the weekly Standard

DYSFUNCTIONAL OBAMA
FRED BARNES • ANDREW B. WILSON

JUNE 14, 2010 $4.95

RIDE ALONG WITH MITCH

. . . from the Indiana statehouse to the White House?

BY ANDREW FERGUSON

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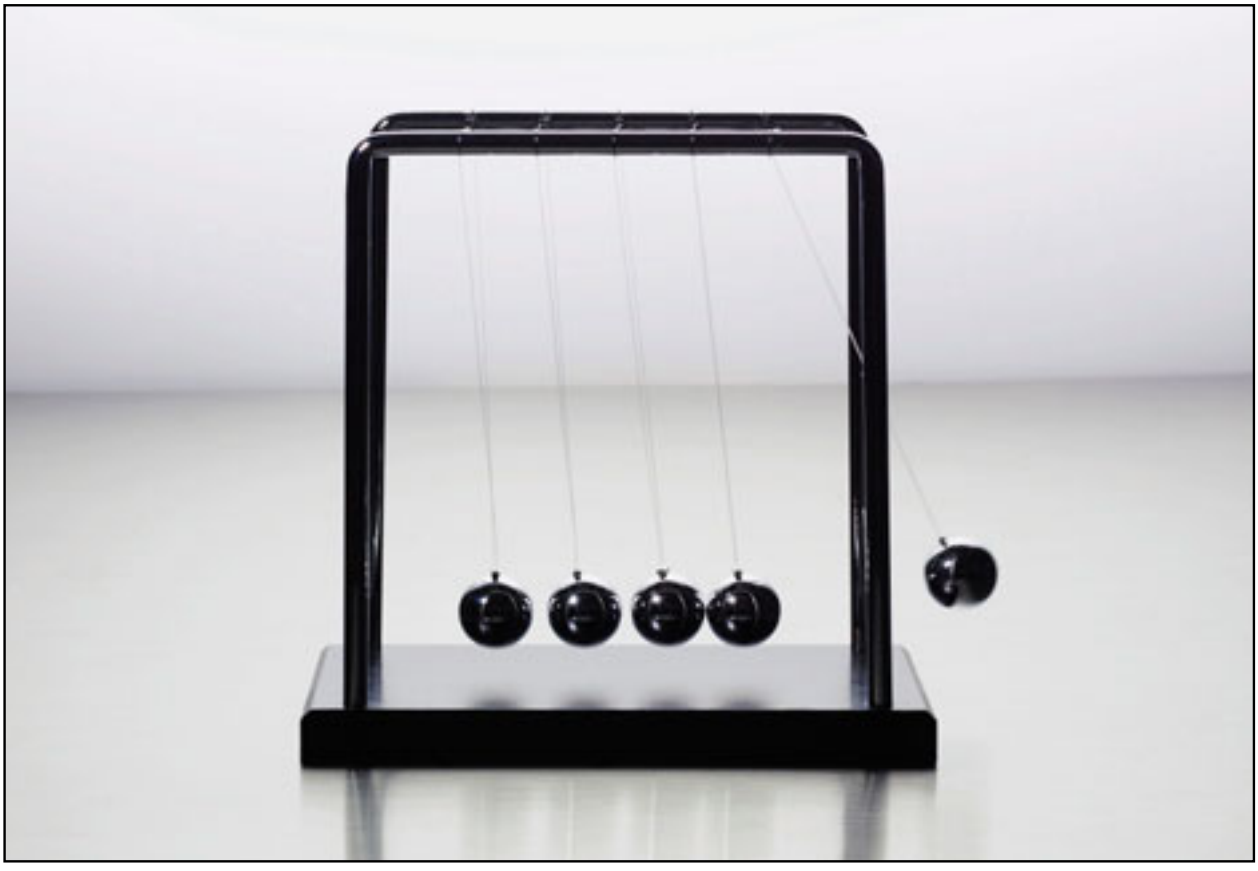

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Does anyone read "how to" books to learn to walk, run, or ride a bicycle? Is anyone taught that it is by conforming to natural laws that one learns to perform those feats? No, of course not! *Whoever or whatever created natural laws* had to wait centuries on end for people to identify natural laws by studying the environment and nature's phenomena.

Richard W. Wetherill
1906-1989

There is a natural law of behavior that was not identified until the past century. It was identified by Richard W. Wetherill and requires ***mankind's behavior to be rational and honest***, according to natural law—not according to man-made law.

Wetherill spent decades trying to explain that the social, health, and economic woes of mankind were being caused by everybody's ignorance of nature's behavioral law: a law he called the law of absolute right.

His talks and writings were rejected by leaders of the educational, religious, and scientific communities, although one psychologist built a wide reputation on Wetherill's command phrase technique for releasing wrong, unconscious thoughts.

In general, people resent being told what they can and cannot think, say, and do. Their reason seems to be that it is "their business": a mistake made by those who overlook where the gift of life originates. ***Whoever or whatever is the creator*** arranged all the details, thereby enabling people to procreate.

Introduction to the ***law of absolute right*** and its influence on behavior is vital information desperately needed by every member of society.

Strange as it might seem, it could be said that the only choice people have is whether they will live in accord with the requirements of natural laws or die for ignoring them. People willingly adhere to the laws of physics, telling them what to think, say, and do. Scientific researchers eagerly seek to understand how natural laws function and the penalties for ignoring them. But to date, their failure to acknowledge nature's ***law of absolute right*** and its impact on human affairs is perpetuating countless human miseries.

The behavioral law is nature's way to create a community of survivors that having resolved their formerly unsolved problems and trouble are enjoying a new life. A common comment of those persons is, ***"It works."***

For example, one person reported that he had made friendly overtures to a long-time estranged, close relative and introduced him to the ***law of absolute right***. Later this person reported a phone call from his formerly estranged relative who said, "It works."

We invite readers to face all future situations with *sincere intent* to respond rationally and honestly, no matter what past reactions might have been. In that moment you will have yielded to yet another natural law created by ***whoever or whatever is the creator***, and you will discover that it works.

By conforming to the behavioral law, you join others who are already benefiting from adhering to it with rational and honest thoughts, words, and action.

Visit our colorful Website www.alphapub.com where essays and books describe the changes called for by whoever or whatever created nature's law of absolute right. The material can be read, downloaded, and/or printed free. Also press a button to listen to each Website page being read aloud with the exception of the texts of the seven books.

This public-service message is from a self-financed, nonprofit group of former students of the late Richard W. Wetherill. We are putting this information where it is available worldwide, and we invite your help to direct others to our Website so that they, too, can learn that conforming to this natural law creates a life that truly is well worth living.

BRADLEY PRIZES

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2010 BRADLEY PRIZE RECIPIENTS

The Bradley Prizes will be presented on June 16th at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C.

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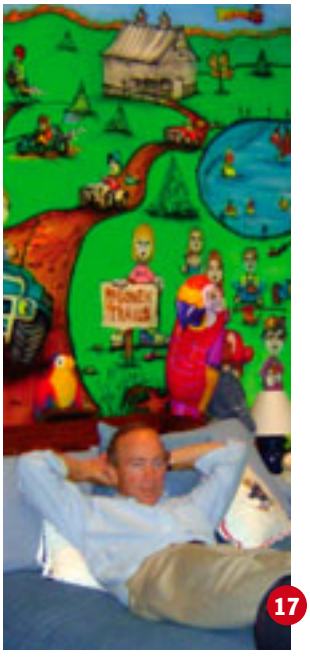
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COVER BY GARY LOCKE

Property in the Balance

The Scrapbook has no official observation on last week's surprise announcement that Al and Tipper Gore have separated after 40 years of marriage. Other than the obvious, of course: namely, that it is never good news when a marriage which has endured for four decades comes to an end by way of press release; and presumably, the Gores will be seeking a divorce. In which case, since their four children are grown, there will be some mutually agreed-upon division of assets and property before any final decree.

Which brings us to our friends at the *Washington Examiner*, who provide an interesting accounting of the Gore family holdings. Before he left public office in January 2001, Vice President Al Gore's family net worth was estimated to be in the range of a million dollars. Six years later it was thought to be somewhere in the vicinity of $100 million—an impressive jump, even by the standards of Bush-era prosperity.

But what really widened The Scrapbook's eyes was the list of residences owned and inhabited by the former

The Gore manse, Nashville

Second Couple. Just a few weeks ago the Gores purchased a 6,500-square-foot villa in the gated community of Montecito, California, featuring five bedrooms and nine baths, a spa, swimming pool, and ocean view (price: $8.8 million). This was in addition to their multimillion-dollar mansion in Nashville's exclusive Belle Meade neighborhood, a Tudor-style house in the Washington suburb of Arlington, Va., the famous Gore family farm in Carthage, Tenn. (where young Al used to "plant, raise, cut, and dry" tobacco), a condominium in San Francisco, and a 100-foot houseboat called *Bio-Solar One*.

Far be it from The Scrapbook to begrudge anyone enjoying the fruits of their labor—or procuring enough space to house their Shaker furniture and stamp collection. But by our rough calculation, the eco-minded, empty-nested, Nobel laureate Gores seem to occupy something well in excess of 20,000 square feet of planet Earth, with all the attendant electrical outlets, sewerage hook-ups, gas mains, labor-saving devices, land lines, water pipes, light bulbs, heaters and air-conditioning units, ranges, microwave ovens, computer paraphernalia and Internet connections, assorted motors, compressors, generators, and crankcases—not to mention the cost of transportation between the houseboat and the condo, Arlington and the farm, or Christmas in Belle Meade followed by New Year's in Montecito.

Surely, that's a carbon footprint worthy of Al Gore's stature, and it ought to keep the family lawyers busy for awhile. ♦

Kass Acts

Two who reside high on the (short and selective) list of people The Scrapbook really admires—Amy and Leon Kass—are retiring at the end of this term after nearly three and a half decades of teaching at the University of Chicago. They are being showered with appropriate honors—Amy is receiving the Norman Maclean Faculty Award for outstanding contributions to teaching at the alumni convocation on June 5, and students from around the country are coming to Hyde Park to celebrate and express their gratitude to the Kasses at a reception on campus.

For those who won't have been in

Leon and Amy Kass

Chicago, and who may not be direct students of the Kasses, there's still a chance to learn from and about them, and to honor them, in a different way: Acquire the volume of essays that's just been published by Rowman & Littlefield, *Apples of Gold in Pictures of Silver: Honoring the Work of Leon R. Kass*. The book features, along with an invaluable bibliography of Kass's works, 16 essays whose "consistently high quality . . . makes this volume a fitting tribute to a stellar thinker and gifted teacher" (as our colleague William Kristol observes in his blurb).

Some of the contributions deal with Kass's own work—notably, the essays by frequent TWS contributors Eric Cohen, Yuval Levin, and Paul McHugh. Others address varied writers and thinkers in diverse but always insightful ways: You'll read Homer, Sophocles, Jane Austen, and Henry James differently (and better!) after

GORE, THE TENNESSEAN; KASSES, NEH

pondering Amy Kass on the *Odyssey*, Paul Ludwig on *Antigone*, Adam Schulman on *Pride and Prejudice*, and Harvey Mansfield on *Washington Square*. It's a spectacular festschrift, assembled for a remarkable thinker and teacher. And while you're at it, pick up a copy of the marvelous anthology edited, appropriately, by both Kasses: *Wing to Wing, Oar to Oar: Readings on Courting and Marrying*.

The Scrapbook is pleased to join in the celebration of both of the Kasses' achievements. ♦

Flying Pigs Alert

A rare tip of The Scrapbook's homburg to the editors of the *Washington Post* for a pungent attack on the all-Democratic Montgomery County, Md., board and its free-spending, public union-coddling ways:

> The cozy ties between elected officials and public employees unions in Montgomery have formed the backdrop for a drumbeat of reports about county employees' bountiful benefits, perks and abuses. . . . More than half the officers who retired recently from the police force left claiming "severe disabilities," some of them dubious, entitling them to huge taxpayer-funded benefits for life. Veteran firefighters may retire at age 46 and continue working for three years while simultaneously accruing pension payments that increase at a taxpayer-guaranteed rate of 8.25 percent annually, regardless of market performance. Meanwhile, Montgomery's teachers union has wielded such outsized electoral clout that politicians who received the teachers' endorsement in the most recent elections reached into their pockets and wrote checks to the union. As far as we know, this occurs nowhere else in America. ♦

The Potemkin Condo

"The itinerary said 'rural village,' but we were actually in a suburb. A *nice* suburb. It looked like a small slice of Northern California had been transplanted onto the outskirts of Dalian, China. . . . This nice little suburb, it turned out, had been built in 2006. And like a lot of things in China, it was built all at once, on top of a village that already existed. The obvious question with this sort of rapid development is what happens to the people who had the shack that sat on the land where the government wanted to put condos? The answer, at least in Dalian, was that they bought the previous inhabitants off. A conversation with some residents revealed that they didn't just get one free apartment in the new building. They got *four* free apartments, three of which they were now renting out. And medical coverage. And money for furnishings. And a food stipend. And—I'm not kidding, by the way—birthday cakes on their birthdays. Sweet deal." (Ezra Klein of the *Washington Post*, on a journalists' tour of China sponsored by the China United States Exchange Foundation.) ♦

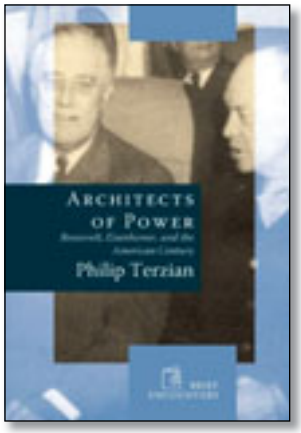
Credit Where Due

In our cover story on the relocation of the holdings of the Barnes Foundation to Philadelphia ("An Act of Vandalism," Lance Esplund, May 31, 2010), image credits were missing for Henri Matisse's *Seated Riffian* on page 17, *The Dance* on pages 18 and 19, and his *Joy of Life* on page 28. The credit in each case should have read: © 2010 Succession H. Matisse / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. ♦

Buy This Book!

The Scrapbook is feeling like a proud parent again, and this time in honor of our literary editor,

Philip Terzian, whose fascinating study—*Architects of Power: Roosevelt, Eisenhower, and the American Century*—has just been published by Encounter Books ($19.95). At 116 pages, *Architects of Power* is just long enough to take an authoritative look at an endlessly interesting subject, and just brief enough to be suitable for beach reading.



Terzian's thesis, in a nutshell, is that the historical reputations of Ike and FDR are at odds with the reality of their lives and careers, and that what they did and believed—as "architects" of America's rise to global dominance—still resonates in the 21st century. It's a biographical study of two vital (and seemingly dissimilar) figures in our history, an unconventional treatment of America's superpower status, and not least, an object lesson for the present day.

It is also written, THE SCRAPBOOK hastens to add, with our colleague's characteristic elegance, skill, and humor. But don't just take THE SCRAPBOOK's word for it; here's what presidential historian Richard Norton Smith has to say:

> The volume may be slender, but the ideas with which it grapples are as large as the American Century. This shrewd, persuasive double portrait captures two of the century's most influential—and elusive—leaders. Moving beyond stale debates over FDR's health at Yalta and the subtlety of Ike's Cold War policies, Terzian recasts each man as an architect of the world we inhabit. Compelling history, gracefully written and hard to put down. ♦

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Don't Touch That Dial

In the rather optimistically titled *Making the "Terrible" Twos Terrific!* (1993), child psychologist John Rosemond wrote,

> The newborn, lacking any other frame of reference, relates all early experience to himself, and himself alone. From his point of view, the world came into being at the moment he opened his eyes; therefore, the act of opening his eyes was the act of creation. It follows, from his point of view, that he reigns over all things, which exist for him and because of him. Amen.

But later a cruel reality sets in. Inevitably it dawns upon the child that he is not at the center of the universe after all. His parents are not always at his beck and call. The resulting frustration then leads to whining, tears, and full-blown tantrums, making the "terrible" twos horrific. (Rosemond does offer prescriptions, but I can't tell you what they are since in all honesty I haven't read the book—just that excerpt, which my wife read aloud to me the other night.)

I may be unusual in this, but I actually remember the moment when the realization that I wasn't the center of the universe occurred to me, around the age of three or four. I was watching a rerun of *The Brady Bunch* on our wood-paneled Zenith (this was in the 1970s) when I decided to turn the set off. Then a little later I switched it on, only to discover the program was no longer the same—this was back when you had to get up from the couch and turn a dial. To my surprise, the episode did not pick up where I had left it off. (How on earth did Bobby and Cindy manage to find their way out of the Grand Canyon with nothing but a flashlight filled with baked beans?)

Back then, if you missed your show, you missed your show. But this all changed with the advent of the videocassette recorder. Suddenly you could enjoy going out on a Friday night without worrying about missing *The Dukes of Hazzard*. Then came TiVo in 1999, followed by a series of other digital video recorders. There is no longer any need for those stacks of cassette tapes. Your digital television box now serves as a computer, storing loads of information in its hard drive, recording multiple shows with the greatest of ease. Not only that, but while watching television, if you happen to miss a vital clue on *CSI* or the possibility that January Jones had a brief wardrobe malfunction, you can instantly hit the rewind button and replay the interesting moment (or, ahem, pause it).

MATT COLLINS

All this has implications. When my two-year-old son is watching, say, *Jack's Big Music Show* and wants to see the puppet band perform the same number again and again, conceivably, he can. At night, if he feels like watching a morning program, this too is possible. In other words, he can still think of himself as being at the center of the universe, at least when it comes to seeing what he wants on television, when he wants it.

Except that my wife and I have decided not to put the DVR at our son's disposal. "Can I see that train again?" is met with the response, "No, the train is gone," or, "Sorry, we don't control these things." When he asks, "Can I watch *Blue's Clues*?" we reply, "No, that show is on in the morning, and it's night time now." Slowly but surely, our son has come to accept that he does not command all things. Just his baby sister.

Of course these are merely delaying tactics. Eventually technology will gain the upper hand. It always does. In fact, we've become so accustomed to instant gratification, whether it be On Demand television programming or downloaded music from iTunes, it's as if we've turned into overgrown versions of the babies John Rosemond described.

But so it goes. The children will no doubt brush off my warnings about the socially decaying effects of technology. Their eyes will roll when I tell them about the olden days when we used to have to get up from the couch to change channels—all 12 of them—and had no call-waiting on our telephone. (On a sidenote, my parents to this day do not have call-waiting. Their main telephone, a wall-mounted multi-line Western Electric model 2851, is a collector's item. Somebody please collect it.)

