the weekly Standard

SEPTEMBER 26, 2011

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Dec. 7	Wednesday	Georgetown, Grand Cayman	8am	3pm
Dec. 8	Thursday	Mahogany Bay, Honduras	10am	6pm
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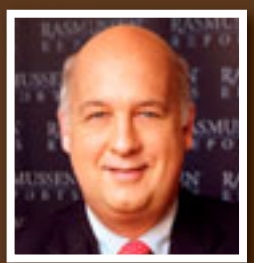

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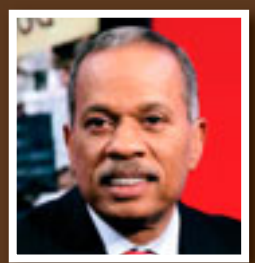

Juan Williams
Fox News Political Analyst

How the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) is Destroying U.S. Manufacturing

Imagine that Congress enacted for the state of California alone a special law that:

- Dropped the minimum wage to $0.50-$1/hour
- Exempted employers from child labor laws
- Expanded the work week
- Reduced health and work place safety laws
- Banned unions
- Gave California exporters full, duty-free access to the rest of the states

Wouldn't that be ridiculous? Well, that is **exactly** what NAFTA did for Mexico, to the detriment of the entire United States.

No U.S. manufacturers can compete with those conditions. They are closing up, selling out or leaving the country.

Since 1994, our federal leaders have mistakenly given China, Caribbean countries and some others this same lopsided, special "free trade" advantage.

NAFTA has been instrumental in rendering our economy totally uncompetitive and has forced us to outsource our manufacturing to other countries. It has also caused millions of our jobs to leave the country.

President Obama and many in Congress now want to extend this one-sided trade arrangement to South Korea and all other Asian nations. It is being sold under the false pretense that it will help our exports, not mentioning that it will more than double our imports and shut down more of our factories. Congress will likely vote on the Korean Free Trade Agreement in the fall of 2011. **Please, help us stop it!**

If the KORUS FTA (Korean-U.S. Free Trade Agreement) passes, all parts of our economy; manufacturing, trade, banking and finance will then be covered in the agreement. Our economy will then be supervised and controlled by the foreign WTO (World Trade Organization). The American government as you knew it will be a thing of the past. We will no longer be self-governed, self-managed and we will no longer be free. **Asian countries are slowly, quietly tightening the noose around our neck by crippling our ability to produce for ourselves.**

For Freedom's Sake NAFTA and All these Other Debilitating Free Trade Agreements Must be Amended or Eliminated!

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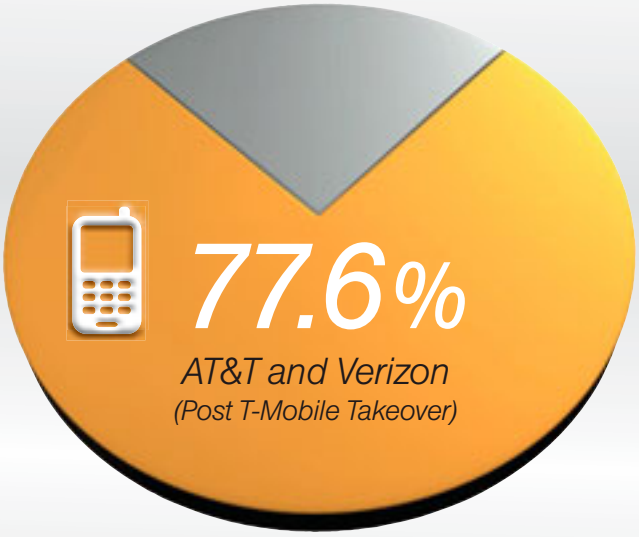
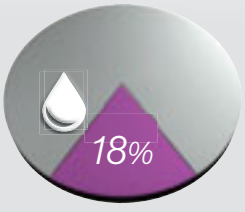
Two companies controlling this much wireless industry revenue creates a one-sided conversation.

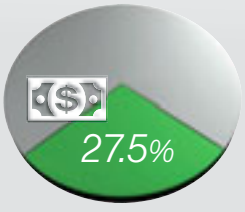


Wireless

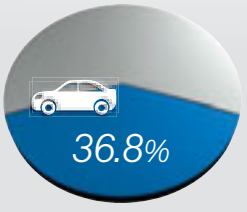


Oil

Airline



Banking



Auto

AT&T's proposed takeover of T-Mobile would result in two companies controlling more than 77% of wireless industry revenues. In other major industries, the two top firms control much less.

Two wireless industry giants would marginalize the ability of other providers to keep prices competitive for consumers and influence the pace of wireless industry innovation.

This is a bad idea for consumers, competition and our country.

Wireless industry source: Individual company annual financial reports for 2010.
Oil source: www.alacra.com/acm/2042_sample.pdf, page 22. Note: data includes oil refining and gas.
Airline source: DOT, form 41, Schedule P-1.2.
Banking source: DATAMONITOR'S "Banks in the United States" and www2.fdic.gov/sdi/main.asp.
Auto source: SEC 10-K filings, (includes cars and trucks and may include other revenue streams).
Foreign currencies converted to dollars using prevailing exchange rates.

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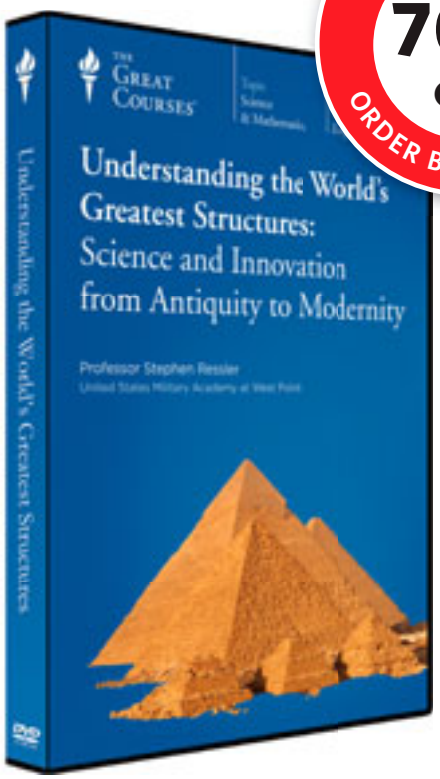

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COVER BY ELWOOD H. SMITH

Selling Out Taiwan, Again

The Obama administration has established a new (even lower) standard for kowtowing to Beijing. In the first instance, the White House has decided against selling Taiwan 66 new F-16s the government in Taipei has been asking for over the last few years. With an aging inventory of Taiwan air force fighters and the continued buildup of Chinese advanced air defenses, fighters, and fighter-bombers, the sale was absolutely essential if the deteriorating air balance over the Taiwan Strait was to be addressed.

Ignoring his legal obligations under the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act to provide Taiwan with the military equipment it needs to maintain its self-defense capabilities, the president has allowed Chinese threats of a rough patch in relations to dictate American security policy.

