No social phenomenon can be completely analyzed, thoroughly critiqued, and given its full philosophical due in just one word. Except Woodstock. Altamont.

And that—except for the shaded sidebar containing the titles of the reviewed books—should be the end of this book review. However, the long weekend of August 15-17, 1969, was one of the great where-weren't-you? moments of recent history. Along with 202,177,000 other Americans, where I wasn't was at Woodstock.

Though it was not for lack of trying. I was 21 and smitten with a girl—call her Sunflower—from exotic Massapequa, Long Island. I had come by motorcycle from Ohio with the idea of Sunflower riding pillion to a "Woodstock Music and Arts Fair" which, according to a poster in a record shop back in Yellow Springs, was "An Aquarian Exposition" featuring "Three Days of Peace and Music." I pictured something on the order of a wind chime sale with evening hootenannies and maybe a surprise guest appearance by Mimi Fariña.

Sunflower, alas, chose the Sunday prior to make a feeble gesture at doing away with herself. (Such feeble gestures were more or less obligatory among fine arts major co-eds in those days. There was a bridge at an Ohio women's college from which at least one art student per semester would plunge. The drop was less than two yards into a foot-deep duck pond.)

While her parents were out slicing Titleists and lobbing Wilsons, Sun-

The Road to Woodstock
by Michael Lang
Ecco, 320 pp., $29.99

Woodstock Revisited
50 Far Out, Groovy, Peace-Loving, Flashback-Inducing Stories From Those Who Were There
by Susan Reynolds
Adams Media, 256 pp., $12.95

Woodstock
Peace, Music & Memories
by Brad Littleproud and Joanne Hague
Krause, 256 pp., $24.99

P.J. O'Rourke, a contributing editor to The Weekly Standard, *is the author, most recently, of* Driving Like Crazy.

flower emptied the family medicine cabinet, swallowing upward of half-a-dozen Midol, One-A-Day, and Miltown tablets. There was a great crash of Cadillacs backing into each other as mom, dad, aunts, etc., raced from the parking lot of the Massapequa Golf Club, Par Venue Links. Ambulances were called. A tummy was pumped. (A rather cute little tummy, if memory serves.)

I was slightly disappointed to be missing Woodstock until the nightly news reported that it had turned into a catastrophic, drug-addled, rain-drenched disaster area lacking food, water, shelter, and Port-A-Potties. Then I was furious to be missing Woodstock.

What this says about 21-year-old boys I needn't tell anyone who has been, dated, or raised one. Furthermore, Sunflower's suicide attempt was the result of a fight with her mother about a department store charge plate bill for a $128 peasant blouse and had nothing to do with Sunflower's desperate romantic feelings for me.

To top it off, a few years later I became a Republican.

What with one thing and another, I was always touchy on the subject of Woodstock. I'm over it now, thanks to various books celebrating the 40th anniversary of too many people in bad haircuts going to an upstate New York dairy farm for no good reason. I've counted three of these books so far. Since counting to three was as much as most Woodstock attendees could manage on goof butts and silly pills, three is where I stop.

Each book is worse than the others, and any would be enough to banish all interest in Woodstock even if you were guilty of (or pleading) *nolo contendere* to having been there.

The Road to Woodstock is the painfully boring epic of how it all came together—or, rather, didn't. A quote from "festivalgoer" Rob Kennedy says more than needs saying:

> On acid, the numbers of people were overwhelming. The concept of finding your way back to a huddle of four friends when you went to piss was mind-boggling. So we pretty much hunkered down in one spot from Thursday night through Sunday morning.

As the neologism "festivalgoer" indicates, Woodstock veterans would remain so out of it that they never watched *Seinfeld*. Kennedy (no relation to the more famous, if equally clueless, family) went on to pursue a career cultivating medical marijuana.

The Road to Woodstock is "by" Michael Lang, one of the two original promoters, "with" Holly George-Warren who is coeditor of *The Rolling Stone Encyclopedia of Rock and Roll* and thus, presumably, knows the alphabet. I have no idea how much of the book Lang wrote, but he doesn't seem to have read it. He is described therein by a pair of ex-business partners as having "a face that is, by turns, evil, wanton, fey, impish, and innocent." This is more than I would let ex-business partners of mine say about me in my book.

And yet, if you reverse the order of the adjectives, you get the progress of the sixties, perfectly delineated. It was not, by the way, a decade: The sixties were a strange episode of about 80 months' duration that started when the Baby Boom had fully infested academia (roughly the 1966-67 school year) and came to a screeching halt in 1973 when conscription ended and herpes began.

But I seem to have wandered from the point, not that there is one. Woodstock was an occasion of enormous pointlessness. I'm loath to give the *New York Times* credit for anything, then or now, but the newspaper did run the following editorial on Monday, August 18, 1969:

> The sponsors of this event, who apparently had not the slightest concern for the turmoil it would cause, should be made to account for their mismanagement. To try to cram several hundred thousand people into a 600-acre farm with only a few hastily installed sanitary facilities shows a complete lack of responsibility.

And *The Road to Woodstock* proudly quotes the editorial—further proof that Michael Lang's porch light may remain on, these 40 years later, but he's still not home.

"We shared everything," Lang gushes on page 4, and on page 226 he blithely notes, "There were two fewer Food for Love stands on Sunday. . . . Angry kids . . . fed up by the prices and the wait, burned them down Saturday night."

This be-in required some "Be All You Can Be." Lang, with utter deafness to irony, says, "A local politician requested that the National Guard . . . supply helicopters. The guard agreed, and their helicopters transported donated food." (And let us note that the National Guard also did a heckuva job at Kent State the following spring.)

"We recognized one another for what we were at the core, as brothers and sisters," Lang intones. But a music journalist, present at that core, described a wooden bridge between the performers' area and the stage as crossing "over the wall separating the stars from the main mulch."

Woodstock had a tremendous impact on American artistic life. "The lighting of candles," Lang says, "would set a precedent that carries on to this day. The candles became lighters, which have since become cell phones."