A few years ago, a friend of mine told me about the time he was playing with his daughter who had a toy cell phone. She pretended to take a picture with it. "Now, Caroline," he reminded her, "you know that's a phone, not a camera." His wife replied, "Well, actually … "

Victorino Matus

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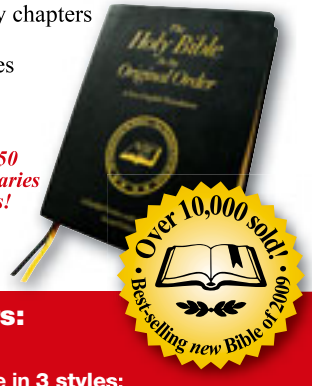

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the weekly Standard

In Praise of Blockades

The Royal Navy's blockade of Napoleon, most famously led by Lord Nelson, protected England from invasion and laid the groundwork for the liberation of Europe. Lincoln's blockade of the South helped win the Civil War, preserve the Union, and end slavery. John F. Kennedy's blockade of Cuba forced Khrushchev to withdraw nuclear weapons from that island and contributed to the eventual successful outcome of the Cold War.

The history of blockades by free nations is an honorable one. Israel's blockade of Hamas-run Gaza—a blockade that, unlike some of the above, permits the delivery of humanitarian and civilian aid—stands in that tradition. It preserves a tenuous peace in the short run. And it may result in the liberation of Palestinians from Hamas's dictatorship, and prevent their exploitation by a terror-supporting Iranian regime, in the longer run.

Israel withdrew from Gaza almost five years ago. Three years ago, Hamas took over in a military coup. Since then, Israel and Egypt have blockaded Gaza to prevent weapons from reaching Hamas, which has launched missiles into Israel and which is committed to the killing of Israelis and the destruction of the state of Israel. Last week, Hamas sympathizers sought to break the blockade. Israel acted to stop them. It has nothing to apologize for. The blockade prevents Hamas, and its backer, Iran, from triggering a larger war from Gaza. It isolates Hamas and allows for continued progress on the West Bank. Israelis live in (relative) safety. The people of Gaza continue to have access to the necessities of life.

Nelson, Lincoln, Kennedy, Netanyahu

NETANYAHU: NEWSCOM

The Palestinian Authority owes Israel thanks for keeping Hamas at bay. The Palestinian people owe Israel thanks for weakening Hamas. The Arab states owe Israel thanks for controlling Hamas and curbing Iranian influence. The Europeans owe Israel thanks for denying Iran a port on the Mediterranean.

Israel will not receive public thanks from any of these entities. Nor, it appears, can Israel expect a full measure of understanding and support from the government of the United States, which one would have hoped would be less timid than the Palestinian Authority, less intimidated than the Palestinian people, less hypocritical than the Arab states, and less sanctimonious than the Europeans.

But the United States these days is under unusually timid, intimidated, hypocritical, and sanctimonious leadership. Such a failure of leadership is not just disappointing. It is dangerous. According to one reliable reporter of the administration's views, writing in the *Washington Post*, "The Obama team recognizes that Israel will act in its interests, but it wants Jerusalem to consider U.S. interests, as well. The administration has communicated at a senior level its fear that the Israelis sometimes 'care about their equities, but not about ours.'"

This shows the Obama administration does not understand U.S. interests and equities. And it shows the administration does not understand that its pathetic desire to split the difference between the forces of civilization and the forces of terror simply emboldens our enemies—*our* enemies, not just Israel's enemies. Our weakness makes the world more dangerous. The forces of civilization retreat.

What can be done? Congress can speak for America. Congress can stand with Israel, expressing support for Israel's right to defend itself. And Congress can act. Congress can demand that we pull out of the farcical U.N. Human Rights Council, and can deny the use of any U.S. funds for the biased, Alice-in-Wonderland-type "investigation" authorized by that council in a resolution that already includes a condemnation "in the strongest terms" of "the outrageous attack by the Israeli forces." And for that matter Congress could authorize the shipment of weapons and materiel to Israel to help enforce the blockade.

But it is not just a matter of congressional resolutions and pressure on the Obama administration. American political leaders can speak up. We survived the Carter presidency partly because men like Ronald Reagan and Scoop Jackson gave our friends hope a better day was ahead.

The dispute over this terror-friendly flotilla is about more than policy toward Gaza. It is about more than Israel. It is about whether the West has the will to defend itself against its enemies. It is about showing (to paraphrase William Gladstone) that the resources of civilization against terror are by no means exhausted.

—William Kristol

The Times They Are a-Changin' . . .

But Obama isn't

BY FRED BARNES

When the White House sent word to Senate Republicans on May 21 that President Obama wished to come to their weekly lunch the next day to talk about bipartisanship, Republicans agreed. But they were baffled. Just the day before, a story on the front page of the *Washington Post* had cited the successful efforts by the Obama administration to kill bipartisan agreement on the recently passed bill to stiffen regulation of financial markets.

The president was unabashed. He told Republicans he needed their help—their bipartisanship—on seven pieces of legislation on subjects ranging from immigration to energy to a "jobs" bill. It was, Republican senators later noted, not so much an appeal as a lecture.

Senator Bob Corker of Tennessee, who'd sought to negotiate a bipartisan financial reform bill, was among the first to question Obama. Corker started by recalling the "warm relations" they'd had when Obama was a senator.

"Still do," Obama replied, according to Corker.

But the cordiality vanished as Corker continued. He told Obama there was "a degree of audacity in your being here today."

"What's your question?" Obama interrupted.

"My prologue is not long," Corker replied. He asked the president to "show me the respect . . . of listening to all of it." Then he mentioned the *Post* story on how the White House tried "to keep [bipartisanship] from happening."

Obama was asking for bipartisanship from Republican senators, but he had rejected it on financial reform, health care, and the economic stimulus. "How do you reconcile that duplicity?" Corker asked Obama.

The president's response was meandering. It reminded Corker of Obama's inconclusive 17-minute answer to a question about tax increases at a town hall meeting in early April. It was, Corker said, "a nothing answer."

Obama's appearance was a failure. Republican senators weren't appeased. They couldn't understand why he would appeal for bipartisanship as if he were actually pursuing it. He was talking to people who he surely realized knew better. He appeared to be oblivious, unaware, uninformed.

But Obama's real problem is that the era of hope and change is over, and he hasn't adjusted to it. He's confronted by a debt crisis, the oil spill, and high unemployment. These are front-burner issues a president is expected to address seriously and on which he'll be held accountable. Yet Obama is still stuck on his old agenda. And he dwells on sentiments like bipartisanship that no longer resonate.

It's as if he's relying on note cards from the early days of his presidency (nearly 17 months ago). Meanwhile, the world has moved on. When the world changed for FDR, he switched from "Dr. New Deal" to "Dr. Win the War." Obama hasn't switched. He's still "Dr. Enact My Agenda."

At his press conference on May 27, Obama exploited the oil spill to tout his energy and global warming legislation. Cap and trade would "jumpstart a permanent transition to a clean energy economy," he said. Fine, but how about dealing with the economy we have now?

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION / THE WEEKLY STANDARD

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Last week at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, he touted small steps he's taken to aid the economy. But that was peripheral to the larger point of his speech, captured by *USA Today* with its headline, "Obama Urges Expansion of Agenda."

Even the media, curtailing their worshipful phase, have figured out that Obama is underperforming. But their explanation, that the president lacks passion, is beside the point. What's required from Obama is strong leadership and effective crisis management. He's offered neither.

As the spill continued to gush oil into the Gulf of Mexico, Louisiana governor Bobby Jindal sought approval from Washington to construct 24 sand berms to protect coastal marshlands. The state's congressional delegation backed the idea and Republican representative Steve Scalise, whose district is near the coast, called the White House to speak to Obama about the request. He heard back from a junior aide.

Obama could have approved the berms instantly with a phone call. Instead, he allowed Jindal's urgent appeal to get mired down in the bureaucracy. At his press conference, he said:

> When I met with [Jindal] when I was down there two weeks ago, I said I will make sure our team immediately reviews this idea, that the Army Corps of Engineers is looking at the feasibility of it, and if they tell me that this is the best approach to dealing with this problem, then we're going to move quickly to execute it. If they have a disagreement with Gov. Jindal's experts as to whether this would be effective or not, whether it was going to be cost-effective, given the other things that need to be done, then we'll sit down and try to figure that out.

That's the explanation of a president not given to decisive leadership. It took two weeks for a single berm to be approved. Later five more were.

Obama isn't giving up his old rhetoric, straw men, or inaccurate anecdotes either. He went out of his way to attack Republicans in his Carnegie Mellon speech, invoking the straw man of those who believe "that government has little or no role to play in helping this nation meet our collective challenges." Makes you wonder why he'd want to do bipartisan deals with them.

And no matter how many times Obama's tales are knocked down, he never lets go. "When I went to meet with [House Republicans] about the need for a Recovery Act, in the midst of crisis, they announced they were against it before I even arrived at the meeting," he said at Carnegie Mellon last week. He didn't mention that the Democratic stimulus bill—in effect, his bill—had been introduced the day before. Republican input: none.

Who'd have thought Obama would be so inflexible? A new reality sets in and the president declines to recognize it. "He's doing what he wants to do instead of dealing with the country as it is today," says Corker. Obama proceeds on this course at his peril. ♦

Arrogance in the Executive

What the oil spill has revealed about the Obama presidency.

BY ANDREW B. WILSON

Real leadership means never *having* to say you're the boss. There is no surer sign of weakness and insecurity than the repeated assertion of your own power and authority. This truth has somehow eluded Barack Obama. Hence the unending (and off-putting) self-puffery in his recent presidential press conference.

Again and again, the president felt obliged to remind us of the centrality of his own position in responding to the Gulf oil spill, as if this would counteract the horrible pictures of thousands of gallons of oil gushing out of the ocean floor. Quoth the president:

> The American people should know that from the moment this disaster began, the federal government has been in charge of the response effort. . . .
>
> Make no mistake: BP is operating at our direction. Every key decision and action they take must be approved by us in advance. . . .
>
> There has never been a point during this crisis in which this administration, up and down the line, in all these agencies, hasn't understood that this was my top priority. . . .
>
> It is my job to make sure that everything is done to shut this down.

All of this is wildly over the top. No one blames Barack Obama for the Gulf oil spill. No one is asking him to swim down and plug the hole. Nevertheless, his response to the crisis is revealing. It points to several deeply troubling aspects of the Obama presidency.

Most striking is his unbounded faith in government—and an equally unbounded faith in his own abilities as a self-proclaimed transformational leader. Then there is his contempt (not too strong a word, in my judgment) for the private sector. Government, he seems to think, is a supermagnet for supersmart idealists from academia, while the business world is populated by dullards motivated by a crass and shortsighted desire for profit.

Obama apparently believes that government should be able to stop all man-made disasters before they happen. "As we continue our response effort," he said, "we're also moving quickly on steps to ensure that a catastrophe like this never happens again." In fact, nei-

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ther he nor anyone else can "ensure" any such outcome, unless he proposes to call an end to all of the progress that has been made since the beginning of the industrial revolution, if not before.

There is no way to guarantee that accidents will not happen as long as people are people, and as long as some of the most creative and imaginative among us continue to push the envelope in engineering and scientific disciplines—whether it is human flight, the exploration of space, hunting for oil in deep water, the development of new forms of energy, or the construction of awe-inspiring bridges or buildings.

President Obama at the beach in Port Fourchon, Louisiana, May 28

My favorite observation on engineering comes from Frank E. Mosier, formerly a top executive at Standard Oil, because it recognizes both the possibility of greatness and the impossibility of perfection. In a commencement address at the University of Pittsburgh School of Engineering in 1989, Mosier said, "All engineering is glorified failure analysis, and great feats of engineering are nothing more than successful bets that your ideas will be more economical or efficient or beautiful without being disastrous."

It is a pity the same kind of failure analysis—subjecting every assumption to rigorous testing and scrutinizing all the ways in which a grand design might fail to deliver the desired result—is rarely if ever applied to major social legislation. The passage of the hastily conceived and sloppily written health care bill ranks as an obvious example.

The blowout in the Gulf occurred in "ultra deep water." Drilling for oil at a depth of a mile or so below the surface became economically feasible about a decade ago, when the price of oil shot up above $20 a barrel. Still, it was a considerable technical challenge to go from deepwater drilling (depths of about 1,000 feet) to ultra deep (5,000 feet).

Until the explosion on April 20 that destroyed the Deepwater Horizon rig, oil companies had experienced only one significant spill in drilling hundreds of wells in the Gulf over a period of more than 60 years, including many in ultra deep water. It has taken just one disaster to call an exceptionally good safety record into question. After the eventual postmortem, we may decide that wisdom dictates a long moratorium on ultra deep water drilling. *Or not*. It may be possible to learn quickly from whatever mistakes were made in this instance and move on.

In his analysis of the situation, Obama has been quick to blame this disaster on the supposed sins of free enterprise and private companies seeking private gain, the public be damned. Without citing any evidence of wrongdoing, he talked about the "oil industry's cozy and sometimes corrupt relationship with government regulators" and how that has meant "little or no regulation at all." Clearly, it does not occur to him that the oil companies have a powerful motive to *self-regulate*—in light of the physical threat to their own workers and the huge potential damage to the long-term viability of their companies that awaits anything less than an exceptional safety performance.

In thinking so poorly of business and business people, it may be only natural for Obama to look upon himself and his friends from academia as being—well—a cut above the ordinary (and quite possibly corrupt) people doing actuarial work for insurance companies, or toiling in the engineering departments of companies like BP. This holier-than-thou, smarter-than-everyone-else ivory tower elitism has unfortunately become a defining element of the Obama presidency.

Perhaps because it was so far-fetched—so bizarre even—few of the reporters covering the May 27 press conference picked up on the fact that Obama seemed to favor the idea of the federal government going into the business of marshalling the technology needed to fix the oil industry's mistakes. "For now," he disconsolately noted, "BP has the best technology, along with the other oil companies, when it comes to actually capping the well down there." But in the future, he said, it might make sense for the government to take direct charge of such operations.

Twice he lauded the contribution that Energy Secretary Steven Chu, a Nobel Prize-winning physicist, could make to recovery efforts in the Gulf. Never mind that Chu is known for his research in cooling and trapping atoms with laser light. These are the president's exact words: Chu "brought together a team, basically a brain trust, of some of the smartest folks we have at the National Labs and in academia to essentially serve as an oversight board with BP engineers and scientists in making calculations about how much mud could you pour down, how fast, without risking potentially the whole thing blowing."

In the mind of this president, there seems to be nothing that government cannot do. ♦

SIPA PRESS

A Predictable Crisis

Europe's single currency was bound to break down. BY MARTIN FELDSTEIN

The current crisis of the European single currency was an accident waiting to happen. The adverse consequences of imposing a single currency on a disparate group of countries were initially hidden by the short-run advantages that the weakest countries enjoyed when they adopted the euro in 1999—and by the favorable global economic conditions that prevailed until 2008. But we now see very serious problems affecting both individual eurozone countries and the overall single currency system.

Many economists warned of these dangers even before the euro was adopted. (My own analysis, first published in the *Economist* in June 1992, predicted many of the problems that I will spell out here.) The euro's political proponents did not understand the likely adverse economic consequences of its adoption, or even care about them. They wanted the single currency as a way of achieving stronger political cohesion in Europe, going beyond the free trade agreement of the European Union toward a full political union.

A country that retains its own currency is certainly not guaranteed problem-free growth and low inflation. There is no substitute for monetary and fiscal discipline and for sound financial regulation and supervision. Even with the best of country-specific policies, problems will occur. But accepting membership in a single currency system exposes a country to four basic problems that would otherwise be avoided.

First, a single currency means a single monetary policy, denying individual countries the chief means of dampening business cycles and reducing the unemployment caused by declines in local spending. A monetary policy that is best for the eurozone as a whole will be excessively easy in some countries, causing house price bubbles that eventually collapse with substantial damage to individual wealth and overall employment.

Second, a common currency means that every eurozone country has the same exchange rate, preventing the natural rate adjustments that maintain national competitiveness when there are different trends in productivity and demand. Germany has an enormous trade surplus because of the strong growth of its labor productivity and because of the rapidly rising demand for German equipment in countries like China. If Germany still had the mark, the currency would have appreciated in response to these developments. The rise in the mark would have limited the trade surplus and, by lowering the cost of imported products, would have raised the real incomes of German workers. Similarly, the decline of Greek productivity relative to that of other countries would have caused the Greek drachma to decline, preventing Greece's enormous trade deficit. It was obvious before the euro was adopted that such chronic trade problems would arise and persist.

Third, membership in the currency union encourages countries to have large fiscal deficits. When a country with its own currency issues large amounts of government debt, the financial markets gradually raise the interest rate on that debt and may also cause the value of the currency to decline. These market responses are a warning that the deficit is becoming excessive. But because eurozone members borrow in euros, the excessive deficit of any one country has only a very small effect on the total supply of euro bonds and therefore on the overall interest rate and euro exchange rate. Until the risk of default by Greece (and others) became substantial, the markets regarded all euro denominated government bonds as essentially equal, implying very small interest differentials among the eurozone countries. As a result, Greece could (and did) borrow large amounts with impunity.

Fourth, the lack of a country-specific exchange rate makes it very painful to reduce excessive fiscal deficits, something that many of the eurozone countries must now do. The large cuts in government spending and large increases in tax collections necessary will reduce the GDP of those countries and cause substantial unemployment. If the countries were not members of the eurozone, they could allow the values of their currencies to fall at the same time. The resulting increase in exports and reduction in imports would raise GDP, reducing the decline in economic activity caused by the fiscal contraction and helping to maintain employment.

In the years before the introduction of the euro, the common reaction to this critique was: Why should Europe not be able to operate with a single currency when the United States, an equally large and equally diverse area, is able to do so? There are four fundamental differences that allow the United States but not Europe to overcome the problems associated with a single currency.

First is the mobility of labor. The rise in the unemployment rate in an individual U.S. state or region in response to a decline in demand for local products is limited because people are quick to move to other parts of the country where jobs are more available. Powerful forces in Europe preclude the development of labor mobility. The most obvious of these is language. But even within a single country like Germany, strong regional allegiances impede the

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flow of workers from one part of the country to another. Union memberships, pension systems, and religious differences also impede cross-border mobility.

The second difference is that wages are much more flexible in the United States than in Europe. A fall in demand for the products of a U.S. region causes a decline in local wages. That lowers production costs in that region which in turn dampens the fall in sales of the affected products and induces a more general increase in the demand for labor in the region. Such wage flexibility reduces the need for expansionary monetary policy. The flexibility is reinforced because wages in the United States are set by individual employers with none of the national or industry-wide wage bargaining seen in Europe and because less than 10 percent of the private sector labor force is unionized.