The second matter was the backgrounder given to the *Financial Times* last Thursday in which "a senior U.S. official" trashed Tsai Ing-wen, the leader of Taiwan's opposition party, the Democratic Progressives, and its candidate in this winter's presidential election.

Taiwan's opposition leader, Tsai Ing-wen

"She left us with distinct doubts about whether she is both willing and able to continue the stability in cross-Strait relations the region has enjoyed in recent years," the official told the *Financial Times* after Tsai met with administration officials, knowing full well that this would be read back in Taiwan as a sign that, if the Taiwanese people want continued help from the United States, they had better not choose her to be their next president.

You don't get much more blatant than this in trying to interfere in the elections of another democratic country. And, again, all in the name of trying to assuage Chinese Communist "worries" that an independent, sovereign, and democratic Taiwan might choose to be headed by someone who believes that Taiwan should not be thought of as a province of the People's Republic.

Pretty shameful stuff. America's other democratic allies in the Asia-Pacific region will surely take note as they ponder whether Washington is to be trusted to stand up to the bullying tactics of Beijing. ♦

The Upward Mobility of the Academic Left

The Scrapbook was thumbing through the *Washington Post* the other day and stumbled on a mildly unpleasant surprise, a name that hadn't registered in a good many seasons: Dr. Johnnetta B. Cole.

The last time The Scrapbook was reading about Dr. Cole in the *Post* was in November 1992 when, as president of Spelman College, she headed one of the "cluster" teams for President-elect Bill Clinton's transition. The clusters were charged with identifying and recruiting personnel for incoming cabinet departments, and Cole (according to the *Post*) was "cluster coordinator for education, arts, labor and humanities" and odds-on favorite to become secretary of education. Then, as now, the *Post* had little specific to say about Cole except that she was an anthropologist by training and something of an academic vagabond, having taught at UCLA, Washington State, the University of Massachusetts, Hunter, and Emory before landing at Spelman, the historically black women's college in Atlanta.

It was then that Cole's upward mobility momentarily ground to a halt. For (no thanks to the *Post* or any other major news outlets) it was soon discovered that, in addition to being an academic administrator and corporate board member, Johnnetta Cole was also a lifelong left-wing political activist and self-described "revolutionary," with a particular predilection for Communist regimes, especially the one in Havana. She had been a member of the National Committee of the Venceremos Brigade—an outreach project of the Cuban intelligence service—and a reliable public voice on behalf of Fidel Castro and Marxist-Leninist insurgencies in Africa, as well as something of a racial philosopher. White Americans, she had written,

> know that racism is a necessity for the continuation of their system of economic and political exploitation. And those who rule this country know also that when a people develops a firm anti-racist and anti-capitalist ideology and practice at home, this same ideology becomes a cornerstone of their international practice.

While The Scrapbook admits

NEW YORK TIMES

that it is not fully certain what that means, this passage and other highlights of Cole's résumé nixed her appointment as "this country's" education secretary during the Clinton administration—and despite the fact that Democrats controlled the Senate in 1992-93. Fast-forward two decades, and we learn that Cole is now at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African Art, where she has been director since 2009, and where, if you consult the website, the first thing you learn is that "Johnnetta Betsch Cole makes history in receiving prestigious 2011 Benjamin Franklin Creativity Laureate Award."

On the one hand, The Scrapbook assumes that Dr. Cole can't do too much damage at the Museum of African Art, a small, underfunded backwater in the great Smithsonian sea. Her *Post* interview consists of the sort of motivational platitudes—"At the core of my leadership style is a collaborative spirit. . . . I don't care how brilliant my vision is. If it is mine, it ain't going nowhere. We have a strategic plan that is the vision of all of us"—that have earned her honorary degrees from Williams and Mount Holyoke, as well as the Benjamin Franklin Creativity Laureate Award. On the other hand, it's annoying to be reminded that a certain kind of far left academic careerist always lands on his/her feet, and that one's taxes pay the salary of a veteran Fidel groupie. ♦

'Losing Iraq,' cont.

Max Boot warned in these pages last week that the Obama administration "appears to be determined to bug out from Iraq." The administration reportedly wants to remove all but 3,000 to 4,000 troops by the end of the year. As Boot noted, this is "far below the figure recommended by U.S. Forces-Iraq under the command of General Lloyd Austin. It has been reported that Gen. Austin asked for 14,000 to 18,000 personnel—enough to allow his command to train and support Iraqi security forces, conduct intelligence gathering, carry out counterterrorism strikes, support U.S. diplomatic initiatives, prevent open bloodshed between Arabs and Kurds, and deter Iranian aggression" ("Losing Iraq," The Weekly Standard, Sept. 19, 2011).

Last week, a group of 42 foreign policy experts and former government officials (including Scrapbook boss Bill Kristol) sent an open letter to the president urging him to maintain "a robust American presence" to "help ensure Iraq remains oriented away from Iran and a long-term ally of the United States."

They wrote, in part:

> The United States has invested significant resources in Iraq over the last eight years. Under your leadership and that of your predecessor, America has helped Iraq's fledgling democracy emerge as a symbol to other peoples of the region, becoming, in the words of former Secretary of Defense Gates, "a multi-sectarian, multi-ethnic society in the Arab world that shows that democracy can work."
>
> We are thus gravely concerned about recent news reports suggesting that the White House is considering leaving only a residual force of 4,000 or fewer U.S. troops in Iraq after the end of this year. This number is significantly smaller than what U.S. military commanders on the ground have reportedly recommended and would limit our ability to ensure that Iraq remains stable and free from significant foreign influence in the years to come.
>
> While the Iraqi Security Forces

have become increasingly capable of defending Iraq against internal threats, they are not yet able to defend Iraq from external forces. As a result, Iraq's troops will require after the end of this year continued U.S. assistance in combined-arms training, border protection, air and naval capabilities, logistics, and intelligence. . . .

We were encouraged by your pragmatism in 2009 as you showed flexibility in the pace of America's drawdown. We believe that the same pragmatism would counsel a significantly larger force than 4,000 U.S. troops in Iraq after the end of this year.

You can read the full letter at the website of the Foreign Policy Initiative, www.foreignpolicyi.org. ♦

Sentences We Didn't Finish

"There has already been a lot of theorizing about why a little-known Republican businessman, Bob Turner, won Tuesday's special Congressional election in a traditionally Democratic New York City district . . . " (*New York Times* editorial, September 14, 2011). ♦

Correction

A photo caption in the September 12 issue incorrectly identified the soldier below as a U.S. Marine in Eastern Afghanistan. In fact it depicts a U.S. Army soldier from the 327th Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne, as should have been clear from the club insignia on the side of the helmet. Thanks to eagle-eyed correspondent Colin Knight for the correction. ♦

AP PHOTO / RAFIQ MAQBOOL

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BPA WORLDWIDE

Bye, Bye, High Five

Time to declare a moratorium on the high five. That combination salute and handshake has been around for more than 30 years, and is now entering the stage of the perfunctory, perhaps even the otiose. The other evening, watching a White Sox game, I saw a player hit by a pitch replaced by a pinch-runner and returned to the Sox dugout forced to undergo from all his teammates a full round of high fives, with a few head rubs and bottom pats thrown in at no extra charge. Perfunctory, I call that, otiose.