And Woodstock had deep political meaning: "Out of that sense of community, out of that vision, that Utopian vision, comes the energy to go out there and actually participate in the process so that social change occurs," said Abbie Hoffman, shortly before he killed himself. In the meantime Abbie had written a book, *Woodstock Nation*. Like everyone else I have never read it, but I've been to that country—overcrowded, muddy, lacking in food, and public order. It's called Bangladesh. (And wasn't there a concert that had something to do with that place, too?)

Abbie Hoffman was the source of the one amusing Woodstock anecdote. You'd think you'd get a lot of funny stories from filling a cow pasture with half-a-million adolescents. But no. The Who were playing. After "Pinball Wizard," Pete Townshend turned away to adjust his amplifier. Abbie rushed onstage, grabbed the microphone and began a political rant. Townshend "whacked him in the head with his guitar."

It was one of Pete's best licks. And here's another: "The people at Woodstock," the book quotes Townshend as saying, "really were a bunch of hypocrites claiming a cosmic revolution simply because they took over a field, broke down some fences, imbibed bad acid, and then tried to run out without paying the bands."

Ah, the bands, Woodstock did have all that wonderful music—Janis Joplin, Jefferson Airplane, Bob Dylan (not there), Joni Mitchell (also not there but wrote "We've Got to Get Ourselves Back to the Garden" after she heard about it later), Melanie (there but didn't write "Lay Down (Candles in the Rain)" until someone told her she'd been there).

Less well remembered, and for good reason, were the performances by Bert Sommer, the Keef Hartley Band, Sweetwater, a group called Quill playing a song called "That's How I Eat," and Country Joe McDonald without the Fish—a McDonald's Happy Meal missing the toy.

The show opened with three hours of Richie Havens. That's a lot of "Handsome Johnny," but no other performers had yet arrived. "How to follow Richie?" Lang asks himself. An idea dawns: "My old friend Peter Max ... had brought the swami." Swami Satchidananda was duly trotted onstage. Said Woodstock's other promoter, Artie Kornfeld, "He put a wave of peace out there." Tim Hardin played a set that caused the rhythm guitar player backing him to declare, "It was so disastrous that afterward I quit the music business for many years."

Say what you will against the crowd at Woodstock, they did not murder sitar virtuoso Ravi Shankar when he played "Raga Puriya-Danashri/Gat in Sawaritai," which, if it was as long as its title, must have tried the patience of even the most blissfully stoned.

John Micik, Judy Remo, August 15, 2009

There was the Incredible String Band "whose folk-psychedelic improvisations featured banjo, oud, mandolin." What fun! "Robin Williamson started the set by reciting a lengthy poem." Jerry Garcia of the Grateful Dead confessed, "Jeez, we were awful!" Grace Slick of Jefferson Airplane admitted, "I sang the goddamned songs with my eyes closed, sort of half asleep and half singing." Country Joe McDonald got reunited with his band "and everything was going really well," he said, "until Barry Melton, who was the lead guitar player of the Fish, brought two cases of beer in aluminum cans and started throwing them into the audience and hitting people in the head." About The Band, Lang says that "they didn't connect so well with the kids."

Graham Nash, of Crosby Stills, Nash and Young, opined, "I thought we did a lousy set." And the famous Jimi Hendrix performance took place at, of all times, 8:30 on Monday morning when everyone who was able to leave Woodstock had done so.

"Hendrix was okay. I had heard him better," said Nash.

Woodstock Revisited was edited by Susan Reynolds, author of, among other works, *Change Your Shoes, Change Your Life*. That cannot be a more idiotic book than this one. *Woodstock Revisited* is far too well described in its subtitle: "50 Far Out, Groovy, Peace-Loving, Flashback-Inducing Stories From Those Who Were There." Say no more. Please.

The 240-page paperback contains exactly one intelligent sentence, from a Jeremiah Horrigan, who asks, "Who invited Sh-Na-Na to the party?" It provides one insight into political liberalism, from a Linda W. Hamilton, who writes, "After the riots in 1968, I spent many hours in the D.C. ghetto tie-dying T-shirts for the neighborhood children." And it delivers one plea for new, fireproof drapes: "Woodstock ... ignited international change while weaving the value of countercultural ideals into the vibrant tapestry of modern life." That statement was made by a Dixon Horne, who now contributes articles to a magazine called *Mature Living*.

Duller even than *Mature Living* is *Woodstock: Peace, Music & Memories*. It is a photo book. Especially dull are the nude photos. Two facts are evident from these pictures. The gym had not been invented. And the ratio of boys to girls at Woodstock was of almost Castro District proportions.

Woodstock looks quite sad. At least the fellows on Castro Street didn't go there hoping to meet girls. Woodstock also looks drab, dated, and inspirational only in a "Every Little Bit Hurts" way. *Woodstock PM&M* is otherwise notable for this

GETTY IMAGES

thought in the foreword by Michael Lang's cohort, Artie Kornfeld: "That mud was like heavenly water washing away all that was wrong with the world at that time." In case you were wondering where the tranquil prosperity of the Reagan era came from. And do not look at page 199 where there are very, very scary snapshots of John Sebastian and Melanie as they look today.

And yet Woodstock is somehow apparently immortal. I speak here, of course, of the one great core contribution to our cultural heritage made by Woodstock: Snoopy's friend, the bird Woodstock, in the comic strip "Peanuts" which amazingly continues in syndication even though Charles M. Schulz is dead as a smelt. And so are Jimi, Janis, Abbie, Jerry Garcia, Max Yasgur, and a whole bunch of my brain cells. ♦

BCA

Gothic Tradition

The man who designed Victorian Britain.

BY EDWARD SHORT

In Disraeli's *Contarini Fleming* (1832), the hero is advised by his father: "Read no history, nothing but biography, for that is life without theory."

The notion that biography is superior to history because it is more faithful to life enjoyed a certain vogue in the 19th century. Emerson would go so far as to say, "There is properly no history, only biography." This was not entirely untenable: Biography can have an actuality that thesis-driven history lacks. Boswell's *Life of Johnson* may not put its subject in much historical perspective, but in capturing the minutenesses of the great lexicographer, poet, essayist, and critic, it captured the tone of 18th-century society far more reliably than the histories of Macaulay, Carlyle, or Lecky.