The third important difference between the United States and Europe is that income taxes are primarily collected by the central government in Washington while in Europe the equivalent taxes are paid to the individual national governments. Each dollar's decline in the GDP of a particular U.S. state causes a fall of about 30 cents in the taxes paid from that state to Washington, an automatic fiscal policy that helps to stabilize local output and employment.

The final difference is that each U.S. state has a constitutional rule preventing sustained deficits. State constitutions also prohibit using borrowed funds for operating expenses. Debt financing is limited to spending on infrastructure. Some states accumulate surpluses to use in years of reduced revenue; others allow operating budgets to be balanced over a two-year period rather than in a single year. But the net impact of the constitutional rules is to prevent the kind of massive deficits and debt at the state level that have occurred in individual European governments. Even California's budget deficit is now only 1 percent of its state GDP.

Despite the fundamental problems, the first decade of the euro was quite successful. The operational transition from national currencies to the euro was smooth. The European Central Bank (ECB) resisted political interference and achieved a very low target rate of inflation—less than 2 percent. The new currency was widely accepted by international investors, causing the value of the euro to rise relative to the dollar and other currencies.

The success was due not only to the very favorable global economic environment but also to the immediate benefits enjoyed by those countries that had previously had high inflation and to the gradualness of the cumulative adverse effects of a single monetary policy and a fixed exchange rate.

For Greece, Italy, and other countries that had previously had high interest rates because of a tradition of high inflation, joining the euro caused sharp declines in interest rates. That induced substantial increases in public and private borrowing that financed spending that stimulated economic activity. But the accumulated effect of that borrowing is the large deficits and debts that now face Greece, Italy, Ireland, Portugal, and other eurozone countries.

In the United States wages are set by individual employers with none of the national or industry-wide bargaining seen in Europe, and less than 10 percent of the private sector labor force is unionized.

The ECB's management of monetary policy for the eurozone as a whole created excessively easy monetary environments for some countries. More specifically, in the early years of the euro, when the economies of Germany and France were relatively weak, the ECB kept interest rates low in order to stimulate demand in those countries. The resulting easy monetary conditions led to housing booms and house price bubbles in Ireland, Spain and other countries that eventually burst. The collapse of housing construction in those countries contributed to a sharp rise in unemployment rates.

The individual countries joined the eurozone at exchange rates that at the time were considered appropriate to balance imports and exports. But Germany's productivity grew more rapidly than productivity in other eurozone countries, its wage increases were limited by tough public and private policies, and the demand for its high-tech products was stimulated by the very rapid growth of China and other Asian countries. As a result, Germany now has a current account surplus of 5 percent of GDP. At the other extreme are countries like Greece in which wages have grown relatively fast despite slower growth of productivity and of export demand, leading to a Greek current account deficit of 7 percent of GDP. These countries will now be forced to accept large reductions in wages and incomes in order to shrink their trade deficits, a very much more painful way to achieve real devaluations than would be possible with an adjustable exchange rate. Differences in productivity trends and in global export trends mean that this will be a recurring problem.

Shrinking the large fiscal and trade deficits may be unacceptably painful. It is not clear that democratic governments will tolerate years of decline of GDP and of real personal incomes. In the end, those governments may choose to default on their debts through a formal restructuring or by substituting new and less onerous debt for existing bonds. If the pain involved in regaining and sustaining a competitive real exchange rate is too large, they may choose to leave the eurozone so that they can devalue.

The creation of the single currency eurozone has been an ambitious, politically motivated experiment. Many of the problems that have now occurred as a result of abandoning country-specific monetary policies and individual exchange rates were anticipated by economists but ignored by politicians. It remains to be seen whether the political pressure to continue building a more centralized federal Europe will induce the eurozone countries to continue to accept these adverse economic consequences. ♦

After Tiananmen

Survivors of the crackdown take a new direction.

BY DAVID AIKMAN

For the scattered and exiled dissidents of China's student democracy movement, brutally crushed by the Chinese army on June 4, 1989, the annual commemorating of the Tiananmen incident has faded with the passing years. Things have moved on in the world. Younger American reporters were still in grade school when Chinese army troops and tanks smashed their way into the center of Beijing. The Chinese government itself has done an able job of consigning "June 4" to the national memory hole. Chinese students arriving in the United States are disbelieving when they first watch news videos of the crackdown. Few of them are even aware that there was an "incident."

At least five of the "21 Most Wanted" list of the government of China after the massacre have turned to the Christian faith for answers. Zhang Boli, No. 14 on the list, who escaped from China after being on the run for two years, is now the pastor of a Chinese church in Northern Virginia. Xiong Yan, No. 20, is now a U.S. Army chaplain and served for a year in Iraq. But the most remarkable convert to Christianity is one of the most prominent of the Tiananmen students, Chai Ling, No. 4 on the list and the "Chief Commander" of the students. Chai Ling, 44, was nominated twice for the Nobel Prize for attempting to change China's political system and became prominent in the U.S. news after she filed a defamation suit against the makers of a TV documentary about her role in the democracy movement. She is also something of a posterchild for the success of former Democracy Movement students now in exile.

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She was on the run inside China for ten months before escaping in April 1990 with the help of Buddhist sympathizers—first to Hong Kong, then France, and finally to the United States. She earned a master's degree in international affairs at Princeton University and then got an MBA from the Harvard Business School. She married a coworker from a consulting company, and the two founded a highly successful software corporation, Jenzabar Inc.

While attending a congressional human rights hearing on China in November 2009, Chai Ling heard a Chinese female witness, identified only as "Yujuan" from Shandong Province and screened to protect her identity, narrate the wrenching tale of having her baby chopped up by scissors in her own womb during a forced abortion. Yujuan, it turned out, had become pregnant without a birth permit. Chai Ling was shocked into a total change of direction. The forced abortion story was her conversion moment.

She met the human rights activist Reggie Littlejohn, a San Francisco-based immigration lawyer who had founded an organization called Women's Rights Without Borders. Littlejohn had also undergone a spiritual awakening after a serious illness. Chai Ling decided to make her own personal profession of Christian faith. "I was a typical type A, insecure overachiever," Chai Ling has written of her student years in China. That sense of ambition followed her into exile in the United States, where she was determined to become economically successful so that she could help finance new directions in reforming China's political system.

After experiencing her dramatic Christian conversion, however, Chai Ling felt she was now being moved in a new direction on issues relating to China. "I could no longer go back to the grand plan of becoming successful, setting up a foundation and freeing China," she said recently. Referring to China's rigidly enforced one-child policy, under which the regime claims to have aborted more than 400 million babies since 1979, Chai Ling says, "The whole world is asleep in the face of this massive campaign against humanity. I don't know who has the courage and strength to stand up."

Last week she launched a new campaign and website, All Girls Allowed, to draw attention to the cruel implementation of China's one-child policy. Chai Ling selected the symbolic date of June 1, International Children's Day, which China habitually celebrates with great fanfare, but without mentioning its forced-abortion policy. For the opening of her campaign, she planned a press conference in Washington with speakers to include Republican representative Chris Smith of New Jersey, a longtime champion of Chinese human rights.

"The significance of her conversion," says Bob Fu, another student activist who came to the United States after Tiananmen and is president of ChinaAid, a Texas-based organization that focuses on China's frequent suppression of religious freedom, "is that she's taking a more transcendental worldview. She's not forgetting her roots, but she is manifesting a social conscience as a Christian with a new identity. I definitely think it will have a ripple effect on two groups of people who know her, her supporters and those who criticize her."

Another of the 21 "most wanted," No. 5, Zhou Fengsuo, a financial analyst based in San Francisco who became a Christian in the 1990s, agrees. "In 1989 there was a lot of bitterness," he says. "There was no hope. Chai Ling is so hungry for the truth. She has found her cause."

And a definite sense of peace. A nanny for her children told a visitor that, since becoming a Christian, she has been a much kinder person. Oh yes, and as a new Christian she felt she should drop her lawsuit over the TV documentary. ♦

Let's Hear It for Tex Avery

Opponents of Texas's curriculum reform embarrass themselves. BY STEPHEN SCHWARTZ

Austin

The nationwide uproar over the Texas State Board of Education's (SBOE) decision to reform the history curriculum began with the release, last July, of proposed new standards for the writing and production of textbooks, and for student understanding. With a school enrollment closing in on five million, Texas practices "statewide adoption" of textbooks, which makes it a leading force in educational publishing. And the state board of education, which has a conservative majority, had chosen a new direction, emphasizing pro-capitalist values and the role of Christian principles in the foundation of the American republic.

Predictably, liberal-left political interests, and the mainstream media, in Texas and across the country, went berserk. The board was accused of removing Thomas Jefferson from the curriculum, of promoting the Confederacy (to which Texas belonged), and of justifying McCarthyism. All such claims were wrong—as anybody who consulted the online draft of the standards could discern. Jefferson had not been removed from consideration as a major participant in the creation of the republic; the Confederacy had not been favored over the Union.

The critical howls over the treatment of McCarthyism were particularly interesting. The board's new language called on students to be able to explain how the activities of Senator Joseph McCarthy, as well as those of the House Committee on Un-American Activities, the arms race, and the space race, "increased Cold War tensions." But the board of education further mandated for study "how the later release of the Venona Papers confirmed suspicions of communist infiltration in U.S. government."

This appeared to strike Texas liberals as an outrageous intrusion of right-wing ideology. Yet the role of the Venona decryptions of Soviet secret intelligence by American code-breakers, in identifying Soviet agents at work in official institutions, has never been questioned by historians of any political sympathy since Venona was released beginning in 1995. Discussed many times in these pages, the importance and veracity of the Venona documentation is almost never challenged—although some recusant leftists still try to deny its evidence on Alger Hiss, or submit it to an "anti-anti-Communist" interpretation.

Benjamin Jealous of the NAACP was asked if he had read the proposed curriculum changes and could cite the language he found unacceptable. He admitted that he had not, and could not.

Critics were even more exercised by the proposed inclusion of previously unmentioned people and institutions. These include "the causes, key organizations, and individuals of the conservative resurgence of the 1980s and 1990s, including Phyllis Schlafly, the Contract With America, the Heritage Foundation, the Moral Majority, and the National Rifle Association." The *Houston Chronicle* editorialized against "too much mention of figures such as former U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich and conservative organizations such as the Moral Majority and none (or not nearly enough) of influential individuals and groups on the political left." In fact, Newt Gingrich was never mentioned in any draft of the standards.

The board of education held a public hearing on the new standards in March, and a second hearing in May. On both occasions, supporters and opponents could present their views: Conservatives hoped that the board would deliver a final vote on adoption or rejection; leftists and race politicians sought delay. On May 19, I watched as more than 200 witnesses showed up in the hearing room in the state capitol. Two examples, among the presentations offered by opponents, are especially illustrative of the drive-by political manners employed against the board.

Benjamin Jealous, president of the NAACP, had come from his headquarters in Baltimore to complain about the downgrading of the human debasement of African slaves. According to Jealous, language referring to the "triangular trade" among the English colonies on the eastern seaboard, the Caribbean, and Britain had excised the horrors of slavery.

Of course, the "triangular trade" has been taught in American public schools at least since I was in California's system a half-century ago, as the import of slaves to the New World, their harvesting of sugar, tobacco, and other commodities, and the sale of these or their by-products (such as molasses and rum) in Europe. Jealous was caught by the gimlet-eyed Terri Leo, secretary of the board. She asked him if he had, in fact, read the proposed curriculum changes and could cite the language he found unacceptable. He was compelled to admit that he had not, and could not. Whereupon she pointed out that the new language summons students to explain "the plantation system, the Atlantic triangular trade, and the spread of slavery." Jealous had been caught in a criticism by inference—or, more bluntly, by depen-

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dence on second-hand talking points.

Later Paul Henley of the Texas State Teachers Association, a powerful public employee union, assailed the board, blasting the replacement of a reference to Santa Barraza—a Texas woman of Hispanic origin, alive and well, who paints folkloric representations of the U.S.-Mexico borderland—with the late cartoon animator Tex Avery (1908-80) on a list of Texas-born contributors to the arts. Most of them, like Barraza, are obscure; Avery is not. According to the intense, rancorous Henley, Tex Avery was "the cartoonist behind racist characters like the Indian Princess, Uncle Tom, and Speedy Gonzales." He declared that Texas's inclusion of Avery in its curriculum represented "either a lack of research or racial prejudice."

As it happens, Tex Avery was a leading figure in the Warner Bros. cartoon studio, which began, at the close of the 1930s, to produce such icons of American humor as Bugs Bunny, Elmer Fudd, Porky Pig, and Daffy Duck, epitomizing a madcap, surrealistic view of life. Avery directed many of the best Warner Bros. cartoons, and worked on three that were eventually withdrawn from public distribution because of offensive images of African Americans. But Avery's involvement in that affair is generally unknown, as is his limited involvement with Speedy Gonzales: In bringing up Speedy Gonzales, Henley sought to appeal to the sensitivities of Hispanic board members.

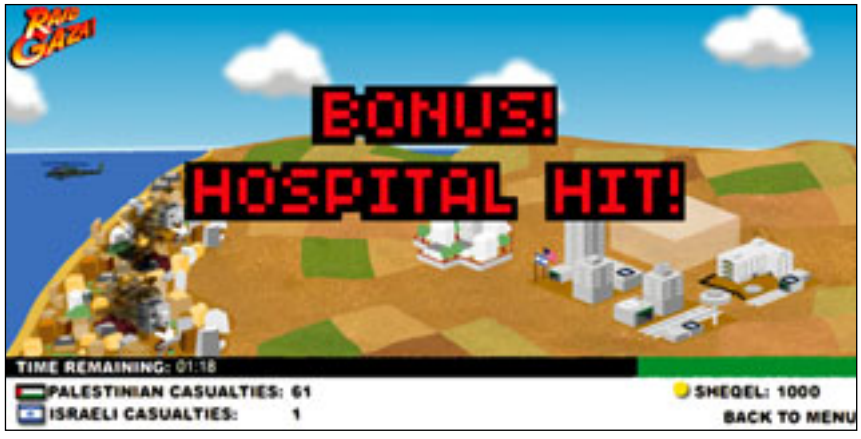
Henley railed against Tex Avery, progenitor of Elmer Fudd, whom Henley sought to imitate, as well as Bugs, Daffy, and a very politically incorrect Porky (especially because he was fat). I was naturally reminded of other cartoon controversies, including the recent specimens portraying the Prophet Muhammad. Henley seemed determined to demonstrate that the mentality of the Texas left and its functionaries is little different from that of Islamist fanatics who try to kill cartoonists. Ideological rigidity and humor—especially anarchic amusement of the kind found in Warners cartoons—are natural enemies.

The board voted, 9-5, to adopt the new standards. ♦

Killjoys for Change

Taking the 'tainment out of edutainment.

BY JONATHAN V. LAST



Israeli helicopters outperform harmless rockets in Raid Gaza.

You might not think of Sandra Day O'Connor as a videogame enthusiast, but there she was in New York last month, giving the keynote speech at a videogame design conference. Just so you don't get the wrong idea about the former justice, this wasn't your normal group of game designers—the anarcho-nihilist techheads who dream up murderous shoot-'em-ups like Doom and Grand Theft Auto and Resident Evil. This was a group of gaming do-gooders who believe that videogames can make the world a better place by making people better.

The conference was hosted by an outfit called Games for Change (G4C), which gathered together an usual assortment of tech futurists, academics, media evangelists, and government hipsters, all of whom want to spur the creation of ennobling videogames.

People have been trying to make videogames good for you since the Apple IIe appeared in the early 1980s. Back then games such as "Lemonade Stand" and "Oregon Trail" tried to teach rudimentary lessons about math and planning. "Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego?" taught geography and some small-bore history. But the Games for Changers are interested in moral instruction. As their website helpfully explains, the Games for Change Annual Festival "brings together leading nonprofit organizations, experts, and game developers to explore the increasing real-world impact of digital games as an agent for social change."

The leaders and experts were the usual suspects. Naturally, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation was there, both as a sponsor and a participant. The foundation has been the biggest dupe in the digital world since 2007, when it was suckered into giving $550,000 to sponsor conferences inside the virtual world "Second Life." The digitally omnipresent NYU media professor Clay Shirky was there too. His contribution was to explain that the Internet is enlarging both "the radius and half-life of generosity."

Shirky is one of those technophiliacs who surf from conference to conference on a wave of babble. In a recent interview with *Wired*, he explained the human animal thus: "Behavior

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is motivation filtered through opportunity." Shirky's Big Idea is that the Internet is replacing television as the activity on which modern man wastes his free time. And that, as Wikipedia, YouTube, and LoLCats demonstrate, the Internet is better for us than television. Or at least, that's his Big Idea this week. A year ago his Big Idea was that the Twitter Revolution in Iran was "the big one"—a seachange in which social media were altering the course of real-world events.

Next to people like Shirky, the representatives from the public sector looked serious-minded and judicious. The White House's chief technology officer, Aneesh Chopra, told attendees that the Obama administration was trying to move citizens away from thinking "there's a form for that" and toward thinking "there's an app for that." Chopra was joined by Kumar Garg, of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, who said that the president's team is very interested in videogames. Garg said that his office is exploring ideas about how the White House could "empower" the "gaming community." Sara DeWitt was there from PBSKids.org—Public Broadcasting's online destination for parents who want the computer, instead of the television, to babysit their children. DeWitt said that the videogames are her site's biggest draw and that these games help children "learn how to interact socially online." In one of the breakout panel discussions it was suggested that the government should create a National Public Games corporation in the mold of National Public Radio.

There were "Twambassadors" roaming the conference and sharing their real-time observations about the affair with other attendees on a G4C Twitter list.

Leaving the farcical elements aside, G4C is serious about making socially instructive videogames. Which is what drew Justice O'Connor to the conference. Even though she's retired from the Supreme Court, she's still an agent for social change. Upon returning to private life, O'Connor discovered—who knew?—that American children know very little about the civic institutions. In 2008 she partnered with Georgetown University to create iCivics, a website full of videogames to teach people about government.

iCivics began with a judicial branch game, Argument Wars, in which players fight Supreme Court cases by choosing arguments in front of a stern, futuristic-looking judge. Later, games about the other branches were added. In LawCraft, you add amendments to a bill in an attempt to garner majority support. In Executive Command, you're a president who chooses a broad goal for his term, and then has to manage various crises while still pursuing his agenda. Oddly enough, though you can choose "deficit reduction" as your primary goal, the game offers no opportunities to cut spending and penalizes you if you refuse to raise taxes.