I am equally eager to see an end to the low five; the side five; the high-low five; the fist bump; the handshake and shoulder bump; the handshake, half hug, and double-back pat (President Obama's masculine greeting of choice); and the leaping chest bump. I have myself participated over the years in perhaps 20 high fives, a few of them with strangers at sports events, but never without a nagging feeling of falsity. I am a straight handshake man, and a handshake man I wish to remain.

"You call that a handshake?" I can recall my father saying to me when I was five or six years old. "That's a dead fish you just gave me. A real man shakes hands with firmness." And he grasped my hand, lost in his much larger one, with a reassuring squeeze. The simple masculine handshake is not quite gone, but one senses that it has become a touch drab, square, yes, honky.

Google recounts the controversy over who threw the first high five. Some claim it was between Dusty Baker and Glenn Burke, then both of the Los Angeles Dodgers, in late 1977. The University of Louisville Cardinals are said to have widely popularized it during their run to the 1980 NCAA basketball championships. A man, Lamont Sleets, was reported to have first used the high five in the 1960s, when greeting his father and his four buddies from Vietnam, exclaiming, "Hi, Five." Later the Sleets story was revealed to be a hoax. But whoever invented the wretched thing should not be any prouder of it than, say, those false geniuses who gave us the electric hand dryer and the hospital gown.

DAVID CLARK

The high five and its variations are part of the empty triumphalism that has overtaken sports and spread to life outside sports in recent decades. In an earlier time, people saved strong congratulations for truly momentous victories: winning the final game of the World Series or the Stanley Cup, Wimbledon, an Olympic marathon run, the Kentucky Derby, and a few other select events.

Now we have the touchdown dance, the sack dance, the Tarzan-of-the-apes scream after the slam dunk, the triple fist pump and knee raise after winning a mere point in tennis. They go too far, all of them. A good winner has felt, and thereby understands, the funk of defeat; he knows that the best man doesn't always win; and so he is therefore generous in victory. Gracious winning was part of what used to be called sportsmanship.

Difficult to say exactly when sports decided it could do without sportsmanship. Perhaps it began with football, professional football especially, where a team can get a 15-yard penalty for excessive celebration. In college football, one can celebrate but not taunt an opponent, but players, feeling it worth the penalty, do it anyhow.

In baseball, at the conclusion of each game, the winning team parades onto the field, and the players form a double row to exchange high fives with one another. During the game itself, there is the home-run trot, the finger pointing to heaven demonstrating that the player has God on his side, the double-leg stomp at home plate to signify scoring the winning run. All that is missing, really, is a net and trident.

Tennis was a game that once had an etiquette for victory and for close calls. Enter those stinkers Jimmy Connors and John McEnroe. Connors stirred up crowds with yells, fist pumping, and pelvis grinding. McEnroe treated linesmen and umpires as if he were a Russian count and they his incompetent serfs. Exeunt the elegance of good manners. In basketball, trash talk is now a regular part of the game.

Golf may be the last game that still values sportsmanship. Players have been known to disqualify themselves for using the wrong ball or having too many clubs in their bag. In recent years, a bit of fist pumping, usually after making a lengthy or tricky putt, has come into play. But there is nothing of the mean-spiritedness of triumphalism in golf that one finds in other sports.

As for the high five, the next time anyone offers you one, meet his upraised hand with the small end of your fist while extending your thumb outward. The meeting forms a perfect picture of a turkey, a word—"Turkey"—you then call out. He'll never throw another high five without giving it a serious second thought.

Joseph Epstein

the weekly Standard

Don't Forget Obamacare

Obamacare's individual mandate—requiring that all Americans purchase government-approved health insurance beginning in 2014—has always been the law's most vulnerable provision. It is incredibly unpopular, and not just among conservatives. Polls consistently show that a large majority of the electorate opposes it, including a good portion of registered Democrats.

It is not hard to see why. Conservatives worry that the mandate, which compels all Americans to buy a particular product whether they want to or not, involves an unprecedented assertion of federal power. Many middle-of-the-road voters don't trust the federal government to do anything well, much less decide for one and all the kind of health insurance everyone must purchase.

And liberals can see that the provision creates a guaranteed marketplace for precisely the *private* health insurers that the president has spent so much time demonizing as greedy, profit-hungry, and patient-abusing miscreants. The president could have used the heavily Democratic Congress of 2009 and 2010 to push through any number of items on the liberal wish list. But he chose to deplete his entire political capital securing a permanent, guaranteed customer base for shareholder-owned private health insurance companies. Ironic indeed.

The mandate is not just politically vulnerable. In mid-2010, when conservative legal experts began marshalling the forces necessary to mount a serious constitutional challenge to the law, many liberals openly mocked the idea that any aspect of Obamacare was vulnerable to litigation. They no longer do so. In August, the Eleventh U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in a 2-to-1 decision that the individual mandate is an unconstitutional congressional power grab. That decision has made it all but certain that the Supreme Court will take up the case.

Although these legal developments are encouraging, there remains the risk that conservatives will put all of their eggs in the Supreme Court basket. That would be a bad idea. There's no telling where Justice Anthony Kennedy will come down on the question of the individual mandate, and other surprises from the Court are certainly possible. Moreover, even if the Supreme Court were to strike down the mandate, much of the rest of the law would almost certainly remain in effect. That's unacceptable. Obamacare without the mandate is nearly as bad as Obamacare with it.

In the end, the fate of Obamacare will almost certainly be decided in the political and legislative arena, not the courts, and the 2012 election is likely to be the decisive battle in that regard. Keeping this in mind, Republicans and conservatives should be doing all they can to make the 2012 election another referendum on the damage Obamacare will do to the American economy and health system.

To make that happen, they need to resurrect Obamacare as an issue in the legislative process. Last January, as one of its first acts, the Republican House passed a full repeal bill, sending a strong signal to the voters who returned them to power. Not surprisingly, repeal failed in the Senate. In the months since that original vote, however, the issue has fallen off the public radar. House committees have held useful hearings, and conducted useful investigations, but the issue hasn't gotten much attention because there has been no high-profile political fight to force additional press coverage.

That would change if House Republicans started bringing up repeal provisions, one by one, beginning with the individual mandate. Yes, the mandate is under review in the courts, and could very well go by the wayside even without legislative repeal. But that does not mean it can't also be targeted by Congress. Indeed, a legal challenge and a legislative challenge might reinforce one another, as justices who see strong political opposition to a provision could be more likely to throw it out.