Yet, ideally, biography and history go hand in hand, and in *God's Architect* Rosemary Hill has written an admirably rich life steeped in history. In addition to delineating the development of Augustus Pugin's prodigious talent, Hill's narrative interweaves histories of English architecture and society at a time when "the railway and the Gothic revival, those two great Victorian enterprises, were gathering steam together."

God's Architect
Pugin and the Building of Romantic Britain
by Rosemary Hill
Yale, 656 pp., $45

One of her themes is how an inspired autodidact, scathingly critical of the architectural consensus of his youth, gradually brought his contemporaries around to sharing his vision of Gothic—a "sacred style," as Hill describes it, "infused with inner truth, an architecture that did not merely evoke 'pleasing associations' but that embodies, in its very fabric, a metaphysical, divine reality."

Another is how Pugin recovered from the Middle Ages principles which, when applied to his own buildings—including St. Chad's (1838) in Birmingham, St. Giles (1841-6) in Cheadle, Staffordshire, and St. Augustine's (1846-51) in Ramsgate, as well as the interior of the House of Lords (1847) and the wonderful clock tower (1852) of the Palace of Westminster (otherwise known as Big Ben)—helped him to go beyond "limitations of literal revivalism" to achieve a supple, eclectic, eminently inventive approach to the challenges of architectural design and use.

In Pugin's mature style, Hill writes, "Form and meaning, what an object was, how it was made and what it was made for, all were interwoven."

Born on Keppel Street in Bloomsbury in 1812, Pugin was the only child of the architect and drawing teacher Auguste Charles Pugin, and his wife, Catherine Welby. His father came to London from France and worked in the offices of John Nash, who would become one of Pugin's prime satirical whipping boys, synonymous with jobbery and false refinement.

If his father instilled in Pugin his skill in draftsmanship, his mother gave him his unflappable self-confidence, once remarking, "If he only knew how to dress I would consider him a universal genius." However brilliant, her son was a confirmed sloven, always preferring filthy sailor smocks to more conventional attire. Such anti-dandyism was sustained by extravagant pride in his putatively noble birth. He was convinced that his father had been "le Comte de Pugin," who fought for the king, and escaped from the Bastille, before sailing to England.

Hill treats this with a genial grain of salt:

> The legend of the émigré Count wandering the streets of London in his tricorn hat, with his muff and gold-topped cane, was handed down by pupils and passed into myth. It became entwined with the romance of the Gothic revival, where history and fiction mingle easily.

The great turning point in Pugin's life occurred when he made a tour with his parents of the Gothic architecture of Lincoln, York, Boston, Tattershall, Grantham, Peterborough, and Hull. There he beheld the Gothic that would ever afterwards epitomize for him a kind of lost childhood, a prelapsarian ideal of true faith and good order. Later, the precocious, bilingual Pugin would accompany his parents on visits to France, where he acquired his lifelong passion for antiquities.

After the French Revolution, which stripped so many nobles of their estates, bargains were ubiquitous. "In the first half of the 19th century it was possible," Hill remarks, "even with the limited pocket money of a 12-year old to buy world-class works of medieval

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art, for few people knew or cared about them." Many of the objects Pugin picked up for a song are now in the Victoria & Albert Museum, the British Museum, and the Metropolitan Museum in New York.

In 1832, while designing stage sets at Covent Garden, he met his first wife, Anne Garnet, an actress, who died one week after giving birth to their daughter. A year later, both his parents were dead. In 1833, he married Louisa Burton, another actress. About his hasty remarriage, Hill says this:

> To marry on the very day that his parents' effects were sold was a gesture of defiance. . . . The trauma of the twelve months that began with his first wife's death . . . and ended with his second marriage resonated throughout his life. He could never bear to look back at it directly, but the past, though he scarcely spoke of it, found expression, obliquely, throughout his work.

In Pugin's architectural preoccupation with the past, there was an abiding autobiographical element.

After the death of Louisa in 1844, Pugin fell in love in rapid succession with two beautiful women much younger than himself, both of whom first returned and then rejected his attentions, one because of his class and the other because of his religion.

"Those who never knew him," one colleague wrote, "may smile at his being able to fall in love again and again but it is the truth, he was always young through vitality and would be happy or miserable like a boy."

About his third wife, Jane Knill, whom he married in 1848 when he was 36 and she 21, he wrote a friend, "I have got a first-rate Gothic woman at last, who perfectly understands and delights in spires, chancels, screens, stained glass, brasses, vestments, etc."

For all his amorousness, however, Pugin was a contented family man and never the aloof paterfamilias: When six of his young children came down with measles (life-threatening at the time) he nursed each of them back to health. His domestic architecture, however, was not flawless: "I have made a horrid mistake in building this house," he complained of the Grange, his family home in Ramsgate. "There are no nurseries cut off from the rest the consequence is that living in a Pig market is less terrible the perpetual screams that proceed from every room in the house are distracting . . . incessant powerful screeching . . . oh dear."

In 1835, Pugin converted to Roman Catholicism, writing a friend: "I can assure you after a most close & impartial investigation I feel perfectly convinced the roman Catholick church is the only true one—and the only one in which the grand & sublime style of church architecture can ever be restored."

As this makes clear, his conversion—a particularly bold one for any Englishman to make 12 years before John Henry Newman went over to Rome—was inspired as much by aesthetics as faith. His journals document his impatience with the more easy-going Anglican Church, noting in one entry how "Rev. Wm. Cooper wore top boots & white breeches on Sunday," and "I can see the time . . . rapidly approaching when there will be only the catholick & the infidel: the power of the church of England is rapidly on the decline."

Still, what is remarkable about Pugin's faith was how reticent he was about it. "Of the interior, spiritual experience of these months," Hill observes, "Pugin himself, who was not by nature introspective, said nothing, and there is nothing that a biographer can properly say either."

This is true: Pugin was never shy about castigating those who did not share his principles—he was particularly vituperative towards Robert Smirke and Charles Cockerell, the architects, respectively, of the British Museum and the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford—but when it came to articulating his faith he was mum, preferring to let his buildings speak for him, which was just as well, because on the few occasions that he did try to describe his faith, he baffled most English Catholics.