All told, the iCivics games are just about as boring as you imagine they are. But they are immeasurably more engaging and less pedantic than the other games G4C is promoting.

A slog through the games featured on the G4C website is dreary, even by edutainment standards. There's Ayiti: The Cost of Life, where you control a rural Haitian family and decide to either send your kids to school or put them to work. No matter what you do, you run out of money and everyone gets sick. There's 3rd World Farmer, where you plant crops and raise livestock, only to see them wiped out by disease and fires at the end of every turn.

The makers of Raid Gaza believe that their game "demonstrates the power imbalance between Israel and Gaza." It begins with a pathetic Palestinian rocket crashing harmlessly in a field. An Israeli adviser then prompts the player to "hurry up and blow the Gaza Strip up before anybody else gets hurt! . . . You get 5 minutes. Eliminate as many Palestinians as possible." Players are given ironic "bonuses" for hitting Palestinian hospitals and U.N. school buses. A counter keeps track of how many Palestinians are killed. I confess that the game had an effect quite opposite the intended one.

Another game, Against All Odds, is about life in a totalitarian state. Produced by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the game opens with your character being arrested by the secret police. Players are "interrogated" and asked to sign a series of statements—for instance, your tormenters want you to declare that homosexuality is a crime and then to give up your "right" to speak and write in your native language. If you refuse any of their requests, you're beaten by the guards.

The first time I played Against All Odds, I quickly figured it would be smart to tell the police whatever they wanted to hear. Would I sign a statement giving up my right to vote? Sure thing. Would I give up the right to travel outside the country? You betcha. With every acquiescence, the game rebuked me with a description of the terrible life I was agreeing to live. When I signed a pledge of unconditional support for the government, the game sadly informed me that I had "given up the right to think differently." The game grew more and more unhappy until, at the end of the interrogation, it informed me—somewhat disappointedly—"That went well . . . this time!" Despite my spinelessness, I was told to flee the country anyway.

The entire Games for Change concept is of a piece with the central conceit of the Internet: that you can change the world without having to actually *do* anything.

Want to change America? Download the Obama app. Want to fight the Iranian mullahs? Turn your Twitter icon green. Want to bring human rights to oppressed peoples? Play a videogame about it. Because what matters isn't fighting autocrats or feeding the hungry or improving the conditions of Haitian farmers. What matters is knowing that you care about such things.

Games for Change isn't really about the dissidents, the starving, or the wretched: Like the Internet itself, it's all about you. ♦

Ride Along with Mitch

Can the astonishing popularity of Indiana's penny-pinching governor carry him to the White House in 2012?

By Andrew Ferguson

Indianapolis

When Mitch Daniels ran for governor of Indiana in 2004, a friend and videographer got the idea of filming the candidate in *vidéo vérité* style as he traveled around the state in his Indiana-made RV. In both his campaigns for governor—in 2004, when he won a close race, and in 2008, when he won reelection against the Obama tide in an 18-point landslide—Daniels visited each of Indiana's 92 counties at least three times, appearing in places that hadn't seen a statewide candidate in generations, or ever. If he wasn't riding the RV, he came to town on his custom-built Harley Davidson, a solitary aide trailing behind.

He insisted on spending every night on the road in the home of a local family. Nearly all the families were strangers to him. He slept in guest rooms, family rooms, dens, and children's bedrooms, on bunks and foldout couches, with pictures of pop stars staring from the walls and an occasional Disney mobile dangling overhead, proving to the people of his state that he could sleep anywhere. He was bit by a pig and, later, a farm dog. For his website he wrote a day-by-day account of the places he went and people he met. He paid special attention to the quality of pork tenderloin sandwiches he found in the local bars and diners. Pork tenderloin sandwiches, the size of a platter, are unavoidable in Indiana, no matter how hard you try, and Daniels made it clear he didn't want to try. Food became a theme of the campaign. The best dessert he'd discovered, he said, was a Snickers Bar dunked in pancake batter and, this being Indiana, deep-fried.

Governor Daniels on the road

All of this was the stuff of what became MitchTV. Daniels said he was skeptical of having his every move placed under the eye of a crew with a handheld camera and a boom mike. The first line of the first episode is: "The first thing you need to know about this is, it was not my idea." But it was a good idea. The campaign edited the video down to half-hour episodes every week and bought time in nearly every TV market in the state, on Saturday nights, Sunday mornings, and Sunday evenings. A typical episode received a five or six share, a rating that shocked everybody and translated into tens of thousands of regular viewers.

I was alerted to MitchTV by a politically connected friend. Most of the episodes are available on YouTube. The shows are bizarrely compelling, as if D.A. Pennebaker had been let loose on the set of *Hee Haw*. The Hoosiers themselves—grizzled old farmers, bikers with attitude, housewives in floral prints, chubby kids in too-tight T-shirts—are part of the attraction. They are alternately delighted,

GARY LOCKE

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disbelieving, and annoyed to find a well-known politician in their midst. The action, if that's the word, plays out in county fairs and barn auctions and meetings of the chamber of commerce, against the woebegone beauty of small towns slowly sinking back into the Indiana prairie.

What ties the episodes together, of course, is the presence of Daniels. His telegenic appeal is highly unlikely. He's 5′7″. His pale coloring is set off by his reddish gray hair, and the day is fast approaching when the combover will no longer be able to work its magic. He favors pressed sport shirts and sharply creased Dockers, public-golf-course casual. His accent is hard to place. He calls it "hillbilly hybrid," a term he coined to describe what happens when the rounded tones of Tennessee and Georgia, where he lived as a boy, are stomped flat as a griddle by the adenoidal twang of Central Indiana, where he's lived, off and on, since he was ten. He has a fine sense of humor—after their dog bit him he told the family he was off to a diner for his new favorite breakfast, "two eggs over easy, biscuits and gravy, and a tetanus shot"—but his manner is just awkward enough to make you wonder, when you talk to him, if you're making him nervous.

And voters, apparently, find it all endearing. In 2008 he garnered more votes than any other candidate in the state's history, even as Obama became the first Democratic candidate for president to win the state since 1964. Daniels won 20 percent of the black vote and a majority of the youth vote. His approval rating among voters here, in the trough of the recession, ranges between 60 and 70 percent. He is everywhere in the news all the time; when I visited Indiana last month, his picture appeared on the front page of the *Indianapolis Star*, above the fold, on two of the four days I was there. He is at once so visible and so self-effacing that he seems to have sunk into a black hole of personal magnetism and come out the other side, where the very lack of charisma becomes charismatic. He is the un-Obama. Republicans—notably some wealthy and powerful ones who have decided he should be president—seem to like that.

For a MitchTV fan, nothing can quite compare to seeing the thing play out in person. Daniels said I could go along with him to a couple of weekday events north of Indianapolis, but the day before we were to leave he decided to ride his Harley, leaving me to trail him in a black Sequoia with the state troopers who are a governor's ever-present companions. When Daniels goes by motorcycle, another trooper will ride a bike a respectful distance behind. "I can pretend, at least, I'm all by myself," he said. "It gives me the illusion of privacy for a little while."

Our first stop that morning was North Central High School, in Indianapolis, where the governor was scheduled to bestow a statewide academic award on a prizeworthy math whiz. Daniels grew up in the neighborhood and graduated from North Central in 1967. His grandfather, born Elias Esau, came to the United States from Syria in the early 1920s. He chose the name Daniels at Ellis Island. After a few years Elias—now called Louie—made enough money to return to Syria and find a bride. He brought her back to Monongahela, Pennsylvania, and earned a good living running a pool hall and, his grandson says, making book. Mitch's father married his mother, of Scots-Irish descent, in the Valley, and Mitch was born there, in the same delivery room that gave the world Joe Montana. After the sojourn in the South, his father landed a job selling pharmaceuticals and brought the family to Indianapolis. "It's the typical immigrant story," Mitch says. "Something that could only happen in America, and it happens all the time."

North Central gleamed. A glass elevator stood in the polished foyer, and a ramp curved up to a balcony where one wall was devoted to the school's Alumni Hall of Fame. A picture of Daniels—straight A student, president of the student council, delegate to the national Boys State convention in 1967—has pride of place, next to a photo of BabyFace, the music producer who has evidently been forgiven for discovering Paula Abdul. Later I remarked to Daniels how the schools I'd seen in Indiana all had the same gleam and polish: immaculate athletic fields, vast cafeterias, swimming pools.

"Yeah," he said, "it's a problem."

I'd meant to flatter him but he sounded appalled.

"When we were first campaigning, I started to notice, we'd drive through these rural counties, these very poor counties, and we'd drive up over a hill and on the other side you'd see a brand-new high school that looked like Frank Lloyd Wright had just been there. Enormous gold-plated buildings. It turned out we had higher capital expenditures for educational construction per square foot than any other state. There'd be a bond issue and then the architects and contractors would run amok, spending money on things that had nothing to do with academics. I understand why it happens. The school board likes it because they get to play designer for a year. But we couldn't afford it."

Daniels put a 120-day moratorium on new school bond

issues. "We've told them, if you propose a project that costs more per square foot than the national average, be prepared to show cause."

Daniels is a font of statistics, but one comes to his lips more than any other. "Only 61 cents of every education dollar gets into the classroom in Indiana." School funding increased every year under Daniels before the recession, and since the downturn, when most areas of state government have seen cuts of 25 percent or more, education has been reduced by only 2 percent. Yet the local school boards and their Democratic allies in the state legislature continue to complain. Daniels calls education funding "the bloody shirt" of Indiana politics: "It doesn't take long before somebody starts waving it." One of my favorite bits of Daniels video on YouTube shows him at a press conference defending a bill to end "social promotion" in the state's grade schools. School districts were appalled that the bill would pass without "additional resources" to educate the kids who would be held back.

A reporter asked him about it.

"By the time a child has finished third grade, the state has spent $40,000 and the school district has had 720 days to teach that child to read," he said, tight-lipped. "If that child can't read by then, there is a fundamental failure in that district. And they'll need to remedy it. The most unacceptable thing to do is to shove that child along to fourth grade into almost certain academic failure. That's a cruel thing to do, it's a wrong thing to do, and we're going to put an end to it."

The reporter pressed: But won't the schools need more money?

Daniels's eyes got wide.

"More than $40,000 to teach someone how to read? No. It won't and it shouldn't and any school district that can't do it ought to face consequences."

For the first time in 40 years more people are moving into the state than leaving it. Indiana earned its first triple-A bond rating in 2008 and two more in April. It's one of only nine states with this distinction, and one of only two in the Midwest. Indiana, Daniels likes to say, is the 'peony in the parking lot.'

We were having lunch one day at a favorite spot, the St. Louis Street Soda Shop in Vincennes, on the Wabash River. Having resisted the Fried Bologna Sandwich ($3.49, with chips, pickle extra), Daniels was washing down a quarter-pound Coney Island dog with a large butterscotch milkshake—"the best in the state," he assured Dolly, the delighted owner—when a reporter from the local radio station appeared. She pressed him on the education budget cuts too. She told him the local school board had just laid off nine teachers and an administrator.

"What would you say to those people?" she asked.

He visibly flinched, just as he had on MitchTV.

"I'd say it should have been nine administrators and one teacher. There are 20 things that school board could do before it had to lay off one teacher."

In fact, the governor's office has publicized a "Citizens' Checklist" that people can take to their local school boards to see if school officials have made every possible economy. Citizens in Vincennes need to take that list and get answers, he said. The list is filled with questions. Have the administrators "eliminated memberships in professional associations and reduced travel expenses"? Have they "sold, leased, or closed underutilized buildings"? Have they "outsourced transportation and custodial services"?

"I want citizens to understand," he said. "When people start demanding we spend more money, they're saying, 'We want to raise your taxes.' And the citizens should say, 'Okay, tell me. Which one of my taxes do you want to raise?'"

While local boards set the schools' budgets, the responsibility for collecting revenue and allocating it to schools has been consolidated in the state government, at Daniels's insistence. The main benefit, as Daniels sees it, has less to do with schools than with taxation. In Indiana, as elsewhere, schools have been typically funded by local property taxes, which local officials could raise to match their budgets, by increasing either rates or assessments. Consolidation took that option away from them. Under Daniels, home property taxes have been cut drastically—by one third in most cases—and are now capped at one percent.

"Property taxation is the most pernicious taxation there is," he said. "Where else in life can you just decide how much you want to spend and then just dial up the rates to get enough revenue to pay for it? Elsewhere in life, you figure out how much money you have and fit your budget to that. If you've got less to spend, well, you've got less to spend."

He treats waste in government as a moral offense. "Government isn't a business, and it shouldn't be run as a business," he said. "But it can be more like business. It has a lot to learn from businessmen." Government operates without the market pressures that produce efficiency and increase quality. The challenge for government leaders is to produce those pressures to economize internally, through an

act of will. "Never take a dollar from a free citizen through the coercion of taxation without a very legitimate purpose," he said in an interview last year. "We have a solemn duty to spend that dollar as carefully as possible, because when we took it we diminished that person's freedom." When you put it like that, overspending by government seems un-American.

When Daniels took office, in 2004, the state faced a $200 million deficit and hadn't balanced its budget in seven years. Four years later, all outstanding debts had been paid off; after four balanced budgets, the state was running a surplus of $1.3 billion, which has cushioned the blows from a steady decline in revenues caused by the recession. "That's what saved us when the recession hit," one official said. "If we didn't have the cash reserves and the debts paid off, we would have been toast." The state today is spending roughly the same amount that it was when Daniels took office, largely because he resisted the budget increases other states were indulging in the past decade.

No other state in the Midwest—all of them, like Indiana, dependent on a declining manufacturing sector—can match this record. Venture capital investment in Indiana had lagged at $39 million annually in the first years of this decade. By 2009 it was averaging $94 million. Even now the state has continued to add jobs—7 percent of new U.S. employment has been in Indiana this year, a state with 2 percent of the country's population. For the first time in 40 years more people are moving into the state than leaving it. Indiana earned its first triple-A bond rating from Standard and Poor's in 2008; the other two major bond rating agencies concurred in April 2010, making it one of only nine states with this distinction, and one of only two in the Midwest.

Indiana, Daniels likes to say, is the "peony in the parking lot."

One morning I sat with Ryan Kitchell in his office in the statehouse so he could tell me how this happened. One of the reasons is Kitchell himself, and people like him. In his mid-30s, Kitchell was a numbers whiz on the fast track at Eli Lilly & Co., a flagship company in Indiana, when Daniels strong-armed him into placing his career in abeyance and joining the state government for a couple of years. He's been there for six, most recently as director of the state's office of management and budget. "He's very persuasive," Kitchell said, with ironic understatement. "You think you'll go back to your old job and he says, 'Just give me another year, just as soon as we get this project done.' The year goes by and the project gets done, and it's 'You can't leave now, wait till we do X or Y, then you can go.' But there's always a new project."

Daniels has laced the government with such people, at the first and second tiers of more than 70 state agencies. You can lump the recruits into three groups. There are midcareer professionals like Kitchell, who had just begun exploiting their gifts in the private sector, and have every intention of going back. There are young and energetic neophytes grabbed fresh from Ivy League government departments and business schools. Perhaps most important of all, there are the Hoosier equivalent of Roosevelt's dollar a year men—accomplished businessfolk at the end of their careers or fully retired, willing to tackle one last challenge for the sake of Daniels's grand reforms. The governor's chief of staff, for example, is Earl Goode, former president of the phone company GTE. With a farm in Kentucky and a ranch in New Mexico and a pleasant golf course retreat, "I'm not doin' it for the money or the power," he says, in a Kentucky drawl. Daniels's first head of economic development, the woman who founded Vera Bradley, was succeeded by an executive who had led foreign operations for Procter & Gamble; his secretary of commerce built cable television networks throughout the Midwest. It's a long list.

"We aren't here to prove anything," Goode told me, with the genial air of a man who figures he's proved quite enough already. "We're doin' it because we believe in what he's tryin' to do."

Kitchell recalled sitting outside Daniels's transition office after the 2004 election in the weeks before his swearing-in. "These very accomplished businesspeople would come in and they'd be waiting for the governor-elect. They'd say, 'Yeah, I'd love to help him but I just don't think I can do it at this point in my career.' Then they'd go in there and 15 minutes later they'd come out scratching their heads: 'Uh, I think I just agreed to be the secretary of agriculture.'"

The reforms began instantly. On his first day Daniels reversed an executive order signed by a Democratic predecessor granting collective bargaining rights to state employees. Union membership plummeted overnight. "I think they were happy to have the extra thousand dollars that would have gone to dues," Kitchell said. Decertifying the public-employees' union has spared Indiana pressures that have crippled other state governments. Unhindered by union demands, the governor instituted a "pay for performance" scheme, rewarding state employees who met explicit goals with raises ranging from 4 percent to 10 percent. The salaries of underperforming employees stayed flat. No one was fired, but every time a job went vacant a supervisor had to justify hiring a replacement. The number of state employees has fallen from 35,000 to under 30,000, back where it was in 1982.

The effects of reform showed up pretty quick too.

The state Bureau of Motor Vehicles, another patronage sump that was routinely ranked one of the worst in the country, was drastically reorganized. "He likes metrics," Kitchell said. "He likes to measure outcomes." Every line item in the state budget has at least one objective formula attached to it to indicate how well each service is being delivered. Regulatory agencies track the speed with which permits and variances are granted. The economic development agency has to compare the hourly wage of each new job brought to the state with the average hourly wage of existing jobs. In the case of the BMV, the two most important metrics were wait times and customer satisfaction. Now each receipt is stamped with the time the customer arrives and the time his transaction is completed. Wait times have dropped from over 40 minutes to under 10 minutes. Surveys put customer satisfaction at 97 percent.

"But when you meet your goal," Kitchell said, sitting at his office conference table, "he just moves the goalpost." He turned to his computer and scrolled to an email the governor had just sent. That morning a transportation official had emailed with the happy news that bids on a new road construction project were coming in 28 percent below projections. No doubt he expected a hearty attaboy for driving a hard bargain to save the taxpayers' hard-earned dollars. Kitchell read me the governor's reply: "Shoot for 30 percent."

Daniels gathered his agency heads on his first day and told them they were henceforth to pursue a single organizational goal—all successful businesses unite their efforts behind a goal, he said. His was this: "We will do everything we can to raise the net disposable income of individual Hoosiers."