Bringing the individual mandate up for repeal would also force an incredibly difficult vote for Obamacare's apologists. The vast majority of voters oppose the health care overhaul, and the Congressional Budget Office says repeal would reduce federal spending and budget deficits by more than $200 billion over a decade. Democrats who defend requiring Americans to pay higher premiums for a product they don't want do so at their peril.

Nor should the House stop there. Republicans could also bring up a bill to repeal the Independent Payment Advisory Board. The IPAB—an unelected and unaccountable group of 15 individuals charged with implementing deep cuts in Medicare—is the epitome of Obama's governing philosophy: a technocratic, know-it-all body, handing down decisions that can't be appealed by ordinary citizens. IPAB will infuriate voters the more they learn about it, and Republicans can help in the education process by voting to repeal it. Similar tactics should be pursued with regard to the Medicare cuts and the dysfunctional long-term care entitlement program contained in Obamacare.

Some worry that targeting individual provisions for repeal in this manner might succeed in killing the most

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odious parts of Obamacare, thereby making the rest of the law more palatable to the electorate. But that shouldn't be a concern. It is highly unlikely that legislation targeting Obamacare will make it through the Democratic Senate. Even if it does, President Obama will almost certainly veto anything that strikes at the heart of his signature initiative.

Bringing up for consideration legislation that targets the individual mandate and other provisions is far more likely to have the intended effect of forcing Obamacare's apologists to defend even its most unpopular features. And that is exactly what the GOP should be trying to do as November 2012 approaches.

—James C. Capretta

Solyndra Nation

To find a metaphor for the failed Obama presidency, look no further than Solyndra. Before it went bankrupt, the solar panel manufacturer was more than the recipient of a $535 million loan guarantee from the federal government. It was the model for the White House effort to put the American economy on a "new foundation."

Solyndra was environmentally friendly, technologically advanced, and politically correct. It was an exporter, not an importer. Politicians and government were instrumental in the company's growth. The money disbursed to Solyndra, it was said, would "multiply" throughout the economy, creating jobs and increasing consumer spending. "Keep up the good work!" wrote an administration official to a Solyndra executive last May. "We're cheering for you."

That was before the bankruptcy filing. Before the 1,100 lost jobs and the empty 650,000-square-foot production facility in Fremont, California. Before the FBI raid of Solyndra headquarters. Before the House Energy Committee released emails suggesting the Solyndra loan was rushed and improperly vetted. These days the White House is tight-lipped. The only cheering comes from Republicans sensing a possible Obama scandal.

Emphasis on "possible." So far, the leaked Solyndra emails raise more questions than they answer. We've yet to see hard evidence that the White House improperly pressured the bureaucracy to approve a risky deal for a supporter. Republicans should also remember that the Solyndra loan was issued under a lobbyist-friendly 2005 law passed by a GOP-controlled Congress and signed by

President Bush. The real Solyndra scandal isn't that White House staff were overeager for a photo-op. It's that America increasingly resembles a bankrupt clean energy company.

In today's economy, risks are socialized while profit is privatized. The government uses deficit spending to shape investment decisions and support markets that otherwise wouldn't exist. Political connections determine the recipients of government largesse. Rentiers conceal their self-interest behind the organic hemp cloak of environmentalism and global "competitiveness." The illusion can be maintained for a time, but in the end the bill comes due. There's no money left. And everything disappears.

If Solyndra had taken off, its private investors would have become extraordinarily rich. But it failed—and the American taxpayer has to foot the bill. And many other bills, too: The Solyndra loan was part of a $38.6 billion program to aid green energy that the *Washington Post* says has created exactly 3,545 jobs. (That's $10,888,575 in loans per job, for those of you without a calculator.)

Government meddling isn't limited to alternative energy. The U.S. Treasury stands behind Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, General Motors, and AIG, not to mention all the other companies that profit from loopholes, sweetheart loans, and subsidies. The cliché has it that government is picking winners and losers. But that's wrong: It picks *only* losers. Winning companies don't need public support.

Fiscal and monetary policy serve the well connected. Wall Street titans benefited not only from TARP but also from the Federal Reserve's money creation. Labor dictated the terms of the auto bailout. The health insurers were more than happy when the Democratic Congress handed them millions of new paying customers. The CEOs of GE and American Express got to sit next to the first lady at the president's last address to Congress. Are we really surprised to learn that the Solyndra loan was approved a week after George Kaiser, the firm's single largest shareholder and an Obama donor, met with White House officials?

The fastest way to earn government support is to say your efforts protect the environment and help America "win the future" over China and India. Solyndra was a twofer. "It's here that companies like Solyndra are leading the way toward a brighter and more prosperous future," President Obama said when he visited company headquarters on May 26, 2010. "Around the world, from China to Germany, our competitors are waging a historic effort to lead in developing new energy technologies." Without intervention, he went on, "We risk falling behind."

The event at which Obama said those words was well orchestrated. Throughout the Solyndra affair, the White House talent at "optics" was apparent. Berlin, Denver, Grant

Park, Fremont—Obama knows how to put on a show. But he and his administration were so concerned with the images on the evening news that they ignored the invisible consequences of fiscal and monetary stimulus. "It almost always happens that when the immediate consequence is favorable, the later consequences are disastrous," wrote the nineteenth-century economist Frédéric Bastiat.

Such was the case with Solyndra, and with Obama. Do they have to take the rest of us down with them?

—Matthew Continetti

Oddly Ashamed

Paul Krugman, of Princeton and the *New York Times*, was up early last Sunday morning, reflecting, as many of his fellow Americans were, on the tenth anniversary of 9/11. He chose to share his thoughts on the meaning of the day. Here's his contribution in its entirety, posted at 8:41 A.M., five minutes before the first moment of silence was to begin at Ground Zero:

> **The Years of Shame**
>
> Is it just me, or are the 9/11 commemorations oddly subdued?
>
> Actually, I don't think it's me, and it's not really that odd.
>
> What happened after 9/11—and I think even people on the right know this, whether they admit it or not—was deeply shameful. The atrocity should have been a unifying event, but instead it became a wedge issue. Fake heroes like Bernie Kerik, Rudy Giuliani, and, yes, George W. Bush raced to cash in on the horror. And then the attack was used to justify an unrelated war the neocons wanted to fight, for all the wrong reasons.
>
> A lot of other people behaved badly. How many of our professional pundits—people who should have understood very well what was happening—took the easy way out, turning a blind eye to the corruption and lending their support to the hijacking of the atrocity?
>
> The memory of 9/11 has been irrevocably poisoned; it has become an occasion for shame. And in its heart, the nation knows it.
>
> I'm not going to allow comments on this post, for obvious reasons.

Krugman pretends to be struck that the 9/11 commemorations have been "oddly subdued." He rather oddly offered this judgment before the major commemorations in New York and at the Pentagon took place. No matter. He was presumably able to base his evaluation on the ceremony Saturday in Shanksville commemorating the heroism of the passengers on Flight 93, or on other events from the preceding week.