For Pugin, Catholicism had little to do with Rome, nothing to do with the pope, and everything to do with rood screens. In light of these eccentric views, it is not surprising that Newman should have looked askance at Pugin—though he was never impervious to the brilliance of his work. About St. Giles, Cheadle, one of Pugin's most dazzling works, Newman wrote: "The chapel is on entering a blaze of light. I could not help saying to myself, Porta Coeli."

In 1835 Pugin met the architect Charles Barry, with whom his name will always be linked. It was on the strength of Pugin's drawings that Barry won the commission for the rebuilding of the Palace of Westminster after it burned down in 1834. Once it was time to begin work on the interior, Barry recognized (as Hill points out) that "he could not possibly design Gothic detail of the quantity and quality required and in so many different media. Nobody except Pugin could."

Barry pleaded with Pugin to help, and Pugin agreed. "Thus began a commitment that lasted, and he often felt, blighted, the rest of his life." Because of his Catholic faith, which posed problems for England's Protestant Establishment, Pugin's role in the collaborative work was always kept quiet. Consequently, "The nature of his employment made it invidious from the beginning for both Pugin and Barry. It ensured that while Pugin would never in his lifetime get the credit he deserved, Barry would always be suspected of owing him more than he did."

Still, the results of Pugin's contribution were magnificent. The House of Lords, the Peers' Lobby, and Big Ben are some of the loveliest things in all of English architecture.

In 1836 Pugin published *Contrasts*, the success of which helped launch his architectural career. In this rollicking polemic Pugin contrasted the England of John Nash with medieval England, to show how inferior the former was. In thus attacking what Hill calls "the world of the Regency, that Vanity Fair of stucco-fronted manners, high taste and low principles," Pugin argued what William Cobbett had argued in *Rural Rides* (1830): that the English

Reformation had robbed the English of their traditional faith and traditional liberties. In the 1830s and '40s, when the country was reeling from the Industrial Revolution and the First Reform Bill, such critiques commanded serious consideration. Afterwards, as Hill shows, a more liberal consensus took hold.

> The England of Prince Albert and the Great Exhibition did not feel the romantic pull of the olden times so strongly. The dream of 'reunion' with Rome that had faded through the 1840s now vanished. Between the Evangelical and High Church parts of the Established Church, a Liberal, Broad Church movement was emerging anxious that England, having escaped the Continental revolutions of 1848, should now avoid the reaction to those revolutions which has seen the Catholic Church reassert itself already in Belgium and Austria, as it would soon in France.

In 1845, the year of Newman's conversion, Pugin built a grim, barracks-like structure for the Catholic seminary at Maynooth outside Dublin, but after this his architectural commissions dried up, and he did much of his later work in textiles, wallpaper, furniture, and stained glass.

Of these piecemeal commissions, Pugin complained: "This is all very well if one is architect to the whole job but architect to one grate or one fireplace is worse than keeping a fish stall." Still, even if Pugin never was given the freedom or the scope he needed to develop his genius fully, his output remains impressive. (Readers looking for a good guide to his work as a whole should track down Paul Atterbury and Clive Wainwright's *Pugin: A Gothic Passion*, published in 1994, which accompanied the first major exhibition of Pugin's work at the Victoria & Albert.)

When Pugin and his brilliant collaborators showed their Medieval Court at The Great Exhibition (1851), it was an unexpected success. "No other designer," Hill writes, "embodied Pugin's vision of home and hearth and God. It was a vision that appealed powerfully to the mid-Victorian mind."

Proof of the vindication of his principles could also be seen in the fealty he commanded from such leading lights of the Gothic Revival as Gilbert Scott, George Street, and William Butterfield, as well as from William Morris and members of the Arts and Crafts Movement—although John Ruskin, who insisted that the Gothic had nothing to do with Catholicism, belittled Pugin in *The Stones of Venice*. When a family member asked Pugin what he thought of Ruskin, the architect replied: "Let the fellow build something himself," and returned to his work.

In 1852, after putting the final touches to the great clock tower for the Palace of Westminster, which recalled his first commission in 1837 for Scarisbrick Hall, Pugin remarked, "I am the machinery in the clock." Thereafter, he grew increasingly psychotic and in September, at the age of 40, he died mad, probably of syphilis contracted when he worked in the theater.

Of the early 19th century, Hill observes: "These were years of revivalism in the positive sense, not of nostalgia or lack of confidence in the present but a time when for many the past was experienced as a living source of inspiration from which England could regenerate itself, like Arthur come to life again."

This creative understanding of the past was one of Pugin's greatest legacies, and *God's Architect* is a worthy celebration of its abundant fruit. ♦

Royal Throne in the House of Lords

ANGELO HORNAK / CORBIS

The Liberal Paradox

Why Lionel Trilling's 1950 classic remains essential reading in 2009. **BY JAMES SEATON**

This reissue by New York Review Books is welcome news for anybody who cares about literary criticism—and literature. Lionel Trilling, more persuasively than any critic of the last century, articulated to the educated public why and how literature is related to life and, obliquely, to politics.

In his preface, Trilling memorably asserted the importance of literature as "the human activity that takes the fullest and most precise account of variousness, possibility, complexity, and difficulty." Literature thus serves as a necessary corrective to the simplifications of any and all political doctrines—one of the reasons why Plato banned the poets from his ideal republic.

The Liberal Imagination
by Lionel Trilling
Introduction by Louis Menand
NYRB Classics, 320 pp., $15.95

Trilling, however, focused on the relationship between literature and liberalism, both because he was himself a political liberal and because, in 1949, it was easy to believe that "liberalism is not only the dominant but even the sole intellectual tradition" in the United States. He found a "characteristic paradox" about liberalism; its goal "of a general enlargement and freedom and rational direction of human life" seems unambiguously admirable, and yet in practice it leads to "a denial of the emotions and the imagination."

Trilling did not take issue with what he identifies as the characteristic liberal attitudes: "a ready if mild suspiciousness of the profit motive, a belief in progress, science, social legislation, planning, and international cooperation, perhaps especially where Russia is in question," even asserting that "these beliefs do great credit to those who hold them." Yet these beliefs are mysteriously connected to other attitudes that do no great credit to anybody.