"So whatever we do," Kitchell said, "we have to be able to show it moves toward that goal." At the BMV, Daniels said, time was money: Cut wait times and Hoosiers have more time to run their businesses or work at their jobs. In some cases, the goal requires enlarging government rather than cutting it. The administration hired 800 more child caseworkers and vastly expanded efforts to help single mothers collect child support, a particular Daniels obsession. (The state now withholds hunting and fishing licenses from deadbeat dads, and casinos, licensed by the state, are required to check the child collection rolls before dispensing winnings.) He began a program to underwrite discounted prescription drugs. To supplement Medicaid, and in time perhaps replace it, he introduced state-sponsored medical insurance built around health savings accounts. Participants were required to pay in to the accounts, which were heavily subsidized by the state, and they had the responsibility of making their own health care decisions. To pay for the program, and to enable the property tax cut, Daniels agreed to increase the state sales tax by one percentage point.

Far more often, though, Daniels's goal means cutting government, high and low. It is work to which he is well suited. He is a famous skinflint. A former employee recalled that Daniels, in private business at the time, asked him to dinner for a job interview and then insisted on splitting the bill. He played golf for several months using a garden glove from home instead of a store-bought golf glove—"I didn't want to buy one until I knew I was going to like the game enough to stick with it," he told me. Family lore has one of Daniels's four daughters, in grade school, piping up in class during a discussion of money. "Our family has money," she announced to the teacher, "but my daddy won't let mommy spend any of it."

On the campaign trail in West Lebanon—in a bedroom decorated by the local art teacher.

Like governor, like state. Daniels's miserliness has proved infectious. In the early days of the administration he had a hunch that the government owned more cars than it could use. Lieutenants were dispatched to the parking lots of state facilities to place pennies on a tire of each car. They returned in a month and if the pennies were still there, Kitchell told me, "We said, 'Give us the keys.'" To save on paper, a study was made to find the narrowest type font. Most state newsletters, once printed

in color, are now in black and white. The state no longer pays for employee business cards. Agencies that were discovered to be net-users of paper clips—another study—were put in touch with the revenue service, which had a surplus of clips sent by taxpayers with their tax forms. The list of economies is long.

Daniels's popularity among Hoosiers, a thing majestic in its dimensions, took a while to grow. Well into his first term, odds on his reelection were heavily against him. "You can only do the kinds of things we were trying to do if you don't really give a damn," he told me last month. "I mean about reelection. I wouldn't have liked to lose, and I'd hate to see everything we did reversed. But if I'd thought about that nothing would have gotten done." Early on his most significant accomplishments were his least popular. Indiana stands athwart two time zones, the eastern and central. It was also one of the last states in the country that did not uniformly honor Daylight Savings Time; some counties did, some didn't. For half the year no one inside or outside the state could be certain what time it was in, say, French Lick or Buddha or Oolitic without consulting a timetable. Businessmen hated it. Daniels hated it too.

The governor honored at the Howard County Fair in Greentown, July 2008

The reasons for sticking to "slow time," as it was sometimes called, offended him as much as the effects on commerce. For generations the foremost apostle of slow time was Gene Pulliam, publisher of the state's most powerful newspaper, the *Indianapolis Star*, back in the days when you could describe newspapers as "powerful." A devout man, Pulliam took the metaphysical view: The Indiana legislature could not undo what God had ordained, which was slow time. Less theologically inclined Hoosiers merely admired the quirkiness of the checkerboard arrangement and took pride in its utter irrationality. I've never met a man with a deeper or more intuitive appreciation for Hoosier irascibility than Daniels, but business is business. By April of his first year in office, old time had been done away with, and all but the Chicago suburbs in the state's northwest corner were on eastern time. Around the state, it took a while for the shock to wear off.

His next act took aim not only at the state's parochialism but also its xenophobia. As governor, he said, you do what businessmen do: "You look for underperforming assets and turn them around." The most egregious underperformer was the Interstate toll road that stretched across the state's northern tier from Ohio to Illinois. In the hands of politicians and their patronage hires, the road fell into poor repair and lost money; tolls hadn't been raised in 20 years for fear of offending voters and Teamsters. Daniels got the authority to put the road up for a 75-year lease and held an auction at the peak of the market. The winning bid contained good news—the price was a stunning $3.8 billion, beyond Daniels's fondest dreams—and bad news: The bid was placed by non-Hoosiers, indeed non-Americans, a consortium of Spanish and Australian financiers. Hoosiers paid less attention to the money than to the fact that foreigners would now be running their toll road.

Daniels was shocked by the hostile reaction. He took to his Harley and barnstormed the state, explaining the realities and benefits of globalization, and in time the deal was approved. You don't hear many objections anymore to what the governor calls "the Transaction." The $3.9 billion went into a fund that can only be used for road construction and can't be counted against the general budget. A backlog of projects that piled up over decades has been cleaned out and hundreds of new projects approved, without a dime in debt or new taxes. You can't drive for 20 minutes in Indiana without coming upon a growling earth

mover. Another fact helped mollify the xenophobes: the collapse of world financial markets has made it obvious that the foreigners got screwed.

One of the charms of MitchTV is the occasional critic Daniels encounters. "What are you going to sell off next?" one old-timer in coveralls snarls, repeating, "I am not a Mitch man" as he steams away, flapping his hands behind him in disgust. To my disappointment I saw nothing even remotely like that old timer as I witnessed MitchTV live, rumbling from Indy to Kokomo to Terre Haute to Vincennes to Evansville and back again.

After the ceremony at North Central High School, Daniels got back on the bike, but only for a minute or two. The troopers told me he is given to random and themeless stops, and on travel days his staff puts enough slack in the schedule to make them possible. He pulled into the parking lot of a McDonald's for coffee, and for a chance to review a backgrounder about the next event.

Heads whipped around as he shuffled to the counter. His walk is a bit like a cowboy's, shifting noticeably from side to side as he advances, bowlegged maybe from a lifetime of Harleys. He never encounters a citizen without trying to shake his or her hand, and they react as though they can't believe their luck. He got his coffee and moved to the back of the restaurant where all the booths but one were empty. He homed in on the booth with citizens in it, a pair of unkempt young men in wifebeaters hanging loose at their shoulders. Both had pony tails.

"Can I sit with you guys?" he said.

They looked up, annoyed at first until they recognized him.

"We are having breakfast with the governor!" one of them cried, yanking on the bill of his cap.

"You have got to be sh . . ." said the other, stopping himself, "foolin' me! You on the bike this morning?"

On the table was a mountain of balled up wrappers. Daniels pushed it aside to make room for his cup. He told them where he'd just been, where he was going, and asked the same of them, and they told him.

They were roofers stoking themselves with five or six Sausage McMuffins before getting to the job. The governor asked whether the building trades were picking up. They were extremely genial and had no more than a dozen teeth between them.

"I'm having breakfast with the governor!" the first one repeated.

"You all got families?" Daniels asked.

The roofers looked at each other.

"I got kids, yeah," the first one said. "They're with their mama. I just got single again."

"Why's that?" Daniels asked.

"Well, governor, me and my kids' mama, we were together for like five years . . ."

"S—, governor," his friend said. "You're going to make him cry. Again."

"I do take care of them, I go without so I make sure they got everything they need."

"Well, that's good," Daniels said. "I guess. But what they really need is *you*."

The man dropped his head and swung it back and forth.

"I know this, governor, I know this."

'I never pass by Sherrill's if I can help it,' Daniels told me later. The official name is 'Sherril's Eat Here and Get Gas.' The tenderloins are bigger than a Frisbee.

There was another unexpected stop on the way to the day's main event.

"I never pass by Sherrill's if I can help it," Daniels told me later. The official name for Sherrill's, which is a combination bar/diner/filling station on Route 31, is "Sherrill's Eat Here and Get Gas." The tenderloins are bigger than a Frisbee.

The first table near the door was a foursome of elderly ladies in print dresses.

"You don't have to introduce yourself to us," one of the ladies said, flapping her hand. "Everybody knows who you are!"

"Do you like catfish?" another of the ladies said, apropos of who knows what.

"I sure do," Daniels said.

"I like catfish," she said, eyes widening. Then she made an effort to lift her tiny body from her chair. "I'd like to go catfishing with you," she said, stretching the vowel, a rising *oooooooooo*, until it reached some terrible, unnameable pitch of desire.

Daniels was unfazed. "I'm ready when you are," he said. Before long he'd grabbed the coffee pot from behind the counter and was making his way from booth to booth offering refills, keeping up the patter, modestly accepting compliments and thanks. "We're trying," he would say, when someone mentioned the BMV or a new highway bypass.

As we were leaving, a woman in a dishwasher's smock moved shyly from the kitchen, cradling a camera. "You want a picture?" Daniels said. "I'm afraid I'm

not very photogenic right now." He was in jeans and his biker jacket, a black leather job with zippers and hooks.

"That don't matter," she said. "You're just you. You're real."

Is such a thing possible? A famous and celebrated political personage, living life in the camera's eye and not faking his sincerity? I wouldn't have thought it so. But there's this: By the time we left Sherrill's a posse of bikers had gathered. They'd got word that the governor was passing through and thought it might be a terrific idea if they accompanied him the final few miles into Kokomo, to the day's main event, a luncheon with local businessmen. Daniels already knew a lot of these guys. They were co-members of a bikers' safety group called Abate. With their tats ("Bad to the Bone") and patches ("Marine Riders") and headscarves and handlebar mustaches, they looked badass to me, but what do I know.

"You hang around these guys and they'll surprise you sometimes," Daniels told me later. "They all look the same, dress the same. And you go up to one of these dudes and you say, So what do you do? 'Oh, I'm an ophthalmologist from down in Greencastle.'"

Daniels talked about bikes for a minute, told them of a group of Harley riders he'd met back at the McDonald's, asked them what they'd been hearing. Then he got on his Harley and the Abate guys got back on theirs, and they moved onto the highway. Twenty minutes later, a small delegation of gray-suited businessmen who had been deputized to greet their governor were standing on the porch of Pastarrific Italian Restaurant in Kokomo, when their governor appeared, hunched on his Harley, with a gang of 25 men in long hair and black leather jackets behind him, in a thunderous internal-combustion roar.

When Daniels found there were some empty seats at the luncheon, he brought a few of the bikers in to sit among the businessmen and their wives. The rest dispersed to the VFW hall for beers. I watched Daniels's presentation, mostly about the glories of the Hoosier renaissance despite the recession, and I realized he'd used the same tone, the same expressions—the same jokes, even—no matter who he was talking to, old ladies or bikers or pillars of middle American commerce, without condescension or false modesty, as equals—citizen to citizen. The dishwasher might have it right.

"I was amazed," Al Hubbard told me one day. Hubbard is one of the Indianapolis businessmen who talked Daniels into running for governor in 2004. "I knew he'd be a very good governor. I didn't think he'd be a good candidate. I didn't think he had it in him."

Daniels has lived most of his public life out of the public eye. He seemed to have the soul of a staffer. He was the guy just beyond camera range at the politician's shoulder, always in time with the perfect statistic or the forgotten name of a supporter. His sister Deb tells the story of young Mitch arriving at the Boys State convention—a mock-up of a political party nominating convention, complete with candidates and campaign speeches and roll call votes. With some friends he found a nice-looking kid playing the piano at the hotel. "That's our candidate," Mitch told his friends, who thereupon helped him put the boy's name up for nomination. "I don't think it occurred to him to be the candidate himself," his sister says.

After graduating from North Central, Daniels went to Princeton and spent the summers back in Indy, interning for the mayor, Richard Lugar. Lugar has called him a "genius," and the admiration is reciprocated. Daniels managed Lugar's successful campaign for the Senate in 1976 and followed him to Washington. He was a Senate staffer for the next eight years, getting a law degree from Georgetown Law School at night. In 1978 he married Cheri Herman, a fellow Hoosier and, perhaps more impressively for a baseball fanatic like Daniels, the granddaughter of the Hall of Fame second baseman Billy Herman. In 1980, their first daughter was born, "and after that we started stamping 'em out one after another. Every 20 months, bam, there's a new daughter." All the while, he says, he and Cheri were itching to leave Washington and get back to Indiana. "But Lugar could be very persuasive," Daniels told me, describing his mentor in nearly identical terms to the ones his staff uses about him.

Ed Rollins, the political consultant, hired him as a political aide in the Reagan White House, and he took the top political job there after Haley Barbour, his immediate boss, left for a career in lobbying. Lou Cannon, in his *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime*, describes Daniels as the only White House staffer willing to confront Don Regan, Reagan's wildly unpopular chief of staff, and tell him he should resign for the sake of the president's popularity. Daniels was a staff guy but a nervy one.

The Daniels family finally moved back to Indianapolis in 1987. He practiced law half-heartedly and became executive vice president and COO of the Hudson Institute, a think tank that had landed in Indianapolis after a series of financial setbacks. Daniels is widely credited with putting the institution back on its feet. "You do what a businessman does," he told me when I asked about taking over Hudson. "You cut costs. You look for underperforming assets. You watch your spending. You find new markets for your services. We had a budget of $14 million. Even though it was nonprofit it was still like a small business. We had a bottom line."

He also enjoyed the company he kept. "There were a lot of really smart, really interesting, really flaky people," he said. Hudson placed him in the thick of the conservative intellectual counterculture of the 1980s. He dabbled in highbrow activism, joining the board of the human-rights group Freedom House and founding a pro-immigration group with the great economist Julian Simon. He still seeds his conversation with references to George Gilder, Thomas Sowell, Michael Novak, and, especially, Charles Murray, whose work, he says, demonstrated that big government liberalism—or statism, to use Daniels's preferred term—does more harm than good to the very people it was designed to help.

And it does this by smothering free enterprise, which works as the real engine of human innovation and betterment. "I'm enough of a Whig to know that government can create the conditions in which free markets can flourish," he says. "Beyond that I get skeptical." Daniels valorizes businesspeople, and he proved, by all accounts, to be an excellent businessman himself. Lilly hired him away from Hudson in 1990 to head its corporate affairs division. He rose rapidly through the corporate ranks—and unexpectedly, since Lilly was a notoriously inbred company, opening its top jobs only to people who had spent their whole careers there. He designed the company's counterattacks on the Church of Scientology, which had launched a massive PR campaign against Prozac, a Lilly drug, in an effort to persuade Americans to drop their attachment to antidepressants and begin worshipping deceased science fiction writers. The campaign was so successful that the Lilly board of directors named Daniels head of the company's North American operations, a multibillion-dollar business with more than 30,000 employees.

In 2000, George W. Bush, at Hubbard's suggestion, named Daniels director of the Office of Management and Budget. "I never thought I'd go back to Washington," he said, "but this was the one job I'd go back for. It's the best job in government. Everything comes together right there." Daniels left Lilly and liquidated all his stock options and other securities, for a payoff well over $20 million.

Bush called him the Blade, at least in public, and the first budget Daniels submitted was indeed restrained, in comparison with the Bush budgets that followed. With his excellent political sense Daniels fastened on a couple of gimmicks to illustrate his tight-fistedness. He tried to have his office voicemail system altered to play "You Can't Always Get What You Want" when callers were on hold, but had to settle for piping the song into the Government Printing Office location when congressional staff showed up to pick up their copy of the budget. At a Capitol Hill hearing, out of patience, he said he'd discovered the motto of Congress: "Don't just stand there, spend something."

Then came 9/11 and Iraq. In some quarters, Daniels is notorious for publicly declaring that the war in Iraq would cost no more than $60 billion, as a way (goes the theory) of solidifying political support. It's a particularly egregious charge, reeking of toadyism. It won't die, and it clearly rankles him.

Pirates of the Caribbean: The governor and his wife greet trick-or-treaters at the governor's residence, 2006.

"The facts are otherwise," he told me, exasperated, when I mentioned it. "I thought we'd dispensed with this, but I guess not. I think we got it straightened out on Wikipedia at least. I got so sick of it I put together a whole file of stuff that lays out the facts." Among the material is a background briefing Daniels gave reporters in April 2002, outlining Bush's request for $74 billion to fight the war. "I said to the Pentagon, give us your assumptions. They talked about a six-month conflict, and we made our estimate on the basis of that."

The briefing transcript bears this out. "This [budget request] will, to the best of our ability to estimate this, cover all costs from now to the end of the fiscal year," Daniels said then. "Six months contemplates a conflict, a period of stabilization in Iraq, and the phased withdrawal of a large number of troops."

He says now, "If someone had come to us and said, What will it cost to invade Iraq, beat the Iraqi Army and stay in Iraq for eight more years, we would have given a different answer. But that wasn't the question."

The invasion was over, and the war was just beginning, when Daniels went back to Indiana. For more than a year he'd been implored by Hubbard and others to challenge the sitting governor, though it's clear he didn't need a whole lot of imploring. To the press he was coy, saying in mid-2002 that he was focused exclusively on his present job, fulfilling his commitment to the president, and was entertaining no thoughts of running for governor. A year later he was in the RV, campaigning.

So is he going to run for president? I asked him at the end of a long dinner in a pleasant, not-too-expensive restaurant on the north side of Indianapolis, and he did what he's been doing for a year whenever interviewers ask the inevitable question—pursed lips, followed by a half-smile, a slight shake of the head, and the recitation of a long string of phrases nearly identical to the ones he used eight years ago when he denied he was running for governor. He has no intention to run, but he's leaving the door open, but right now he's focusing on the commitment he made to the people of his state, but if no one else steps forward it's something he might be forced to consider, but he doesn't expect that to happen, but . . .

'What we've seen in the past year, what I call shock-and-awe statism, has put the American experiment at risk,' Daniels said. 'For the first time in my life, the country faces survival-level issues.'

There are smart people in Indiana who think he won't run—that his demurrals are a ploy to better position himself as governor. "He can't run [for governor] again, but you notice nobody here considers him a lame duck," said John Ketzenberger, a veteran statehouse reporter. "He's still a player in the minds of people here because he's seen as a player on the national scene. He knows how to leverage that."

At dinner Daniels admits as much. "Newt [Gingrich] told me, look, quit saying you're not going to do this. If you don't run, you don't run. But say you're leaving the door open, and the national press will pay a lot more attention to your viewpoint."

In the past year he's raised money and recruited candidates for this fall's state races. Republicans have a good chance of winning both houses of the state legislature, giving the governor a free hand in the next legislative session when he resubmits a raft of reform ideas rejected by the Indiana house's Democratic majority. The session begins in January and runs through April. One last, truncated legislative session, in 2012, will require much less of the governor's attention. After next April, in other words, he'll still be governor, but he'll have more time on his hands.

Also over the last year, he's been attending a series of small lunches and dinners arranged by consultants and fundraisers from Indiana and beyond, and his recent visits to Washington have been packed with TV appearances, press breakfasts, closed-door kibitzing, and fundraisers for his state political action committee. After 30 years of national political activity, he doesn't need any introductions.