Of course, he's right that the 9/11 commemorations, both before and after he wrote, were subdued. But why is that "odd"? Shouldn't they have been? 9/11 is a day of mourning, of solemn remembrance and rededication. What did Krugman expect but subdued commemoration? Loud and raucous gatherings? Celebratory and chest-thumping declamations?

Perhaps that is what he anticipated. Krugman's contempt for his fellow Americans is so bottomless that it might have led him to assume that they would commemorate 9/11 in a thoroughly inappropriate way.

But the key to understanding Krugman's odd declamation is not what he expected. It's what he wanted. He wanted an acknowledgment of shame. For him, 9/11 "has become an occasion for shame." And he wanted America to acknowledge its shame because, he claimed, "in its heart, the nation knows it."

Really? Paul Krugman is not stupid. Surely he knows Americans don't agree with him that the memory of 9/11 has become an occasion for shame—that's probably one of the reasons he didn't allow comments on his post. But he doesn't have the courage to acknowledge that. He'd rather ascribe his own sense of shame to the American people, who manifestly don't share that sentiment.

The next day, after a barrage of criticism, Krugman wrote a follow-up. After defending himself, he did acknowledge one error of omission: "Now, I should have said that the American people behaved remarkably well in the weeks and months after 9/11: There was very little panic, and much more tolerance than one might have feared. Muslims weren't lynched, and neither were dissenters, and that was something of which we can all be proud."

This qualification is perhaps just as revealing as Krugman's original post. In Paul Krugman's America, one expects panic and lynchings of Muslims and dissenters. So "we" should be "proud" to have avoided this natural inclination of ours.

To which one might respond: What do you mean "we," professor? Krugman posted his original declaration on the morning of September 11. In the moral universe of most Americans, if one were to choose to declaim on the meaning of 9/11 on its tenth anniversary, even if one wanted to criticize subsequent policies of the American government, one would first pay tribute to the sacrifice and heroism of that day. But on September 11, and again on September 12, Krugman has nothing to say of the people killed in New York and Washington, of the passengers on Flight 93, the firefighters and rescue workers in New York City, the civilians and military at the Pentagon, or those who after 9/11 volunteered to serve their country in uniform or otherwise. He finds nothing to be proud of there.

Paul Krugman is ashamed of America. We trust Americans, to the degree they notice him, will wear his scorn as a badge of honor.

—William Kristol

Who's number one? Rick Perry (left) greets Bob McDonnell in Richmond, September 14.

Team of Rivals

Could the governors of Texas and Virginia end up on a national ticket together?

BY MARK HEMINGWAY

Richmond, Virginia

"We're friendly rivals," says Virginia governor Bob McDonnell of his relationship with Texas governor Rick Perry. "Texas and Virginia have a lot in common in terms of business rankings and the criminal justice system. All my relatives are from the Texas A&M area, so I've always had an affinity for Texas. He's a veteran, I'm a veteran."

McDonnell is sitting on a couch in his office. In about an hour, he's scheduled to walk a few blocks to the convention center in downtown Richmond to introduce Perry, who is headlining a fundraiser that afternoon for the Virginia Republican party.

Mark Hemingway is online editor of The Weekly Standard.

Months ago, when McDonnell asked Perry to appear at the event, the Texas governor hadn't announced his campaign for president. Now that Perry's in it to win it and has rocketed to the top of the polls, McDonnell's fundraiser has effectively been turned into a Perry campaign event.

The rivalry between the two men may indeed be "friendly," but there's a trace of determination in McDonnell's voice conveying that the competition with Perry is something he takes quite seriously.

"We are friends, but we've always been very competitive because Texas and Virginia have always been at the top of the heap, competing [to attract] the same businesses," says McDonnell. "He beats me on some stuff, I beat him on some stuff."

Last year, when CNBC released its annual listing of the "Top States for Business," Texas was ranked number one and Virginia number two. "So I called [Perry] and said, 'The only reason we slacked off is because you're running for reelection and we want to make you look good, but I'm going to kick your butt next year,'" recounts McDonnell. "He laughed and said, 'Yeah, yeah, right.'"

At the end of June, the 2011 CNBC rankings were released. Sure enough, Virginia was number one and Texas was number two. "He was the first guy to call me this year, eating crow and say, 'Okay, you told me!'" says McDonnell.

For a guy who is about to introduce the most talked-about GOP politician in the country, McDonnell doesn't need to worry about being upstaged. He has quietly emerged as one of the most accomplished and popular Republicans, although the national media haven't much noticed.

That same day last week, Quinnipiac University released a poll showing that McDonnell has a 61 percent approval rating. He is tied with New York governor Andrew Cuomo for the best approval rating in the survey. Even among Virginia's black voters, more approve of McDonnell's performance as governor than disapprove—"a highly unusual finding for a Republican office-holder," observes Quinnipiac.

McDonnell's approval ratings are also soaring in a state that is by no means a Republican stronghold. Obama carried Virginia by 6 points in 2008, but a year later McDonnell was elected by a 17-point margin.

McDonnell's legislative achievements certainly measure up to the impressive work Perry's done in the Lone Star State. Texas may have recently closed a $15 billion budget deficit, but in the last year Virginia, which has less than a third the population of Texas, went from a $4 billion deficit to a $545 million surplus.

Closing a $15 billion budget deficit is by any measure a real test of political leadership, but Perry had the benefit of a GOP supermajority in Texas's

AP / STEVE HELBER

last legislative session. McDonnell isn't so lucky.

"I've got the same issue Obama does—I have a Republican House and a Democratic Senate," observes McDonnell. Not only did McDonnell have to muster bipartisan support for getting the budget into balance, the latest state budget passed the Virginia legislature unanimously.

On employment, Texas's record of job creation is unparalleled—over one million new jobs in the decade that Perry's been governor. However, Texas's unemployment rate is currently 8.4 percent, where Virginia's is 6.1 percent.

To be fair, the rate in Texas in part reflects large inflows of unemployed people looking for work. And Virginia's unemployment rate might be considered artificially low thanks to the large number of federal jobs in the northern part of the state. Still, with unemployment at 9.1 percent nationally, it seems clear that the jobs situation in both states is enviably better than in the rest of the country.

So what's the key to McDonnell's success? "We've really tried to place the focus on what people really care about. . . . [We're] cutting spending so that we've ended up with surpluses, but at the same time investing in bread and butter issues that people really are concerned about: transportation, higher education, job creation," says McDonnell. "Those were major new investments we made in the budget while we cut dramatically in other areas."

Focusing on fiscal responsibility, transportation, higher education, and job creation—that template sounds eerily familiar. It would appear that Perry and McDonnell are very much on the same page.

McDonnell recently got a higher education reform bill through the legislature (again, unanimously) and even got substantial Democratic support for the passage of a $4 billion highway bill.