Finding "no connection . . . between our liberal educated class and the best of the literary mind of our time," Trilling argued that it was liberalism, not "the literary mind," that needed to change. Liberals proudly favor "social legislation" supposed to help the poor, yet Trilling observes that liberalism seems incapable of acknowledging the full humanity of poor people: "We who are liberal and progressive know that the poor are our equals in every sense except that of being equal to us."

That feeling pity for others often involves and even feeds a feeling of unearned superiority in oneself is a moral complication likely to be ignored by politicians more interested in amassing votes than in questioning the motives of voters. Writers anxious to speak for the poor but without access to "the deep places of the imagination" are no help, either; Trilling observes that "the literature of our liberal democracy pets and dandles its underprivileged characters" but nevertheless—or therefore—fails "to make them more than the pitied objects of our facile sociological minds."

In contrast, a great writer like Henry James, speaking for no one but himself, succeeds in *The Princess Casamassima* in representing "the poor as if they had dignity and intelligence in the same degree as people of the reading class." Trilling finds the special distinction of James's fiction in what he calls its "moral realism," a quality that has little to do with political attitudes and much with imaginative depth. Trilling refers to it as James's "particular gift of human understanding," a gift that allows him in *The Princess Casamassima* to imagine individuals like the radical leader Paul Muniment, in whom "a genuine idealism coexists with a secret desire for personal power."

Surveying the literary scene at mid-20th century, Trilling makes an observation that seems equally true today:

> We have the books that point out the bad conditions, that praise us for taking progressive attitudes. We have no books that raise questions in our minds not only about conditions but about ourselves, that lead us to refine our motives and ask what might lie behind our good impulses.

To those who answer that what lies behind is unimportant as long as the impulses are good, Trilling answers that it is imperative that we become "aware of the dangers which lie in our most generous wishes," since "the moral passions are even more willful and imperious and impatient than the self-seeking passions." But if even "genuine idealism" is no guarantee of moral soundness, how can we learn to distinguish between what only makes us feel good about ourselves and what is truly good?

Trilling's answer is the cultivation of "the moral imagination" through the study of literature, and particularly the novel: "For our time the most effective agent of the moral imagination has been the novel of the last two hundred years." In placing such reliance on the "moral imagination," Trilling pays tribute to Edmund Burke, who famously insisted in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* that the radicals' "new conquering empire of light and reason" would end in tyranny and barbarism unless supplemented by "a moral imagination, which the heart owns, and the understanding ratifies."

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Burke's prescient warning was ignored by fellow Whigs like Charles James Fox and Americans like Thomas Jefferson, who expected a new world of "liberty, equality, fraternity" but instead got the Reign of Terror and Napoleon.

For Trilling, the most striking instance of the failure of the liberal imagination was its refusal to imagine that any movement whose professed goal was the end of all injustice and inequality could possibly be guilty of serious moral crimes rather than mere errors or mistakes. Communists, whatever their excesses, at least had noble ideals, unlike Nazis, fascists, or for that matter, supporters of the British Empire or American capitalism.

Today, communism seems to have lost most of its power to fire the imagination, but one does not have to look hard to find movements whose moral absolutism leaves their adherents no room for the kind of "moral realism" Trilling found in James's novels. Meanwhile, a significant current in contemporary liberalism, as in Trilling's day, finds it difficult to imagine that any opponent of the United States could possibly be guilty of more than excusable errors, since it is American military and economic power that is the source of all real evil in the world.

It is not unreasonable to assume that some approximation of that last sentiment is endorsed by many (though by no means all) readers, contributors, and editors at the *New York Review of Books*, so the *New York Review* deserves special commendation for making *The Liberal Imagination* available in a new edition.

Yet this new edition has a complicating factor: A reader must choose whether to read the essays in the spirit encouraged by Trilling's own preface, or as instructed by Louis Menand's new introduction. Trilling hoped that his criticism would succeed "not in confirming liberalism in its sense of general rightness but rather in putting under some degree of pressure the liberal ideas and assumptions of the present time."

Louis Menand assures his readers that no such reexamination is necessary. According to Menand, Trilling believed in the obsolete notion that "there are more less politically hygienic works of literature, and the function of criticism is to identify them and to explain why they tend to have good or bad political consequences." This idea is outdated because (again according to Menand) "since the 1960s . . . cultural taste has largely been liberated from politics" so that nowadays "educated people tend to be culturally promiscuous and permissive." Trilling's ideas about the "moral imagination" and "moral realism," unmentioned in Menand's introduction, have become retrograde and may be safely ignored.

Lionel Trilling, 1952

TIME & LIFE PICTURES / GETTY IMAGES

What one should take away—the "more difficult lesson of the way Trilling treats literature in *The Liberal Imagination*"—is the awareness "that there is no stable point outside a culture from which to critique it." Although Menand calls this the "more difficult lesson," it turns out that it is not so difficult after all. It is "something that is easy to see once you look at culture in the way anthropologists do." So it is this "anthropological perspective" that is the real insight to be gleaned from Trilling's work. It is "the most valuable piece of his intellectual legacy" despite, or rather because, it makes one skeptical of "the critical program for which he became celebrated."

Menand claims to be praising Trilling, but if the truly valuable lesson to be learned from *The Liberal Imagination* is the "anthropological perspective," one wonders why one would go to a literary critic rather than to the anthropologists themselves. But why bother even with them? Menand's "more difficult lesson" is a mere corollary of the general proposition that "truth is relative," a notion that almost all students absorb even before they get to college, as Allan Bloom observed with some disapproval in 1987.

Lionel Trilling believed that the "moral imagination" as expressed in literature could, indeed, provide a basis for criticizing and questioning political and social movements, including those that seem so unambiguously righteous as to be beyond criticism. Louis Menand is confident that today "educated people tend to be culturally promiscuous and permissive," so that concepts like the "moral imagination," "moral realism," and even "literature" seem outdated.

If Louis Menand is right, *The Liberal Imagination* goes against the grain in the 21st century even more than when it was first published in 1949—and is even more necessary. ♦

Perpetual Motion

Merce Cunningham, 1919-2009.