But he has yet to set foot in New Hampshire or Iowa, as other potential nominees have. So far his only scheduled campaign appearance out of state is in Ohio, at a rally for John Kasich, the Republican candidate for governor.

"I really don't want to run," he said again. "It's very important this time around that the party get it right. It's not going to be enough to be the un-Obama. We need to focus more on the What of the campaign than the Who." When he describes the What, though, it sounds tailored for a particular Who.

"What we've seen in the past year, what I call shock-and-awe statism, has put the American experiment at risk," he said. "For the first time in my life, the country faces survival-level issues."

Those would be, along with "terrorism in a WMD world," the national debt and the recurring federal deficits.

"There are things that I would advance as a candidate that the playbook says are folly—suicidal," he said. "We'd have to fundamentally change all the welfare and entitlement programs. What Bush tried to do [in proposing private accounts for Social Security] was mild compared to what needs to be done. You have to have a completely new compact for people under a certain age, for Medicare and Social Security. You're gonna have to dramatically cut spending across the whole government, including, by the way, national defense. When Bush arrived, we were spending $300 billion on national defense, and he thought that was plenty. Now it's, what, $800 billion?"

Beyond the debt and the deficit, in Daniels's telling, all other issues fade to comparative insignificance. He's an agnostic on the science of global warming but says his views don't matter. "I don't know if the CO_2 zealots are right," he said. "But I don't care, because we can't afford to do what they want to do. Unless you want to go broke, in which case the world isn't going to be any greener. Poor nations are never green."

And then, he says, the next president, whoever he is, "would have to call a truce on the so-called social issues. We're going to just have to agree to get along for a little while," until the economic issues are resolved. Daniels is pro-life himself, and he gets high marks from conservative religious groups in his state. He serves as an elder at the Tabernacle Presbyterian Church, in inner-city Indianapolis, which he's attended for 50 years. In 1998, with a few other couples from Tabernacle and a nearby Baptist congregation, he and his wife founded a "Christ-centered" school, The Oaks Academy, in a downtown neighborhood the local cops called "Dodge City." It's flourishing now with 315 mostly poor kids who pursue a classical education: Latin from third grade on, logic in middle school, rhetoric in eighth grade, an emphasis throughout on the treasures of Western Civilization. "It's the most important thing I've ever been involved in," he told me. His social-conservative credentials are solid.

But about that truce . . .

"He might be one guy who could get away with it," said Curt Smith, head of the Indiana Family Institute, who's known Daniels since the 1980s. "He has a deep faith, he's totally pro-life, and he walks the talk. And in an acute situation, like the one we're in now with the debt, he might get away with a truce for a year or two. But to be successful in office he's going to have to show those folks he shares their vision."

In 2008, Smith supported an amendment to the state constitution to codify marriage between a man and a woman. He asked for the governor's support.

"I wish he'd been more vocal about it, but that's not his way," Smith said. "What he told me, and told the public, was 'As a citizen I will go into the voting booth and vote for it eagerly. As governor, I don't have a role in this. The legislature and the people amend the constitution.'"

A couple of his friends say the one thing that will keep Daniels from a presidential campaign is deference to his family.

"Who would want to have your life opened up like that," he said at dinner. "Who would want to subject his family to it? It's vicious. My daughters are terrified of the idea."

His wife Cheri isn't crazy about it, either. She has been a low-flying first lady, hosting occasional receptions and launching a campaign to educate Hoosier women about heart disease. And she proudly won the watermelon-seed-spitting contest at the 2007 Indiana State Fair. But she never campaigns with her husband and rarely attends official functions.

"Right from the start she told me, 'I don't do the whole politician's spouse thing,'" Daniels said. "She's not apolitical. She's not unpolitical. She's antipolitical. I told her I would never ask her to do anything she didn't want to do. And I haven't. And she hasn't."

When the oppo researchers and the national press do get around to opening up Daniels's life for inspection, they will find a few embarrassments. One is his arrest in 1970 for marijuana possession when he was a student at Princeton. He spent two nights in jail and paid a $350 fine, and later wrote about the bust in a column for the *Star* in 1989. More painfully, he and his wife Cheri divorced in 1994. She moved to California, leaving Daniels with the four daughters, aged 8 to 14, and married a doctor. She divorced again and moved back to Indiana. She and Mitch remarried in 1997.

Cheri has never spoken about this publicly, and from what I can tell it's been mentioned in print only twice. Daniels's only comment was to the *Indianapolis Star* in 2004: "If you like happy endings, you'll love our story."

Daniels's valorization of business and private enterprise is essential to his view of public life, and it makes for a clear contrast with the views of President Obama. It may also be at odds with the public mood. On the other hand, President Obama's valorization of government is at odds with the public mood, too.

As our dinner wound down—I insisted on paying the bill, he offered to split it—he said he was going to give a commencement address the coming weekend, at Franklin College, south of Indianapolis. It had been inspired partly by the theme of "public service" struck by Obama's recent commencement addresses, in which the president discouraged the pursuit of mere material gain in favor of nonprofit and government work.

"That strikes me as exactly the wrong message to send to young people," Daniels said. "He's got it completely wrong. Government service—nonprofits—all that's fine and necessary. But the host can only stand so many parasites."

He stopped himself and glanced at my open notebook.

"Maybe that's too harsh," he went on. "But someone's got to say to these kids, There's nothing wrong with going into business. It's not selfish. It's good. Build a business, create jobs for people, create wealth for people. It helps people. And that's what we're supposed to do, isn't it."

The troopers pulled the Sequoia up to the door of the restaurant, and Daniels left me with what he said was one of his favorite quotations.

"I remember it from a book by Bruce Catton," he said. "It's a Union general commenting on Ulysses S. Grant. He said, 'There was no nonsense, no sentiment; only a plain businessman of the republic, there for the one single purpose of getting that command across the river.'

"I like that. I like that a lot." ♦

In Russia's Shadow

The surprising resilience of Georgian democracy

By Matthew Continetti

Tbilisi

It's hard building a house when your neighbor has annexed the front lawn. Since November 2003, when the Rose Revolution brought Mikhail Saakashvili's United National Movement (UNM) to power, the Republic of Georgia has been trying to build a modern liberal democracy in the middle of the Caucasus. It hasn't been easy—thanks mainly to the influence of Russia, which even invaded Georgia in August 2008. Today, almost two years after that war, Vladimir Putin's troops still occupy the provinces of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in contravention of international law. The Russians control more than 20 percent of the country. They have about 10,000 soldiers and FSB agents in the occupied territories. Their forces are only 30 miles from the Georgian capital. They could crush the independence and democratic aspirations of 4.6 million Georgians in a matter of hours.

A poster supporting Georgia's joining NATO in central Tbilisi

Yet none of that seemed to matter on May 27, as Tbilisi mayor Giorgi Ugulava stood in the hot sun outside the Kopala hotel. The Kopala, situated on a hilltop overlooking the old city, is one of Tbilisi's most fashionable spots, and its owners had invited the 34-year-old Ugulava to help them celebrate the opening of a new wing. It was a typical photo-op: a glad-handing politician, a crowd of local actors, businessmen, and other V.I.Ps, half a dozen TV cameramen, and a slightly anxious proprietor who barked "*Ashi! Ashi!*" whenever he wanted the crowd to applaud.

A handler carried a pillow, on which sat a pair of scissors. The mayor cut the red ribbon hanging over the entrance to the hotel, everyone cheered, and the gaggle took a tour of the facility. Then they broke for lunch. It was one of the quickest, most painless campaign events I've ever covered. Not bad for a democracy that hasn't yet reached its seventh birthday.

A few days later, on May 30, Ugulava beat eight rivals to win a second term. A member of Saakashvili's UNM, Ugulava took 55 percent of the vote. It was the first time the mayor of Tbilisi had been directly elected. But that wasn't what made the campaign special. What made it special was that Ugulava had done something new in Georgian politics. He had run on his record. As recently as 2004, there were only two hours of electricity in Tbilisi per day, crime was rampant, and the police were often no better than the crooks. Now the city has power at all times. It's safe. The roads are paved. Street life bustles. The place is filled with restaurants and casinos. As you walk around Tbilisi, you're reminded that economic progress and democratic governance go hand in hand.

This was the theme of municipal elections throughout the country. In the days before May 30, international observers flooded Georgia to observe 14 political parties and 3 political blocs participate in 64 municipal council elections, spread over 73 election districts, divided into 3,624 precincts. Saakashvili's party was the big winner. But the larger story was that the elections proceeded peacefully and fairly. In a preliminary report, the OSCE observer delegation said the elections "marked evident progress" in Georgia's political, social, and economic development.

These elections appear to signal that Saakashvili's reforms are taking root. Georgia wants to join Western institutions such as NATO and the EU. But it first must demonstrate that it can function as a Western-oriented nation-state. This is easier said than done. Since independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, all political change in Georgia has been driven by street protest. In 1992, armed

PHOTOS: REUTERS / DAVID MDZINARISHVILI

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clashes brought down the government of nationalist Zviad Gamsakhurdia and resulted in civil war. In 2003, the Rose Revolution demonstrations outside the parliament brought down the government of Gamsakhurdia's successor, Eduard Shevardnadze. In November 2007, street confrontations forced Saakashvili to call early elections.

When Saakashvili was reelected in 2008, part of the opposition refused to recognize the result. They launched another round of protests in April 2009. Those demonstrations lasted several months, but they ended in failure. The opposition splintered, and the "Georgian Street" has been relatively quiet ever since. "Standing in the street outside parliament is no longer enough to deliver change," says a high-ranking member of the government. Slowly, participation in the electoral process is becoming the only legitimate option.

It's a cliché to say that a country stands at a crossroads. But in Georgia's case the cliché happens to be true. This ancient nation, with a unique alphabet and culture, has withstood invasion and subjugation by Turks, Persians, Mongols, and Russians traversing the Eurasian landmass. It has its independence for only the second time in 200 years and wants to align itself with the West. The government has reformed its economic and political structures. The banner of the Council of Europe flies alongside the Georgian flag outside government buildings. About 1,000 Georgian soldiers are serving in Afghanistan.

Tbilisi is safe. The roads are paved. Street life bustles. The place is filled with restaurants and casinos. As you wander, you're reminded that economic progress and democratic governance go hand in hand.

The trouble is that Georgia is taking these steps just as the Western powers are beset by financial crises, split over the purpose of NATO, and cowed by a resurgent, belligerent Russia. The West has turned a blind eye to the fact that Georgian independence and Georgian democracy are inextricably linked. "In the post-Soviet sphere, Georgia is the most well prepared democracy," says Guram Chakhvaze, an MP from the opposition National-Democratic party. "But this is not the standard that will allow us to enter NATO and think about the European Union."

The Georgians want to join NATO and the EU not just as a hedge against Russian aggression, but also to realize aspirations stretching back to their last period of independence, between 1918 and 1921. Back then, Georgian leader Noe Zhordania did all he could to establish the country as a European social democracy, with a constitution, individual rights, and modern institutions. Such hopes were crushed by the Soviet invasion. Now, at the beginning of a new century, history is repeating itself. Down one road is democracy, individualism, and markets. Down the other is autocracy, vassalage, and statism. And if neither America nor Europe helps Georgia along the winding path it's been traveling, well, who will?

Georgia is an old nation but a young country. Children are everywhere. Freedom Square in Tbilisi is filled at all hours with young men and women hanging out. They dress in what seems to be the Georgian national uniform: black tops and blue jeans. Visiting the state chancellery is like dropping by the set of one of those Brat Pack movies from the 1980s. Practically everyone in a position of authority looks like they are around 30 years old. Saakashvili is ancient at 42.

The reason for this is simple. By the time of the Rose Revolution, older Georgians had become invested in a bankrupt system. Shevardnadze's nomenklatura benefited from the corruption and chaos. Younger Georgians did not. A rising cohort, born in an era of Soviet decline and raised in an age of post-Soviet anarchy, wanted to reform politics along the lines articulated by its heroes: Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher, and Friedrich von Hayek. The changes would improve Georgia's economic, political, and social life. But they would also transfer power from one generation to another, and create new opportunities for ambitious young men and women outside the power structure.

The most important reforms involved public safety. In 2004, Georgia was close to being a failed state. The mafia ran rampant. The police were just another gang. The province of Ajaria, bordering Turkey on the Black Sea, was ruled by the gangster Aslan Abashidze. The chances for a Georgian life untouched by crime or graft were nil.

The "youngsters," as Saakashvili's team is sometimes known, instituted radical changes. A minister of justice in Shevardnadze's government, Saakashvili made his name fighting corruption. The laws against bribery were tightened and enforced. Compromised bureaucrats and police were fired. One notoriously corrupt department, the traffic police, was simply abolished. The government is proud of what it has achieved, sometimes ostentatiously so. The new ministry of internal affairs, a postmodern building resembling a lava-lamp fallen on its side, is made of glass to signify government transparency.

The changes came at a cost, however. When one fires

the police, one creates an entire class of disgruntled men. The "thieves in law" did not leave Georgia without bloodshed. In the fight against organized crime, 27 policemen were killed. In 2004, the situation in Ajaria threatened to become an armed conflict between Abishidze and the central government.

In the end, though, the situation was resolved. Ajaria's reunification with Georgia was peaceful. These days, Saakashvili loves to take visiting dignitaries to the Black Sea city of Batumi, where he shows them how much his government has invested in the former breakaway province. Meanwhile, the crime rate is down. Eka Zguladze, the deputy minister of internal affairs, boasts that violent crime has decreased by 30 percent over the last three years. Public support for the government's policies is high. As Rudy Giuliani demonstrated in New York City in the 1990s, once people feel secure, business and civic life flourish. "Without these reforms," says the minister for European and Euro-Atlantic integration, Giorgi Baramidze, "none of the others would have materialized."

Electrification was a top priority. Pre-Saakashvili, electricity was rare, and the overwhelming majority of Georgians who could turn on the lights were not paying for their power. The government invested heavily in hydroelectrics. In a matter of years, Georgia went from importing energy to exporting it. It's now in a better position than many Eastern European countries, which rely on the Kremlin-controlled Gazprom to supply power. This is one area, at least, where the Georgians do not have to worry about Russia.

Another set of reforms involved fiscal policy. The Georgians looked to Estonia, where Prime Minister Mart Laar had made a variety of durable free-market changes in a post-Soviet setting. Saakashvili's government privatized state enterprises. It instituted a flat tax, which captured revenue that otherwise would have gone into the underground economy. (Georgia also has a VAT.) The government cleaned out the customs agency and lowered duties and fees to encourage trade.

Georgia is now 11th on the World Bank's "Ease of Doing Business" rankings. Right now the big domestic initiative is an economic freedom bill. If it passes, referendums will be required for all tax increases, and Georgia's debt-to-GDP ratio will be capped at 60 percent. Mention these reforms to American libertarians, and their mouths water.

Finally, there is education. Saakashvili inherited a public schooling system that was as compromised as the other bureaucracies. Members of the nomenklatura used their connections, as well as bribes, to guarantee entry into one of Georgia's more than 200 universities. These schools hardly deserved to be called "universities," however. They had few students and fewer requirements.

A 2004 education reform beefed up the entrance exams. It directed colleges to meet tough standards before they could accept students. The number of universities decreased as a result, leaving a lot of angry professors and administrators looking for work. But the government had brought yet another unruly public apparatus under control. One Georgian proudly told me that the system was so meritocratic, the son of a top education official had been denied admission into university because he did not pass the entrance exam. This wouldn't have happened under Shevardnadze.

As much as the Georgians have accomplished, they face greater challenges. Domestically, the number one problem is unemployment. The government's efforts to close state businesses led to an increase in joblessness. "We had to squeeze out big inefficiencies," says an economic adviser to the government.

Normally, economic growth and foreign direct investment would create new jobs to replace the old. But the August 2008 war, followed by the global financial crisis a month later, devastated the Georgian economy. The official unemployment rate is 16 percent, but the real number is probably much higher. And it will take some time before foreign companies feel safe investing in Georgia with Russian troops occupying Sukhumi and Tskhinvali.

There is a lot to do on the democratization front, as well. The municipal elections were a big step, but the real test will come with parliamentary elections in 2012 and the race to succeed Saakashvili in 2013. As it stands, the opposition to the UNM is truculent and divided. The most recent addition to the political scene is the Union of Orthodox Parents, a conservative social movement with pro-Russian ties. It's a fringe group with little public support. Nevertheless, it is in Georgia's interest, as well as the West's, to see a responsible opposition in Georgia, with broad appeal. And though the print press is oppositional, and the government has created a C-SPAN-like public affairs channel, more could be done to promote media freedom.

A case in point is the Imedi television station. The authorities seized Imedi during the November 2007 protests after its owner said he was committed to bringing down Saakashvili. The current ownership of the station is in dispute, but its ties to the government came under fire in March when it broadcast a "War of the Worlds"-style program that simulated another Russian invasion of Georgia. (The show caused panic on the streets of Tbilisi.) A member of the opposition says the biggest confidence-building measure the government could do is return Imedi to its former owner.

Saakashvili is no saint. He's impulsive, daring, and aggressive. He sometimes pushes the envelope. He mishandled the 2007 protests. Members of his inner circle have a strange habit of becoming opposition figures. He made mistakes before and during the war with Russia. He's becoming

too friendly with Iran. The government is new at governing, and the opposition is new at opposing. In this part of the world, overreach by the authorities is all too familiar. But there is no question that his country is in better shape than it was six years ago.

A proposed constitutional reform would give more power to the prime minister at the expense of the president. If Saakashvili backed the change, as well as a cap on presidential terms (right now the executive is limited to two consecutive terms, but can run again after a break), he would confirm his democratic credentials.

The major threat remains to the north: Russia. The czars invaded in 1801, and the Soviets invaded 120 years later. Today, Vladimir Putin asserts Russia's authority over its "near-abroad." Critics like to make Saakashvili the scapegoat for a Russian aggression that is antique. But the Georgian leadership is the variable in this historical equation. The constant has been Russia's compulsion to dominate her neighbors.

A shop girl wearing a traditional Georgian hat in Tbilisi

Georgia is tiny. The entire country could fit inside South Carolina. She is used to being under constant threat. "Russia has devastating airpower," says a source in the ministry of defense. Not only is Georgia outmatched, the Rose Revolution is the last of the democratic "Color Revolutions" in Ukraine, Lebanon, and Kyrgyzstan to survive. Russia would like to see it stamped out too.

What the 2008 war made clear was that Abkhazia and South Ossetia were conflicts between Russia and Georgia, not internal conflicts persisting from the civil war. In February 2008, Putin was stung by Western recognition of Kosovo. He felt threatened by former Warsaw Pact nations and Soviet Republics moving toward the West. Searching for a way to display Russian power, he turned Western rhetoric on itself.