On these issues, Perry's been more ambitious but less successful. He tried and failed to get 4,000 miles of new superhighways funded as part of his Trans-Texas Corridor. As for higher education, Perry's still fighting the good fight. His initiative to get Texas to create a bachelor's degree costing only $10,000 over four years has yet to become a reality, but it is one of the boldest and most-discussed higher education proposals in the country.

McDonnell clearly relishes the competition with Texas, but that's largely because he sees it as benefiting everyone. "We think it's healthy, this competition," he says. "It's not dog-eat-dog. We sharpen each other.

'I think we've got a very strong field and I think we've got a number of candidates on the stage that could beat President Obama,' McDonnell says. 'I'm a little partial to governors, because when I look at why I think the leadership in Washington is failing, it's a lack of executive experience.'

We make the states better, and therefore we make America better."

Perry seems to agree. While introducing him at the luncheon for the Virginia GOP, McDonnell again—and this time publicly—reminds Perry that Texas is number two in CNBC's rankings. Perry can't let the remark slide, and reminds McDonnell and the rest of the crowd that he just signed "loser pays" lawsuit reform in Texas to cut down on frivolous litigation, and he fully expects this latest accomplishment will put Texas back on top.

Still, Perry surely took notice of the unusually spirited standing ovation McDonnell received when he walked out to introduce him. The Texan didn't skimp on praising his host. "In Virginia you have the right formula," Perry said, "because you have the right leadership. Bob McDonnell has given the business creators and small-business owners that opportunity."

So what does it mean that the relatively unsung Bob McDonnell holds his own in head-to-head comparison with the governor who happens to hold a commanding lead in the GOP presidential primary? (In addition to that day's Quinnipiac poll showing high marks for McDonnell, Public Policy Polling also released a survey showing Perry had a 13-point lead over Mitt Romney.)

At the press gaggle afterward, reporters were not shy about asking Perry whether the popular Virginia governor has potential as a running-mate. "That is thinking too far ahead," Perry said.

And while Perry's already been endorsed by Louisiana governor Bobby Jindal and Nevada governor Brian Sandoval, McDonnell is keeping his cards relatively close to his vest.

"I think we've got a very strong field and I think we've got a number of candidates on the stage that could beat President Obama," McDonnell says. "I'm a little partial to governors, because when I look at why I think the leadership in Washington is failing, it's a lack of executive experience and an inability to really focus on getting things done."

Of the current crop of contenders, only Romney, Perry, and Huntsman have been governors. To further winnow things down, it's worth noting that Perry and McDonnell worked closely together at the Republican Governors Association, where Perry was chairman and McDonnell was vice-chairman. After Perry quit the association to run for president, McDonnell assumed the chairmanship.

But McDonnell's only been governor for less than two years (after 21 years in the Army, where he retired as a lieutenant colonel, 14 years in the state legislature, and a stint as state attorney general). The Virginia governor insists he's not looking at national politics. For now, at least, he says he's content to spend his time messing with Texas. ♦

Whip Unemployment Now?

The Obama presidency enters its pathetic phase.

BY FRED BARNES

It's come to this: The president touted for his brainpower, idealism, and global esteem has been reduced to leading captive audiences in chants of "Pass this bill," a measure that Republicans loathe, Democrats regard warily, and Congress is unlikely to approve even in truncated form.

The Obama presidency has entered the pathetic phase. This occurs when a president acts in a demeaning fashion while trying to rebuild his popularity and political strength. It's a product of desperation.

There are numerous examples from earlier presidencies. Gerald Ford had his WIN buttons (Whip Inflation Now). George H. W. Bush told New Hampshire voters, "Don't cry for me, Argentina." Jimmy Carter boasted endlessly he hadn't "panicked in the crisis" and insisted he wasn't contrasting his conduct with rival Teddy Kennedy's at Chappaquiddick.

For Obama, the pathetic phase began over the summer when the economy weakened further and his job approval rating tanked. He recklessly called for a joint session of Congress to announce his jobs initiative. During his speech, he demanded 18 times, "Pass this bill."

That was on September 8. Then Obama hit the road. He spoke at two colleges and one high school to crowds whose enthusiasm was expected. Mary Bruce of ABC News kept count of the injunctions to "pass the bill": 18 at the University of Richmond, 24 at North Carolina State, 18 at Fort Hayes High School in Columbus, Ohio.

Barack Obama: Dr. Pass-the-Bill

He looped back to the White House last week to announce he'd sent the bill to Capitol Hill and uttered "pass the bill"—by then his signature slogan—another dozen times. When he addressed the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute in Washington later in the week, there were a dozen more instructions to "pass the bill."

What's wrong with all this? At least the president has shown a burst of energy. This was salve to Democrats and his supporters in the media who have been pleading with the president for months to step up his fight against congressional Republicans.

But the fight is not going well, and for good reason. For one thing, Obama suffers from what Maureen Dowd of the *New York Times* has identified as the "speech illusion." This is the notion that he can swoop down from on high, deliver a speech, persuade millions, and move the political needle in favor of his legislation. And, naturally, make himself more popular.

Quite the opposite has happened. The speech wasn't a bomb, but it was close. Individual parts of his proposal—the payroll tax cut, for instance—drew a positive response in polls. Overall, though, it was a downer. Poll numbers for both the president and his plan sank gradually after the speech. The truth is, Obama is simply not persuasive.

Summoning a joint session was a problem in the first place. Besides the annual State of the Union, joint sessions are traditionally reserved for issues of overriding and urgent national concern, often involving national security. The content of Obama's speech didn't qualify. He cheapened the idea of a joint-session address.

Press, politicians, and the public were unenthused. Republicans opted out of replying on national television, figuring Obama wouldn't sway the nation or cause them any trouble with his criticism. They were right. It was a rare occasion when Dowd and Republicans agreed.

Obama's conceit is that he stands high above the crass politics of Congress and represents the needs of the entire country, while Congress—he means Republicans—pursues narrow party interests. Does anyone, including those in the White House, believe this? I don't think so.

One reason is the president has protested too much. "It's the members of Congress who put party before country because they believe the only way to resolve our differences is to wait 14 months till the next election," he told the Hispanic group. "I've got news for them. The American people

AP / STEVE HELBER

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

don't have the luxury of waiting 14 months." And so on.

The suspicion has been that Obama has attempted to use the joint session and the "jobs bill" to further his chances of reelection. He can't run on his record with unemployment so high and the fiscal mess worsening. He needs a villain.

By themselves, his speeches aren't confirmation he's following the so-called Truman strategy. In 1948, an unpopular President Truman called a phony joint session and offered up legislation he knew Republicans would block. Then he campaigned against them as the "do-nothing Congress." And won.

In 2012, Obama's villain would be congressional Republicans. He'd have to argue the economy would be booming if only they'd approved his bill. Job growth would be soaring. America would be back on track, not falling behind China with its high-speed trains and flashy airports or South Korea with its better schools.