BY NATALIE AXTON

Merce Cunningham might be the only American artist to have remained avant-garde, even cool, for almost a century. This extraordinarily inventive choreographer, who died late last month at 90, possessed a vision that bridged expressionist modern dance and classical ballet. His career has been celebrated with honorary degrees and awards, including the National Medal of Arts and France's Legion of Honor; he created a self-sufficient modern dance language that changed the course of dance history. Without Merce Cunningham there would be no Paul Taylor, no Trisha Brown, no Mark Morris.

Born in Centralia, Washington, he began his dance studies in tap, enrolling at the Cornish School in Seattle, where he began modern dance training with Bonnie Bird, a onetime Martha Graham dancer. At age 20 Cunningham came to New York to dance with the Martha Graham Dance Company, where he was a talented performer known for his unusually high jump. He stayed with Graham for five years, and then began to work on his own; by 1944 he had produced an evening of solos that won the admiration of dance's preeminent critic, Edwin Denby.

Integral to Cunningham's development was his relationship with the composer John Cage. Cunningham first met Cage at Cornish where, in 1938, he served as Bonnie Bird's musical director. The two reconnected in New York, and Cage encouraged the shy, younger Cunningham to choreograph. Cunningham and Cage, who died in 1992, became one of the most celebrated artistic—and personal—partnerships in theater history.

Together they formulated a creative method based on "chance operations" and a philosophy of the independence of the theater arts: Choreography, music, and set pieces were created separately and joined just hours before a premiere. Cunningham made his dances in silence; sequences were ordered according to the role of the dice, or the flip of a coin. Dancers learned the timing of the choreography with the aid of a stopwatch.

Merce Cunningham, 1967

In 1953 he formed his Merce Cunningham Dance Company. The painter Robert Rauschenberg—and later, Jasper Johns—joined the Cunningham-Cage creative team. A 1964 world tour brought the company international acclaim. Recognition abroad was always easier than respect at home: To this day the French remain the Cunningham Dance Company's most ardent fans.

Merce Cunningham's choreography is radically formal. The movement is the basic ballet vocabulary expanded to incorporate the modern dance articulation of the torso. A Cunningham extension of the leg *á la seconde* might see the torso tilt away from, or towards, the raised leg; an arabesque can extend through the upper body, taking the back parallel to the floor. The torso can be arched, straight, or curved well forward. The *port de bras* can be square or rounded; jumps can have either a modern weightiness or balletic *ballon*.

This is ballet made gyroscopic.

"Chance operations" inspired Cunningham because they freed him from mental habit. Still, there is much of his personality in the overall design. Cunningham's dances are dense with witty phrasing and references to both ballet and pedestrian movements. *How to Pass, Kick, Fall and Run* (1965) remixes the universal lightheartedly, and the tightly counterpointed duets of *Ocean* (1994) are reminiscent of August Bournonville, the 19th-century Danish ballet master. There are moments of great beauty, but the music is challenging and the work is not for everyone.

Innovation, technology, and collaboration were the bedrock of Merce Cunningham's career. He did not shy away from computer technology. He created a motion-capture program, DanceForms, which served as a choreographic aid, and which became a set element in *Biped* (1999), his finest late work. The score for *eyespace* (2004) was installed on iPod Shuffles. *Nearly Ninety* (2009), his last work, was a collaboration with the architect Benedetta Tagliabue and musicians John Paul Jones, Takehisa Kosugi, and Sonic Youth, the rock band.

Cunningham was incessantly in motion. He performed with his company until 1989 and was its prolific choreographer, creating over 200 works. He employed chance operations to mix repertory into new dances, which he called "Events." Some of his works were adopted by the major ballet companies, and he completed several commissions for the Paris Opera Ballet. The Merce Cunningham Dance Company plans to close after a two-year world tour, and the organization will evolve into an administrative trust.

Above all, students from around the

GETTY IMAGES

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world flocked to his penthouse studio in the Westbeth Building. In his later years he was cherished for his charmingly eccentric routine: After a breakfast of oatmeal and a physical therapy session, he would listen to a recorded bird call or two. He went to the studio and sketched before beginning the day's choreographic work. On Mondays he taught company class, which was streamed live on the company's website, merce.org. Anyone could tune in to see Merce Cunningham in his wheelchair, teaching youngsters how to move. ♦

B&A

No Harm Done

The origins of modern medicine in the Greek healing arts. **BY SUSANNE KLINGENSTEIN**

Greek family sacrificing a bull to Asklepios, 5th-century B.C. votive relief

THE GALLERY COLLECTION / CORBIS

Mania, *cholera*, *nausea*, *dyspnea*, *apnea*, *asphyxia*; *lipophilia*, *tachycardia*, *thrombocytopenia*. If medical terminology seems all Greek to you, the delightful George L. Banay, erstwhile medical librarian at Worcester State Hospital, confirms your diagnosis: "The Hippocratics," he wrote in his still-useful 1948 introduction to the Greek and Latin derivations of medical terms, "were the first to describe diseases based on observations, and the names given by them to many conditions are still used today."

Latin speakers came late to the feast. Only a quarter of medical terms are of Latin origin (*fossa*, *fundus*, *hernia*). If only the great Aelius Galenus of Pergamon (129-200 A.D.) had written his 200 known essays, running to three million words, in the language of the superpower, Rome, rather than in the language of philosophical learnedness, Greek, things might have turned out differently. Yet even the magnificently expansive and innovative Galen was an epigone of sorts, because much of the structure of how to think about medicine had been put in place by his Greek precursors.

Asklepios, Medicine, and the Politics of Healing in Fifth Century Greece
Between Craft and Cult
by Bronwen L. Wickkiser
Johns Hopkins, 192 pp., $55

In this delightfully concise and accessible book, Bronwen L. Wickkiser, who teaches classics at Vanderbilt, unfolds the complexities of Greek medicine. The Hippocratics were not the first, and then not the only, game in town. They emerged only in the fifth century B.C., focused on observation in order to arrive at a prognosis, and were therapeutic conservatives. They recommended dietetic measures always, *pharmaka* rarely, and surgery hardly ever. It is easy to recognize their ruling principle at work here—"First, do no harm"—an adage that, strangely, we tend to remember in Latin rather than in Greek: *Primum non nocere*.