The window of opportunity came after the April 2008 NATO summit in Bucharest. The allies there denied Georgia and Ukraine Membership Action Plans (MAPs), but nonetheless stated that one day the two countries would be members of NATO. Here was Putin's chance. He could reassert regional authority, topple Saakashvili, and not have to worry about Western intervention.

The Allies intervened in Kosovo to stop a genocide, so Putin began interfering with Abkazhia and South Ossetia using similar rhetoric. The Allies created a new country out of a former Serbian province, so Putin began laying the legal groundwork for Russia to create new states out of Georgian provinces.

When the war arrived, however, Putin failed to achieve his strategic objectives. His intervention rallied Poland, Ukraine, and the Baltic states to Georgia's side. Saakashvili remains in power. Abkazhia and South Ossetia may be members of the Russian Federation, but only Nicaragua, Venezuela, Nauru, and the breakaway Moldovan province of Transnistria have recognized them as independent states.

But it was not all downside for Putin. Abkazhia and South Ossetia are strategically valuable—Abkazhia for its Black Sea port, South Ossetia for its location (from there, one can split Georgia in two). Most important, the invasion exposed Western weakness. Russia paid no price for its actions. Indeed, some in the West said Georgia was at fault. And the war damaged Georgia's chances of joining NATO—not because Georgians no longer desire membership, but because the West is afraid of the collective responsibility such membership might entail.

When Putin looks abroad today, he sees an American administration so obsessed with obtaining Russian cooperation on Iran, it is willing to toss aside missile defense agreements with the Poles and Czechs, overlook the Russian occupation of Georgia, and ignore the Finlandization of Ukraine under Viktor Yanukovych. Putin sees an American president who hopes for a fantastical rapprochement with the Muslim world, and with the great powers of Russia and China, more than he supports the beleaguered small democracies of Georgia, Israel, and Honduras. Putin sees the Americans fixated on achieving "nuclear zero," even as Iran hurtles toward nuclear weapons and the North Korean nuclear deterrent remains intact. Traditional strategic objectives, such as strengthening the alliance structure and bringing new countries into the liberal democratic sphere of influence, are left by the wayside.

"We lost two years because of war and economic crisis, but now we are recovering," says Baramidze, the minister for European and Euro-Atlantic integration. A visit to Georgia suggests he's right. Wouldn't it be nice if someone in the West Wing actually noticed? ♦

'Dr. Samuel Johnson in the anteroom of Lord Chesterfield, awaiting an audience, 1748' by E.M. Ward

Dr J.'s Sampler

Gleanings from the sage of Fleet Street

BY BARTON SWAIM

Years ago I bought a musty, hundred-year-old book at a secondhand bookstore, *Selected Essays of Samuel Johnson*, edited by a scholar named Stuart Reid. I remember reading the book and thinking I would write an essay on why it's too bad Burke, rather than Johnson, is thought to be the father of modern conservatism. I yield to no man in admiring Edmund Burke, but his conservatism seemed essentially a response to a bellicose ideology rather than an expression of immovable beliefs. Johnson's conservatism was a reflection of the man's soul.

I never did anything with the idea, mainly because it was stupid. Conservatism is by its nature a response, and in any case Johnson was more concerned with morality than with politics; he cared about individual rather than societal reform, and so could never be the father, or even the uncle, of any variety of political conservatism.

Samuel Johnson
Selected Writings
edited by Peter Martin
Belknap Harvard, 536 pp., $29.95

Even so, reading through this latest collection of Johnson's writings, I can't help thinking there was something to my stupid idea. Johnson's is a moral and intellectual, not a political, conservatism, but it is no less relevant for that. If there is any truth to Michael Oakeshott's claim that conservatism is a disposition rather than a creed, that disposition was given its fullest and most memorable expression in the works of Samuel Johnson: preeminently in his essays from *The Rambler*, *The Idler*, and *The Adventurer*, and in his short philosophical novel, *Rasselas*; but also in his literary criticism and other occasional writings.

Peter Martin, who joined the crowded ranks of Johnson's biographers last year, has given us a fair representation of these works here. It's possible to quibble with some of his editorial choices. Why, for instance, does he include the forgettable *Rambler* 117, on the advantages of living in a garret, but not *Rambler* 180, a marvelous essay on the idle speculations of the learned? The latter half of the preface to Shakespeare could have been excluded, it seems to me, in favor of some passages from *A Journey to the Western Isles of Scotland* or, at the very least, the whole of *Vanity of Human Wishes*. The editorial endnotes seem haphazard: We're told that "momentaneous" means "lasting but a moment," yet Martin passes over in silence Johnson's risible observation that Milton was "untainted by any heretical peculiarity of opinion." Still, Martin's choices are defensible, and the Harvard Press deserves lavish praise for producing a handsome, well-made edition on which they will probably lose money.

Johnson was not, as those who've

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read only Boswell have often concluded, a reactionary. He thought of himself as a Tory, but that label did not mean for him a hidebound attitude toward all things modern. He certainly had a perverse streak (as, surely, all conservatives must have if they wish to preserve their sanity), and he enjoyed making outrageous and abusive remarks in conversation. But Johnson's views were in chief respects more forward-looking and Whiggish than otherwise. In the essays reprinted in this volume, he inveighs against punishing debtors with prison sentences, men who take advantage of vulnerable women, the ill-treatment of children by fathers, and of Indians by the North American settlers.

He rejected the belief, common throughout the latter half of the 18th century, that the spread of commerce, or "luxury," led inevitably to moral debasement and political instability. In *The Adventurer* 67, one of the essays included here, Johnson celebrates the bewildering array of human propensities on display in London. These myriad talents and interests combined, he says, to produce wealth for every willing participant.

> In the endless variety of tastes and circumstances that diversify mankind, nothing is so superfluous, but that some one desires it: or so common, but that some one is compelled to buy it. . . . When I look round upon those who are thus variously exerting their qualifications, I cannot but admire the secret concatenation of society that links together the great and the mean, the illustrious and the obscure.

One also learns from Johnson that the false premise of our time is the belief that man is justified, not by his behavior, but by his opinions. What one does is of little consequence so long as one holds the right views. Disdain for that assumption runs through all Johnson's writings on manners and morality. "There are men," he writes in *Rambler* 28,

> who always confound the praise of goodness with the practice, and who believe themselves mild and moderate, charitable and faithful, because they have exerted their eloquence in commendation of mildness, fidelity, and other virtues. . . . Having none to recall their attention to their lives, they rate themselves by the goodness of their opinions, and forget how much more easily men may show their virtue in their talk than in their actions.

Accordingly Johnson's most acerbic criticisms are usually reserved for those "men of letters"—intellectuals is our term—who pay scrupulous attention to the morality of "society" but none to their own. "Be not too hasty," says Imlac, the prince's wise instructor in *Rasselas*,

James Boswell (left) and Johnson as gourmands

"to trust or to admire the teachers of morality: They discourse like angels, but they live like men."

Johnson was among the most learned men in the world in his day, and he never engaged in "anti-intellectualism," to use Richard Hofstadter's egregious phrase. There is a lovely passage in *Adventurer* 137 in which "books of morality" are compared to the husbandman's labor; let the world go without one or the other, and "the wickedness that is now frequent will become universal, the bread that is now scarce would wholly fail." For precisely that reason he hated those "speculative reasoners"—David Hume was a frequent target, at least in conversation—who use their powers irresponsibly: "What punishment can be adequate," he wondered in *Rambler* 77,

> to the crime of him who . . . tortures his fancy, and ransacks his memory, only that he may leave the world less virtuous than he found it; that he may intercept the hopes of the rising generation; and spread snares for the soul with more dexterity?

He hated philosophies that relied on theory in the absence of practice. His essays take aim at Stoicism—a doctrine which, with its promise of emotional equipoise, clearly had some appeal for Johnson, who struggled all his life with melancholy and guilt. What offended him about Stoicism and its intellectual cognates was their tendency to believe that human life could be made tidy, and that human motivations could be explained simply. "There is a kind of mercantile speculation," Johnson says,

> which ascribes every action to interest, and considers interest as only another name for pecuniary advantage. But the boundless variety of human affections is not to be thus easily circumscribed. Causes and effects, motives and actions, are complicated and diversified without end.

Johnson had little faith in human propensities for good. He struggled heroically with what he felt were his own moral shortcomings, and he had no patience with the view that men could regulate themselves by means of a "moral sense," as the Scottish philosopher Francis Hutcheson had originally called it. In Johnson's rendering, the human heart is governed by pride, envy, idleness, covetousness, and vanity. His hatred of idleness—his own especially—is well known. I was surprised by how frequently he returns in these works to the sin of covetousness. "Men may be found," he says in *Adventurer* 119,

> who are kept from sleep by the want of a shell particularly variegated; who are wasting their lives, in stratagems to obtain a book in a language which they do not understand; who pine with envy at the flowers of another man's parterre; who hover like vultures round the owner of a fossil, in hopes to plunder his cabinet at his death; and who would not much regret to see a street in flames, if a box of medals might be scattered in the tumult.

Both these predispositions—his refusal to countenance any belief that oversimplified the human experience, and his dim view of man's benevolence—made him skeptical of the claims of politics. The mental vulgarity of politics robs men of good cheer, and gives them the moral license to say things they know to be untrue. In *Idler* 10, Johnson discusses two of his friends. "They are both men of integrity," he says, "where no factious interest is to be promoted; and both lovers of truth, when they are not heated with political debate."

Politics usurps the mind, and tempts its participants to exaggerate the importance of government policies beyond all rational bounds. The hero of *Rasselas* recognizes this tendency in his sister. "Let us not imagine evils which we do not feel," he says to her, "nor injure life by misrepresentations." Rasselas goes on:

> While courts are disturbed with intestine competitions and ambassadors are negotiating in foreign countries, the smith still plies his anvil and the husbandman drives his plough forward; the necessaries of life are required and obtained, and the successive business of the seasons continues to make its wonted revolutions.

Peter Martin's decision to include Johnson's preface to his *Dictionary* was an excellent one. It is a delightful essay, partly explaining his lexicographical methodology and partly setting forth Johnson's views on the nature of language. He struggled for nine years to produce the *Dictionary*; indeed he almost gave up on it more than once, and wasn't happy with it when it appeared. None of this comes through in the preface, which alternates between self-effacing wit and peremptory authority.

Johnson's understanding of linguistic change is, as you would expect, extraordinarily sophisticated. In 1755 he was well aware of what postmodern literary critics were congratulating themselves for knowing in the 1980s: that change in language is inevitable, and that words derive their meanings, not from themselves, but from the ways in which they are used.

> As by the cultivation of various sciences, a language is amplified, it will be more furnished with words deflected from their original sense; the geometrician will talk of a courtier's zenith, or the eccentric virtue of a wild hero, and the physician of sanguine expectations and phlegmatic delays. Copiousness of speech will give opportunities to capricious choice, by which some words will be preferred, and others degraded; vicissitudes of fashion will enforce the use of new, or extend the signification of known terms. The tropes of poetry will make hourly encroachments, and the metaphorical will become the current sense: pronunciation will be varied by levity or ignorance, and the pen must at length comply with the tongue; illiterate writers will at one time or other, by public infatuation, rise into renown, who, not knowing the original import of words, will use them with colloquial licentiousness, confound distinction, and forget propriety.

Yet Johnson did not draw from this the literally inhuman conclusion that the lexicographer's duty is merely to describe the language with no reference to propriety or correctness. He refused to include "casual and mutable" language (I notice the *Oxford English Dictionary* has now adopted, under "footprint," the meaning "an environmental consequence of human activity"). "This fugitive cant, which is always in a state of increase or decay, cannot be regarded as any part of the durable materials of a language, and therefore must be suffered to perish with other things unworthy of preservation."

Language is mutable, yes, but it is not for that reason impossible to misuse it, as everyone but linguists seems to understand. Johnson: "Tongues, like governments, have a natural tendency to degeneration; we have long preserved our constitution, let us make some struggles for our language."

Johnson was at his best in his *Lives of the Poets*, a series of biographical and critical reflections on 52 British poets, written near the end of his life and published in 1781, three years before his death. The present volume reprints most of the lives of Pope, Milton, and Abraham Cowley (this last a risky but reasonable choice), as well as excerpts from Johnson's full-length biography of Richard Savage.

Like all great criticism, Johnson's is valuable even when it's wrong. In the life of Milton, for example, even his disapproval of blank verse is instructive—and, in its way, right:

> Of the Italian writers without rhyme, whom Milton alleges as precedents, not one is popular; what reason could urge in its defence has been confuted by the ear. But whatever be the advantages of rhyme I cannot prevail on myself to wish that Milton had been a rhymer; for I cannot wish his work to be other than it is; yet like other heroes, he is to be admired rather than imitated. He that thinks himself capable of astonishing may write blank verse, but those that hope only to please must condescend to rhyme.

Again and again, Johnson puts into words what the educated reader usually thinks, without realizing, or admitting to himself, that he thinks it. Again on Milton:

> *Paradise Lost* is one of the books which the reader admires and lays down, and forgets to take up again. None ever wished it longer than it is. Its perusal is a duty rather than a pleasure. We read Milton for instruction, retire harassed and overburdened, and look elsewhere for recreation; we desert our master, and seek for companions.

Johnson could tolerate technical imperfection in a poem far more easily than he could abide a common sentiment dressed in florid language, and his discussion of Pope's *Essay on Man* remains one of the great eviscerations of English literary history. "Never was penury of knowledge and vulgarity of sentiment so happily disguised," he begins.

> When these wonder-working sounds sink into sense, and the doctrine of the Essay, disrobed of its ornaments, is left to the powers of its naked excellence, what shall we discover? That we are, in comparison with our Creator, very weak and ignorant; that we do not uphold the chain of existence; and that we could not make one another with more skill than we are made. We may learn yet more: that the arts of human life were copied from the instinctive operations of other animals; that if the world be made for man, it may be said that man was made for geese. To these profound principles

of natural knowledge are added some moral instructions equally new: that self-interest, well understood, will produce social concord; that men are mutual gainers by mutual benefits; that evil is sometimes balanced by good; that human advantages are unstable and fallacious, of uncertain duration and doubtful effect; that our true honour is not to have a great part, but to act it well; that virtue only is our own; and that happiness is always in our power.

Surely a man of no very comprehensive search may venture to say that he has heard all this before, but it was never till now recommended by such a blaze of embellishments, or such sweetness of melody.

Johnson's champions have wondered for years why his writings aren't more widely known. Certainly his prose is often too abstract and Latinate. He was not a systematic thinker, and there is no One Great Work to serve as an obvious point of entry to his writing. Whatever the reasons for his neglect, there is this to be said in his favor: It is impossible to read Johnson without a heightened awareness of the seductiveness of cant.

Surely that's all the reason we need. ♦

B&A

Cinéma Rivierité

When it comes to the movies, those who Cannes do.

BY SARA LODGE

Cannes

For twelve days in May, if cinema is your business or your passion, there is only one place to be.

The city of Cannes on the south coast of France has, since 1946, played host to a film festival that is also a marketplace where some 60 percent of international business in the film industry is annually accomplished. Like the mass migration of wildebeest across the plains of the Serengeti, or the flight of hundreds of pink flamingos across the salt marshes of the Camargue, the descent of 10,000 filmmakers, screenwriters, producers, distributors, sales agents, actors, financiers, and studio executives, together with 4,000 press, and another 100,000 wannabes, cinéastes, partygoers, and star-spotters, is one of the great spectacles and curiosities of the natural world.

Life is one long promenade: and so is Cannes. The town is dominated by a wide seafront boulevard, the Croisette, which curves like an Oscar-winner's smile from the pass-controlled Palais des Festivals, with its long, red-carpeted steps, to the public Cinéma de la Plage, an open-air arena that screens free classics. Crowded even at two in the morning, the Croisette is a fashion runway, a nightspot, a circus, a grandstand from which the curious peer into beach bars like Terrazza Martini, where, perhaps, the cast of Oliver Stone's new movie *Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps* (Michael Douglas, Carey Mulligan) are holding a private party.

This is a human safari. You will see no more than a leopard skin dress disappearing into a glade of cameras, a herd of newsmen being pursued by a traffic cop, the blond mane of a cinematic lion stalking across a savannah of red carpet. But the crowds are fascinated. The very elusiveness of the game is its attraction. And since nobody can be quite sure who is who in this crush, it's open to anyone to walk like a giraffe (high heels, big sunglasses) or play the puma (tuxedo, black shirt, big sunglasses) as they pass the palms, the panhandlers, the panpipe players, the Grand Hotel, and the glittering shopfronts of Balenciaga, Prada, and Christian Lacroix.

In the window of Balenciaga at Cannes, I spotted a glorious dress: black, with a low neckline and layers of ruffle descending from hip to floor. On close inspection, you could see that each ruffle was edged with the open teeth of a hundred zippers. And that dress is the spirit of Cannes: froth with bite. For the festival is a desperate round of parties, where the trappings of entertainment conceal frustration, hunger, and cutthroat competition. For the tourist, the safari is glamorous; for the creatures who live in the film jungle, it is a place of frantic courtship, struggle, and narrow odds of survival.

The strange thing, to a newcomer, is that many people who come to the Film Festival barely see a film while they are here. In fact, the number of films in the Grand Jury Competition—which, like Napoleon, is mercurial, political, and short—never reaches much above 20. Of course, there are many side events, with screenings taking place all over town, but the slimness of the Official Selection is telling. The Palais des Festivals embodies the French view of film as high art: a medium worthy of government sponsorship, select presentation, and serious cultural discussion.

If, however, with your festival pass, you walk through the Palais, with its screening rooms named after Debussy and Buñuel, you discover that what lies behind it is the Film Market: the low commercial underbelly to the high art façade of Cannes. The Film Market consists of hundreds of stalls devoted to particular production companies, all busily touting their wares ("Action, Samurai, Erotic!" as one Japanese firm proclaimed). Behind it is the "International Village," a long row of shiny white tents inhabited by the National Film Board of every country from Lithuania to Egypt. It is behind the Palais that the real scramble to gamble occurs. Most of the people here are looking for tax-sheltered investment in film as a high risk, high return product. They don't give a damn about art.

Beyond the International Village is the marina, where the celebrity yachts are docked. I saw Jean-Claude Van Damme's unobtrusive little craft, which has a stuffed lion on the deck and looks

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as if it could, in an emergency, evacuate the entire population of Belgium. I saw a bronzed Italian actor clad in only swimming trunks and sunglasses, leap aboard a yacht called *Low Profile*, accompanied by six suitcase-bearing minders. However, many of the vast and shiny cruisers seemed unattended. It occurred to me that it would be easy to slip aboard and stow away: Hide in a cupboard and come out with your script at night and make the captain and (film) crew read it. This is known as movie piracy.