But suspicion became fact when the president disclosed he'd pay for his $447 billion bill entirely with tax increases. He knew Republicans would never go along. If they did, he knew it would split their party bitterly. He knew he'd have a "do-nothing Congress" of his very own.

Obama isn't as clever as he thinks. A back-to-the-future strategy from 63 years ago isn't likely to work. Politics has changed, and the president's devices and desires are transparent. Truman himself couldn't pull off the strategy today.

But Obama's machinations aren't the clearest evidence of his desperation. His unpresidential conduct is. In 2008, he led crowds in chanting, "Yes, we can." He was a candidate then, and it demonstrated the loftiness of his appeal and the passion of his partisans.

Now he's president. We can have fast railroads like China's, he said in Columbus. "So let's tell Congress, pass this bill right away." The crowd shouted back. "Pass this bill! Pass this bill! Pass this bill!"

Now get ready for the "Pass this bill" buttons. ♦

Showdown at the United Nations

The Israeli-Palestinian clash comes to Turtle Bay.

BY LEE SMITH

Jerusalem

As Israel has lately found itself on the receiving end of several dangerous surprises, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu wants to get out in front before the next possible diplomatic catastrophe. Turkey expelled the Israeli ambassador to Ankara, and a Cairo mob ran the Israeli embassy staff out of the Egyptian capital, but by the time the Palestinian delegation comes to New York on September 23 to seek a U.N. resolution declaring statehood, Netanyahu plans to be sitting in the driver's seat.

Benjamin Netanyahu

It's hard to know who more dreads the prospect of Bibi in Turtle Bay—Palestinian Authority president Mahmoud Abbas or Barack Obama. Indeed, the White House is still licking its wounds from last May when Netanyahu came to Washington and routed the administration by taking Israel's case directly to Congress. It's hard to imagine he'll have much trouble duplicating the feat at the U.N., since the audience is essentially the same, U.S. public opinion.

"It's a perfect venue for making Israel look like David going up against Goliath," says Martin Kramer, the Wexler-Fromer fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and senior fellow at the Shalem Center in Jerusalem. While Middle Eastern and European media typically portray Israel as the bully, the optics at the U.N., with virtually everyone lined up against the Jewish state, are going to be rather different. "The Europeans," says Kramer, "are going to be left feeling a little dirty for ganging up on Israel."

The White House is perhaps confused as to how it wound up standing all alone alongside Israel. Put aside Obama's not particularly warm feelings for Israel: In the administration's view, it is not good for Washington to be seen as going it alone on *any* issue. It is better to work with partners and use international institutions to advance interests that

NEWSCOM

Lee Smith is a senior editor at The Weekly Standard.

America shares with the rest of the world. When this is your worldview, Israel is a nuisance. Maybe it's not Israel's fault, but Jerusalem is always in the middle of some scrape—now with Ankara, now with Cairo, and who knows who's next—from which Washington must rescue it, to the annoyance of our other, much less annoying partners.

Nonetheless, the administration can ill afford a unilateral declaration of Palestinian statehood, since U.S. policy is premised on brokering a negotiated settlement between the parties. The White House has little choice but to veto the statehood resolution if it goes to the Security Council. This will no doubt embarrass Obama, but the much larger concern is the General Assembly. A vote there would likely result in an upgrade of status, with the Palestinians becoming a "nonmember observer state."

"The key word is state," says Nathan Thrall, a Jerusalem-based Middle East analyst at the International Crisis Group. Thrall explains that this would open the door to the Palestinians' joining other U.N. bodies, like the International Criminal Court—an institution that the White House may wind up using to try Muammar Qaddafi and perhaps eventually Syria's Bashar al-Assad. The Palestinians, on the other hand, would endeavor to use the leverage of a General Assembly nod to "statehood" to sic the International Criminal Court on Israeli officials. "The last thing the inner circle of the administration . . . wants is to be sitting on the other side of the table from the Palestinians if they take action against Israel," says Thrall.

It's not clear that would be a good outcome for the Palestinians either. What's worse is that Congress will almost certainly look to squeeze the Palestinian Authority's funding, and Abbas will return to Ramallah with little of consequence to show his constituents. The question, says Thrall, is whether Abbas "can be presented with something that looks like a victory" in New York.

Dore Gold, a former Netanyahu adviser and president of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, argues that there's something more to it. "I was in a televised debate with [Palestinian negotiator] Nabil Shaath," says Gold, "and Shaath tried to explain the purpose of going to the U.N. Part of it is simply to enshrine aspects of the Palestinian narrative." For instance, that the territory is not "disputed" but "occupied." "Israel," says Gold, "has to get out there and make its case and lay out its own narrative."

Netanyahu's decision to go to New York to tell Israel's story is best understood through what's happened over the last few weeks, like the September 9 attack on the Cairo embassy. Neighbors and other regional actors are trying to score points off Israel to enhance their own domestic prestige. Accordingly, one key question is whether Abbas's failure might give room to local adversaries, including Hamas, to launch attacks on Israel. Some security figures are readying for the possibility of a third intifada, though others suspect that any incidents will be limited in scope and intensity.

One rule of Middle East politics, says Kramer, is that "if people are expecting something to happen, it won't." Most of the major events of recent regional history came out of the blue—from the Israel-Hezbollah war of 2006 to the *Mavi Marmara* incident, and from 9/11 to the Arab Spring.

In fact, some are wondering if the U.N. bid may at last provoke a Palestinian version of the Arab Spring. Doubtful, says Kramer. "If there was going to be a Palestinian Arab Spring, it would've happened already. But the Arab Spring has shown that the other Arabs are not all free with only the Palestinians waiting to be liberated. Rather, the Palestinians are arguably better off than lots of others around the region. What irks the Palestinian leadership is that it hasn't been in the spotlight for a while."

First there was the Arab Spring, and now, with Bibi coming to New York, it looks like the Palestinian Authority still isn't going to have the spotlight to itself. ♦

Regulation Nation

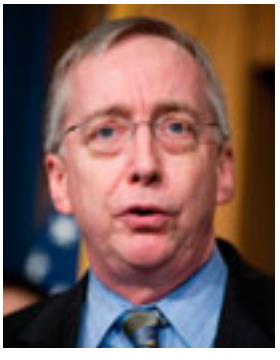
Three Kentuckians join forces to stop America from choking on red tape. BY PHIL KERPEN

As the country teeters on the edge of recession, two competing visions of government's role in the economy are being offered in Washington. President Obama again proposes big government programs and Keynesian stimulus. House Republicans have a different idea.

In the belief that government regulation is blocking job creation, House GOP leaders aim not only to repeal specific regulations, but also to reform the rule-making system. Their key reform bill is the Regulations from the Executive In Need of Scrutiny Act, or REINS Act. It comes at a crucial time.