The puzzle, as Wickkiser sees it, is that parallel to the emergence and unfolding of a *iatrike* (medicine) that searched for causes in nature rather than among the Olympians, the cult of Asklepios experienced an unprecedented surge in popularity. Asklepios, the son of Apollo and a mortal woman, was trained by the centaur Chiron and made his first appearance in the *Iliad*. There the Greeks revere him and his sons Machaon and Podaleirios (whom he trained as he trained in his skills) for their ability to treat difficult wounds.

When Machaon himself is wounded, Idomeneus, rushing to save him, exclaims: "A doctor is worth many other men!" Those were the days.

Homer did not consider Asklepios divine, but in the course of human events, Asklepios ascended to the stature of a healing god. Sanctuaries were established, the most important of them at Epidauros, and visited by pilgrims afflicted predominantly with chronic ailments: blindness, deafness, baldness, paralysis, infertility, insomnia. The supplicants would sleep in the temple, hoping that Asklepios would appear to them in a dream and perform a medical procedure or prescribe a therapeutic regimen.

Why did observation-based *iatrike* and faith-based healing experience a simultaneous surge in fifth-century Greece? We should not be terribly surprised, since in the absence of antibiotics even the rationally inclined *iatroi* (doctors) could effectively do very little. Trauma surgery had already evolved

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into its own discipline and was practiced by manually skilled surgeons. Hence the Hippocratic Oath, a kind of buyer's guarantee that no irreversible harm will be done to patients, makes the *iatros* (whose major assets are astute observation and deductive acumen) declare: "I will not cut for stone, even for patients in whom the disease is manifest; I will leave this operation to be performed by practitioners, specialists in this art."

Fifth-century philosophically trained physicians knew how little they knew. They also knew that, in order to attract new customers, they had to keep their mortality figures low. Modern hospitals are familiar with that idea. Hence the Hippocratic *iatroi* decided that they would not treat chronic and incurable cases. As Wickkiser points out, it's important to see this not only as a shrewd business decision. As medicine established itself as a profession, it was important to delineate what it could and could not accomplish so that patients would be able to distinguish the skilled practitioner from the snake-oil vendor and charlatan. The trained physician would acknowledge the limits of his art (*techne*) and skill (*sophia*).

The more professionalized and established observational medicine became, the more patients would find themselves turned away by physicians. Those were the ones whose last resort were the temples of Asklepios. Against older theories, Wickkiser brilliantly shows how the two approaches to healing can rise to power simultaneously: When skill fails, faith prevails. Temples are the refuge of those unwilling to give up.

Had Wickkiser stopped here, this would have been a short, clear book on a fascinating facet of Greek medicine complete with the obligatory (in this case rather gentle) academic assassination. The victims here are Emma and Ludwig Edelstein, whose massive two-volume work on the cult of Asklepios appeared in 1945 and dominated the field until now. Wickkiser reproaches them for having based their interpretation of the cult on literary evidence alone while ignoring the artifacts on the ground.

The Edelsteins were German Jews who left Germany for America as soon as Emma finished her doctorate at Heidelberg in 1933. They were hardly in a position to traipse around Greece during World War II.

Wickkiser himself then adds a rather sterile reading of Athenian ruins, and shows in the process how a perfectly fine scholar gets his brain addled and his writing scrambled when he succumbs to the temptation to be hip by adopting the lingo of progressive academia.

In 420 B.C. the Athenians, then at war with Sparta, had the bright idea to import the cult of Asklepios from Epidauros, a city that controlled access to the Peloponnese and was thus of strategic importance to Athens. Epidauros was the target of repeated Athenian attacks during the Peloponnesian war: "That the Athenians chose to memorialize the cult's Epidaurian origins in the name of another festival of Asklepios integrated into the Eleusinian Mysteries (the Epidauria)," Wickkiser explains, "suggests that Athens imported the cult as a way of securing the good will of Epidauros during the Peace of Nikias."

Perfectly fine. But Wickkiser then launches into a meticulous "reading" of the Acropolis as a demonstration of Athenian dominance whose individual components "share in the reflective text of empire published across the Acropolis." It is at this point, as Wickkiser tries to combine his interpretation of the fancy new location of the cult of Asklepios on the Acropolis with an obligatory critique of empire-building, that the book falls apart.

That's a shame, because for so many pages it is a pleasure to accompany Wickkiser on his textual discoveries, and in his leisurely rambles around the ruins that were denied the valiant Edelsteins. ♦

BCA

Der Führer's Face

Hitler gets what's coming to him: Quentin Tarantino.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

To begin with, a caution. There is no way to write honestly about Quentin Tarantino's new movie, *Inglourious Basterds*, without revealing its gobsmacking concluding twists. So if you want to see the movie unspoiled, do not read further.

I am giving you one more chance to turn back. No? Then here goes. At the climax a Boston Jew in the guise of an Italian cameraman riddles Adolf Hitler with machine-gun fire until the Führer is a bloodied, mangled, unrecognizable corpse.

Inglourious Basterds
Directed by Quentin Tarantino

John Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, *is* The Weekly Standard*'s movie critic.*

The year is 1944, the month July. Hitler is attending the premiere of a movie in a theater in Paris. As Hitler is being massacred, the theater is set ablaze by its owner, a hidden Jewess named Shoshanna who has become the object of a celebrated Nazi soldier's desire, and her lover, a black man. Everyone dies.

The killing of Hitler and his inner circle has been made possible through the courtesy of a Nazi colonel named Hans Landa, nicknamed "the Jew Hunter." A man of immense cultivation and murderous instincts, who we have just watched strangle a traitor to death, Landa has figured out the plan and taken its designer, a former Tennessee moonshiner named Aldo Raine, into

custody. Rather than saving Hitler, Landa has Raine, who is the leader of the platoon that goes by the misspelled name of the title, radio American headquarters to secure him a full pardon, a house in Nantucket, and a Congressional Medal of Honor. Which he does.