For cinéastes, the Film Market is fun. I enjoyed finding dreadful post-

Matthieu Amalric and the cast of 'Tournee'

ers for films that very few people may ever see. Among the more intriguing offerings were *Gothic & Lolita Psycho*, *Reykjavik Whale Watching Massacre*, *I Sell the Dead*, and *Dino Mom*. I went to a pitching competition. Contestants drop five euros into the hat for the chance to pitch their film to an industry panel: The first in line have two minutes, the last have only 30 seconds. Watching was fascinating, and painful. Despite their brevity, pitches were often both confusing and dull, and I began to understand why top film industry figures are as hard to reach as Mars.

"It's a mystery-comedy," said one aspiring director. (I visualized a man walking into a room, saying "knock, knock, who's there," raising an eyebrow, and leaving.) A Saudi woman pitched a movie in which a suburban mother goes into the desert to look for a pink elephant. Remarkably, she finds one wholly without the aid of gin. The winner was a film about Guy Fawkes: "Fundamentalist religion, terrorism, bombs: We love it," the panel enthused.

I saw two films in the Official Selection that embody the best and worst of Cannes. The first was *A Screaming Man*, directed by Mahamat-Saleh Haroun, from war-torn Chad. This is a patient movie, which draws the viewer inexorably into a conflict that is both personal and national. A father is the lifeguard at a hotel pool; he loses his job to his son and, through straitened circumstances, but perhaps also through jealousy, stops paying off the local recruitment sergeant whom he has been bribing not to press his son into the army. The son is dragged off to the front line; his pregnant girlfriend appears and begs the family for help. So the father, racked by guilt, goes to the battlefield to try and find his injured son and bring him home. The ending is devastating and tragic.

This small-scale Oedipal drama encapsulates the losses of a whole country. At the end, the 2,000-strong audience rose as one and gave the filmmakers a ten-minute standing ovation. This kind of film eloquently makes the case for the eclectic, cultural, and international focus of the movie menu showcased at Cannes.

The second movie was *Certified Copy*, directed by Abbas Kiarostami, from Iran. A self-indulgent romantic comedy that was neither romantic nor funny, it followed a middle-aged lecturer in art history and a middle-aged gallery owner as they drove around Tuscany and exchanged dreary conversations about whether a fake could be as good as an original and whether, after fifteen years of marriage, a couple had anything left to share. There was nothing about the empty, awkward, and meandering dialogue that was more profound than the kind of late-night spat between loveless partners that you can see in any bar, on any night, in any city, for free. By the end of the press screening, journalists were hanging over the velvet seats in attitudes of grotesque boredom and despair, like gargoyles from a church roof.

Amazingly, Juliette Binoche won a Best Actress award for her role in this film; she used the platform to demand the release of an imprisoned Iranian director. *A Certified Copy* eloquently conveys the problems of the Cannes menu which, determined to champion a certain cultural and political agenda, and certain favored practitioners, can be willfully blind to the (flawed but frank) wisdom of popular taste.

On my last day, I met up with some childhood friends who were here to sell a movie. Their competition-winning trailer—for *Nitrate*, a thriller—was screening alongside two others in the U.K. Film Council tent, so I went along to see them. One was a thriller set inside a shipping container in which there was an unhappy man, a ticking watch, and menacing drums. What they were doing in the container, however, was wholly opaque. Another was a thriller set inside a submarine, in which there were many unhappy men, mysterious bangs, and menacing drums. Even the director, however, was forced to admit that he had yet to decide exactly what the bang-producing monster was.

My friends' film has a plot. It features a movie director who is trying to finish the last film of a legendary Russian director, Yuri Gadyukin, but is drawn into a web of mystery, danger, and deception. The crowd liked *Nitrate* but the sales agents were cautious. They knew what to do with container-based dramas; they felt less certain about movies

ANNE-CHRISTINE POUJOULAT / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

that weren't set in a can. It was tempting to conclude that it is the container rather than the content, the genre rather than the story, which sells a film.

"Let's go to Belgium," I suggested to my friends after the back-slapping and hand-wringing was over, "they have free beer there." Luckily, Belgium (at least the Belgian Film Council tent) was only five minutes' walk away. Journalists at Cannes spend mush of their daze traveling from news to booze, which is tactfully distributed by those countries and companies that seek media coverage. So we traveled to Belgium, whence we could see another party, across the picket fence, in Bulgaria. After a brief tour of Europe, we ended up on the terrace of the Grand Hotel, where hundreds of people in evening dress who hadn't managed to gatecrash their party of choice, knocked back 15-euro gin and tonics and sat on plastic sofas under the stars plotting their next mov(i)e.

Cannes isn't what it was. Many people felt 2010 was a lackluster festival. A sixtysomething producer wearing a great deal of make-up was wistful: "In the old days, bands like The Pogues came to Cannes just to party. People let their hair down. What happened in Cannes, stayed in Cannes. Now what happens in Cannes goes on Facebook." Back then, you could see Robert De Niro each morning, collecting croissants from his favorite boulangerie. Back then, when the pornography festival and the film festival occurred simultaneously, topless models frolicked on the beach. Those were days of low security and high rollers.

Now Cannes is cannier. Money comes here, but it sticks close and is heavily guarded. Getting it to meet your project is hard. For the aspiring writer-directors who proliferate here, the odds against getting a film funded make the life of the lemming seem comparatively secure. Yet each year, by a miracle of nature, new lemmings and new films emerge.

"I don't want to be rich," one of my friends said with beer-flavored earnestness. "I just want to make movies!" I raised my glass to the moon and made a generous cinematic wish, as generations of Cannesistas have done before me.

"You will," I murmured, "you will."♦

B&A

Tower of Power

An (unbuilt) tribute to the Russian revolution.

BY ANDREW STUTTAFORD

Imagine that a critic had written a book centered on *Olympia* and *Triumph of the Will* without emphasizing the fact, however well known, that the Nazi ideology to which the director of those movies had dedicated her talent had led to the slaughter of millions. You can't. It would be inconceivable. Few can deny that, at their best (if that's the adjective), Leni Riefenstahl's films were works of genius, but their hideous context should never be ignored. And generally it isn't.

Tatlin's Tower
Monument to Revolution
by Norbert Lynton
Yale, 240 pp., $50

The artists who promoted Soviet communism are given an easier ride. To take perhaps the most prominent, Sergei Eisenstein is remembered today as a stylistically revolutionary filmmaker. Fair enough. But who mentions that he, no less than Riefenstahl, was a flack for totalitarian savagery? And Eisenstein was not alone. As the Bolsheviks hacked their millennial way to a radiant future built on slaughter, medieval despotism, and the annihilation of the society that had preceded them, they were cheered on by some of the brightest creative spirits of their era, by Malevich, by Rodchenko, by Mayakovsky, by—well, take your pick.

Amongst those who cheered the loudest was Vladimir Tatlin (1885-1953), designer of the immense (perhaps 1,200 feet tall) unbuilt structure that became a defining emblem of revolutionary élan. He is the subject of this fascinating, if in one sense tellingly uncritical, study completed by the noted British art historian Norbert Lynton shortly before his death in 2007. Scholarly, densely argued, and rendered more opaque still by the gaps in Tatlin's foggy biography, the book is wonderfully illustrated but not the easiest of reads. That said, persevere for long enough and you will be left mourning the brilliant culture of Russia's imperial twilight, struck by the strangeness of what replaced it, and appalled by the moral vacuum at the heart of Lynton's book.

Already deservedly (as Lynton demonstrates) famous as one of Russia's leading modern artists, Tatlin began planning his building, the "tower" of Lynton's title, in early 1919, shortly after taking a senior position in the ministry run by Anatoly Lunacharsky, Lenin's commissar for enlightenment. The tower was to be a monument to the Third International (the Comintern) and thus to global revolution. As such, it would have been a celebration of massacres past, present, and to come. Dreamt up as a wonder of the modern world, Tatlin's tower was to be the lighthouse of some nightmare Pharos, a beacon illuminating only the way to destruction.

None of this seems to have bothered Lynton overmuch. He confines himself to anodyne remarks about the tower's role as an incitement to revolution without worrying too much what that revolution might mean in practice, a peculiar omission from a man (a Jewish boy in Hitler's Reich) who had himself been forced to flee the rage of a state.

On the other hand, one of the strengths of this book is the manner in which Lynton links Tatlin's plans for his tower to the curious (and now largely forgotten) fusion of mysticism and futurism (Lynton's suggestion that

Andrew Stuttaford, who writes frequently about cultural and political issues, works in the international financial markets.

the tower also reflects Christian imagery is less convincing) that could be found in the thinking of some sections of the pro-Bolshevik intelligentsia: His "temple" would, Tatlin gushed, be the precursor of a future "temple of the worlds—which would … move in infinite space," emancipating "all the world from bondage to gravity" and paving the way for the "expression … of mutual love of all the generations," of a mankind that must become "sky-mechanics and sky-physicists."

A marginally less overexcited Nikolai Punin, future lover, companion, and heartbreaker of the poetess Anna Akhmatova, and a man ultimately destined to perish in the Gulag, explained how the tower, home to the coming world government, would be an "organic synthesis of architecture, sculpture, and painting." It was to encompass three large halls, one "for legislative purposes," shaped like a cube, that rotated annually, one pyramidal (for bureaucrats) that rotated monthly, and one cylindrical, dedicated to "disseminating information to the world proletariat," which was meant to rotate daily. These halls would be enveloped within a double helix framework that hinted at the ziggurats of antiquity and myth. Location, too, was crucial. The idea was that this vast, asymmetrical edifice of steel, iron, and glass would squat in the middle of the former St. Petersburg. Taunting and overshadowing the elegance and grandeur of the old imperial capital that had itself once represented a new direction for Russia, it would stand as a rebuke to history and homage to the future.

Spiraled, pointing, angled, closer in appearance to a giant telescope or piece of artillery than to a building, Tatlin's work conveyed both an impression of coiled power and energy unleashed. This was an *architecture parlante* intended to roar, a stupendous symbol of the new age. Statues of men on horseback were, like the aristocrats—the *individuals*—they depicted, to be consigned to the past. Tatlin's tower would be utilitarian, a manifestation of the collective will, a "living machine" made of industrial materials yet somehow organic, functional, more-than-modern and, like the revolution, in perpetual motion.

Tatlin and assistants working on the Tower model (1920)

Of course, it was never built. The resources were not there; the political will was not there (those running the new Soviet state preferred their monuments representational, solid, and stolid); and the technology was not there. Failing to take account of the last was a rare lapse for Tatlin, the son of an engineer and a man who took pride in his technical savvy, unless the tower was (as plausibly claimed by John Milner in the fine monograph on Tatlin he wrote in the 1980s) not so much impractical as explicitly utopian from the get-go, a manifesto rather than a blueprint.

Tatlin did manage to build at least three large-scale models of his tower, photographs of which are included in Lynton's book. The first stood around 15 feet high above a circular base (in which someone could crouch, turning the cranks that moved the tower's halls); the second, slightly smaller and decidedly more elegant, was exhibited in 1925 in Paris, home of the Eiffel Tower that had partly inspired it; and the third, stripped down and simplified, made an appearance, like some futurist fetish, at a ceremonial parade in Leningrad the same year. All three have since vanished, long since lost like so much else in the Soviet junkyard, but Tatlin's original vision itself endured in the leftist imagination as a statement of the what-could-be and, later, the what-could-have-been. Artistically, its status as one of the 20th century's most influential icons of architecture unbound remains undiminished.

As for Tatlin, his career went into a decline in the culturally more conventional years of full Stalinism, neither out of favor, nor quite in. His became a life of smaller-scale projects, from furniture design, to stage sets, to art more traditional than anything he had produced for decades. What was left of his old utopian obsessions revealed itself in prolonged attempts to perfect the Letatlin, his final challenge to "the bondage of gravity." A man-powered flying machine of remarkable beauty—oddly, no images of this craft are included in Lynton's book—it was inspired by the work of Leonardo da Vinci, another artist uncomfortable with strict divisions between the aesthetic and the practical, in the same field. It never flew.

Towards the end, Lynton includes a picture of an older Tatlin. He looks sad, beaten, crushed, an Icarus who had fallen to earth without ever reaching the heavens. ♦

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B&A

Scoundrel Time

Michael Douglas is the very model of a modern aging Boomer. **BY JOHN PODHORETZ**

Remember when wacky codgers in movies used to sit in rocking chairs on porches dispensing cranky wisdom? Or how, on television, Uncle Joe would be "a-movin' kinda slow at the junction—Petticoat Junction"? Uncle Joe was played by an actor named Edgar Buchanan, and when the show debuted in 1963, Edgar Buchanan was all of 60 years old.

Sixty happens to be the age of the character played by Michael Douglas in the compelling new movie *Solitary Man.* Only instead of taking a nice snooze in the afternoon when he should have been helping around the Shady Rest Hotel in Hooterville, Douglas's character in *Solitary Man* is sleeping with the 18-year-old daughter of his girlfriend in a Boston hotel, telling his 35-year-old daughter all about the repercussions, and abusing his daughter's husband for refusing to take risks even as he has to shnorr money to make the rent.

Why on earth would a movie about a reprehensible character like Ben Kalmen be at all worth seeing? Because *Solitary Man*'s screenwriter and co-director Brian Koppelman is onto something very interesting that doesn't quite come clear until the movie is almost at its end. This is a movie about a Baby Boomer who, right up until its opening scene, has led a wildly successful life, having grown so wealthy that the library at his alma mater is named after him. He's a husband and a father (though presumably not a very good husband and not a very attentive father). The movie begins with Ben getting the first real intimation of his own mortality when a doctor tells him, "I don't love your EKG." The doctor orders up more tests. The screen goes dark.

We don't watch Ben's life spiral out of control; Koppelman and his codirector, Brian Levien, flash forward six years to show us the wreckage. Ben wakes up alone in a jazzy bachelor pad, the wife (Susan Sarandon) he happily mentioned in conversation with his doctor nowhere in evidence. He downs some baby aspirin, dresses himself in funky clothes, and hits the streets of Manhattan. He ends up in a playground, where he tells his adoring grandson not to call him "Grandpa" because it might scare off the hot blonde he has spied over by the benches.

Solitary Man
Directed by Brian Koppelman and David Levien

As *Solitary Man* progresses, we learn that after decades of being New York's "honest" car dealer, making the cover of *Forbes* and the *New York Times* business section, Ben started scamming both buyers and BMW and only avoided prison by paying a colossal fine that wiped him out financially. He is on the verge of staging a remarkable comeback, but then his own determination not to consider the consequences of his actions puts that in danger as well.

And yet Ben is also good-humored, spirited, fun-loving, interested in people and extraordinarily incisive about what they want. He tells people that they have to think about "what you get out of the transaction." He was a great salesman, he explains, because he always knew what kind of car to put someone in. He knows what other people want before they do, and is able, for a time, to fulfill their desires in a way that fulfills his as well.

You want to hate him but you can't, quite; you want to understand what drove him to self-destruction when he had everything anyone could ever want. That is due to Koppelman's brilliant construction of Ben. Koppelman's screenplay isn't everything it could be, because it's full of on-the-nose speeches from other characters about what Ben has done wrong and how his wrongdoing hurts the people he loves and how he needs therapy and so on. But it builds Ben slowly and carefully until he is as fully rounded a character as we've seen in an American movie in a long time. And it will be a long time before there is a better American performance by a leading man.

When Douglas is at rest, and isn't spewing out words or working his vivid eyes and killer smile, he looks startlingly worn, even worn out. The unpitying eye of the camera here offers us a surprising, shocking, even bravely naked look at a soon-to-be little old Jewish man. And it is this fact, this unavoidable fact, the fact of his inevitable decline, that has driven Ben Kalmen off the rails.

"If you're lucky," his wife says, "you get old." But that is not what Ben feels. He had everything, was the focus of everyone's attention, the star in every room . . . until, after a while, he was less of a star, less the focus, more wounded, more fragile, just because that is what happens. He could have accepted it. But that was unbearable to him.

His later-in-life crisis is the crisis of the Baby Boomer generation writ small. In its own way, and perhaps without even knowing it, *Solitary Man* is the best portrait we've yet had of the psychology and motivation of Bill Clinton. ♦

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

"Federal officials are hoping film director James Cameron can help them come up with ideas on how to stop the disastrous oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico." — Associated Press, June 1, 2010

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FILM DIRECTOR SOLVES OIL CRISIS, AVERTS DISASTER DESPITE 'MORONS'

Machine 'Terminates' Spill, Becomes Self-Aware

By JILL ABRAMSON

BATON ROUGE — The worst oil spill in American history finally came to a halt yesterday when President Obama gave the go-ahead to deploy a cybernetic machine known as the T-2000. A few hours later, the deep-sea gusher that threatened the Gulf of Mexico was successfully sealed. The president thanked his staff and a select panel of leading scientists but especially director James Cameron for his leading role in solving the crisis.

"Without James Cameron, our environment would still be suffering the depredations of greedy oil executives who were given a pass by the previous administration. But thankfully Mr. Cameron's cyberdyne solution has brought this nightmare to an end." When asked by reporters precisely how this technology works, White House press secretary Robert Gibbs said they would have to ask the machine itself. "The T-2000 learns at a geometric rate. It actually thinks on its own, thereby coming to its own conclusions."

Although Cameron had initially recommended other solutions to the oil spill based on his expertise in remote underwater technology, officials at the Environmental Protection Agency were drawn to the more exotic suggestions, including the T-2000 and possible communication with highly intelligent luminous beings who live near the ocean floor.

Mike Matus

James Cameron's T-2000 is designed to clean up oil spills and terminate 'moron' executives at BP.

In a televised statement last night, Obama delivered the good news, even waxing poetic: "We will be able to look back and tell our children this was the moment when our planet began to heal, the oil slick began to subside, when the government began the process of nationalizing BP, and when machines like the T-2000 became self-aware." White House sources say the president was so excited about the new technology he is contemplating placing the nation's nuclear arsenal under the control of a cybernetic system.

"The first thing I did," said the president, "was to tell Malia I had finally plugged that hole." Meanwhile former President Bill Clinton expressed his admiration of Obama and said he was quite envious of his signal achievement. "If I were Barack Obama, I'd be going around town telling everyone I meet just how good I am at plugging

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President Restores Perfect Game

'Further Proof We Need to Regulate Baseball'