Thus, *Inglourious Basterds*. Quentin Tarantino has done something incredibly nervy here and, from a storytelling point of view, something that even I, a confirmed Tarantino hater, must confess is kind of brilliant. If there is one unassailable rule of historical pictures, it is that they must conform to the historical narrative in the broadest sense. In other words, you can't kill Hitler a year early. You can have Hitler travel to Paris after 1944, when he never did so. You can have Hitler interrogate a fictional character, as Tarantino has him do. You can stage a battle that never happened. But you cannot change history's timeline.

But then again, who says you can't? Who made these rules? That was the startling narrative insight of the writing team of Bob Gale and Robert Zemeckis in 1985 when they conceived *Back to the Future*. They allowed a character to change something in the past and then discover, upon returning to the present, that he had actually made everything better. Before *Back to the Future*, time-travel pictures featured the iron law that any change in the past would only have calamitous consequences. This is something everyone watching *Back to the Future* knew, even without knowing they knew it—and so the joyous final five minutes proved to be the most blissful twist in movie history.

Tarantino has done *Back to the Future* one better. He hasn't just changed the past for one suburban kid by turning his loser father into a winner; he has altered history itself to give one of its most monstrous events a cinematic happy ending. He has made a World War II movie in which Jews kill Hitler and the German high command, during which the Inglourious Basterds go marauding through France, torturing and slaughtering German soldiers and stirring fear and terror in every Nazi breast.

Because of what happens at its climax, there need be no Battle of the Bulge, no final year of the war; the millions of Jews who died in the camps between July 1944 and the war's actual end survive; and even when the Nazis get away with it, they don't, thanks to Aldo Raine. He carves swastikas into their foreheads so they can never hide from public condemnation.

The question *Inglourious Basterds* raises is whether what Tarantino has done here is even remotely acceptable—as pop art, as a pop culture document, as anything. Does ending the war in 1944 serve to erase the sacrifices made by so many to end the war in actuality in 1945? Does it make a mockery of the continuing genocide to pretend there was an earlier conclusion to it?

Eli Roth, Brad Pitt

FRANCOIS DUHAMEL / TWC 2009

Taken literally, as though Tarantino were Oliver Stone trying to rewrite the facts of the Kennedy assassination to suit his own conspiratorial idiocy, *Inglourious Basterds* is so offensive that it beggars one's vocabulary to find words to condemn it. Tarantino has traveled beyond the bounds of bad taste into a new realm of tastelessness. But this is too harsh. For what Tarantino has produced here is not to be taken literally, at least not once the picture has sprung its surprise and revealed that everything we are seeing is taking place in an alternate universe.

Tarantino displays no interest in, or much knowledge of, World War II, Nazism, the conduct of the U.S. Army in the European theater, the Jewish people, or anything else. He exists in a world entirely bordered by the movies he grew up watching on television and then on videotape during the decade he famously spent as a clerk at a video store. And with *Inglourious Basterds*, he hasn't made a movie about World War II. He has made a movie about movies about World War II, about movies about Nazis, and about movies that offer satisfying revenge fantasies. The occupied Paris we see bears no relation to any Paris that ever existed; it's the Paris of *An American in Paris*, only with Nazis in it.

As a result, one doesn't watch *Inglourious Basterds* in a state of rage, or at least I didn't. Rather, I was open-mouthed at its conclusion, akin to the first-night theatergoers aghast at the opening of *Springtime for Hitler* in *The Producers*. But I was not only open-mouthed at the wholesale revision of history; I was also open-mouthed because Tarantino pulled off something entirely new, and for breaking the narrative mold and pulling off a spectacular trick, he deserves some credit for originality.

I have seen so many movies in my life, and written about so many of them, that I am nearly impervious to surprise. But Tarantino fooled me. Now that you have read to the end of this piece, he won't have been able to fool you if you choose to go see *Inglourious Basterds*. You will be able to judge, better than I, whether it should be protested and reviled for its misuse of history or whether it is, finally, so demented that it can be enjoyed on its own terms.

I think it can. But I'm not sure. ♦

"Yet Obama was clearly hoping for the type of confrontational questioning that would allow him to dispel false claims. At one point, he practically begged for tougher questions."
—Washington Post, August 15, 2009

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT OBAMA / Town Hall, Aug. 25, 2009

that socialism as a model for health insurance reform isn't as bad as you think. So what I am saying is, please ask me the toughest questions you can think of. I dare you. How about you? The gentleman in the camouflage jacket. You look like a Republican. Ask away.

Q: First of all, Mr. President, I just wanted to say it is an honor to have you visiting our state. We have nothing but absolute respect for what you are doing. But I am concerned about health care and so I am going to ask you a tough question. Do you think illegal immigrants deserve treatment in our hospitals and emergency rooms?

THE PRESIDENT: Is that it?

Q: Yes, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Really? Because I was hoping you were going to ask something tougher, like about my own illegal relatives living in this country or my immigrant background, if you know what I mean. After all, I did spend much of my youth in Indonesia, a hotbed of Islamic fundamentalism. And I have yet to produce an authentic birth certificate to quiet all those "birthers." Why do you think that is? Anyone? How about you?

Q: Mr. President, we all know you are an American. A great American. But do you ever regret taking on such a large task as health insurance reform?

THE PRESIDENT: Again, you're throwing me a softball. Yes, sometimes I feel overwhelmed about taking care of the 47 million uninsured Americans out there. But I have to try. You know, there is this saying in Islam … Yes, I am bringing up Islam, a religion I know much about from my time spent in madrassas in Indonesia. I know some of you wonder if I am a Muslim. Am I?

Q: Over here, Mr. President. I just want to say it doesn't matter what religion you are. But I wonder how much of a role religion plays in your life?

THE PRESIDENT: A big role. Huge. Ever since I started paying attention to the stirring sermons of my very good friend Reverend Jeremiah Wright, religion has played a major role in my life. It has also governed my politics. I may even believe the chickens have come home to roost.

Q: We know you don't mean that Mr. President. We're with you 100 percent.

THE PRESIDENT: But did I mention the time I was having coffee with one of my closest confidants, Bill Ayers? And the time he took me to his basement and showed me what he was building? And how he asked me to hold these wires together while he assembled some sort of nuc-

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