The voters who fueled the Republican surge in last year's midterm elections were aiming to end the "fundamental transformation" of America that Barack Obama promised when he ran for president. They failed. The day after the elections, the president made clear his intention to bypass Congress when he touted EPA regulations as an alternative to the cap-and-trade legislation that Congress failed to pass. Regulation, Obama said, was another way of "skinning the cat." Then his transition chairman John Podesta issued a 48-page agenda for bypassing Congress. And on December 21, the Federal Communications Commission voted 3-2 on party lines to regulate the Internet. Right in step, the National Labor Relations Board—operating with an unconfirmed acting general counsel and two recess-appointed, union-lawyer board members—launched an assault on right-to-work states.

Lloyd Rogers



Geoff Davis

Rand Paul

Even before the Obama administration's onslaught of new regulations, regulatory costs were depressing economic growth. A study by the Small Business Administration Office of Advocacy pegged the cost of federal regulations in 2008 at an astonishing $1.75 trillion, with costs for small businesses topping $10,500 per employee, per year. Another analysis, from the Phoenix Center for Advanced Legal & Economic Public Policy Studies, found that each regulator on the federal payroll destroys 98 private sector jobs and $6.2 million worth of gross domestic product every year. And the number of regulators is up 13 percent since Obama took office, while private sector employment shrank by 5.6 percent.

Any way you look at it, regulations are damaging our economy. The answer to this insanity comes from the heartland.

In 2009, an Alexandria, Kentucky, man named Lloyd Rogers handed his congressman a piece of paper containing a powerful idea. That idea became the REINS Act, H.R. 10. Speaker John Boehner embraced it, and it is now a centerpiece of the House Republican agenda.

Rogers is 78 years old, and his is a great American story. "I grew up in an orphans' home," he told me. "I never had any college, but I had an ambition. I took speed-reading, I took public speaking, and I took things like that."

A wounded four-year Navy veteran, Rogers was a commander of both the Disabled American Veterans and the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

"My dad died when I was young," he explained. "The man who was in charge of the orphanage, he used to be in there when he was a kid. He came back and he ran it, and he was a very conservative fellow. And he used to teach us: If there's nothing else anybody can ever say about you when you die, they can write on your tombstone that you were honest."

Rogers worked for 31 years as a supervisor and engineer with Cincinnati Bell. "I never voted until I was 40," he told me. But at some point he got interested in government. He took courses on the Constitution and became, he said, "very well-versed." Increasingly, he felt called to get involved. Shortly after he retired, Rogers was elected Campbell County judge executive, a post he held from 1982 to 1985. During that time, he had his first confrontation with the EPA over his opposition to federally mandated tailpipe emissions testing.

DAVIS: NEWSCOM

Phil Kerpen is vice president for policy at Americans for Prosperity and the author of the forthcoming Democracy Denied: How Obama is Ignoring You and Bypassing Congress to Radically Transform America—and How to Stop Him.

After going a few rounds with then-EPA administrator Bill Ruckelshaus, Rogers won, and tailpipe testing was ended in his county.

More recently, as a concerned citizen, he targeted the EPA's sweeping storm water consent decree, which imposed enormous costs on the three-county sewer district in his area. His congressman, Republican Geoff Davis, shared Rogers's outrage over the consent decree. "Everybody's taxes were doubled as a result of it," Davis told me. "There was no commensurate improvement in service whatsoever." He pointed out that the money would have been better spent on replacing the I-75 Brent Spence Bridge, which carries 3.8 percent of the country's GDP every year.

Davis represents Kentucky's 4th Congressional District, along the Ohio River. He too had a tough childhood. In high school in Pittsburgh, he worked as a janitor to help support his family. Then he enlisted in the Army. Later he attended West Point and spent 11 years commanding assault helicopters before opening his own consulting firm specializing in lean manufacturing.

Davis was elected to Congress in 2004. He serves on the House Committee on Ways and Means and is a deputy Republican whip. He brings a businesslike approach to government and has a keen understanding of regulatory issues.

A study by the Small Business Administration Office of Advocacy pegged the cost of federal regulations to small businesses at $10,500 per employee per year.

So Davis saw the power of Rogers's idea. The piece of paper Rogers handed him said,

> Proposed legislation:
> In adherence to the U.S. Constitution, Article 1, section 1 . . . "All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives." All rules, regulations, or mandates that require citizens, state or local government financial expenditures must first be approved by the U.S. Congress before they can become effective.

Davis took the idea back to Washington and huddled with his advisers. He agreed that what was missing from the regulatory process was accountability. Anticipating objections, Davis and his team worked to make the proposal into a robust, workable bill. They designed a streamlined process to guarantee a quick up or down vote on any economically significant regulation. Under their bill, no major regulation could take effect without the approval of the House and Senate and the president's signature (or congressional override of a presidential

White House Jobs Plan Falls Short

By Thomas J. Donohue
President and CEO
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

While the president's jobs plan contains some ideas that American business supports, it falls short by focusing too much on government spending and temporary tax breaks and too little on the trade, energy, tax, regulatory, and entitlement reforms we need.

The proposed payroll tax cut might give some small and medium-size businesses relief. But temporary tax breaks won't create new jobs in significant numbers—and unfortunately, neither will the plan as a whole. It fails to adequately address the fundamental challenge facing our economy—too little growth—or the business reality that keeps companies from hiring—too few customers.

What's worse, not one dime of spending will be cut to offset the $447 billion package. Instead, successful small businesses—especially those filing taxes as individuals—and productive industries will foot the bill through major tax increases. Any jobs that might have been supported under the plan would be wiped out by these hikes.

Though the president was on the right track with some of his proposals, like passing the free trade agreements with South Korea, Colombia, and Panama, he stopped short of an aggressive trade agenda, which would open more markets to American goods and services. He also proposed more infrastructure investment, but he failed to call for multiyear reauthorizations of our nation's core transportation programs that would allow communities to plan and hire.

We could create hundreds of thousands of jobs and secure our energy supply by responsibly producing more American energy, which we have in abundance on federal lands and offshore. The administration has yet to seize this extraordinary opportunity, and it should.

Finally, the president touched only briefly on the tax, regulatory, and entitlement reforms that should be the centerpiece of an American jobs plan. Congress and the president should negotiate and pass comprehensive pro-growth tax reform that lowers individual and corporate rates and broadens the tax base.

While the administration has taken some steps to rein in regulations, many of its new rulemakings are killing business confidence, expansion, and jobs. Nearly 150 regulations costing $100 million or more are in the pipeline. The president should issue an executive order to declare a time-out on new major discretionary regulations.

And without meaningful entitlement reform, runaway costs and unsustainable obligations will continue to push us toward insolvency. No economy can grow or create jobs at its full potential when faced with such massive and expanding claims on its capital, credit, and other resources.

Bottom line: The president and Congress must act faster, be bolder, and put their faith in free enterprise, not in bigger government.

U.S. Chamber of Commerce Comment at www.chamberpost.com.

veto). The REINS Act quickly garnered scores of supporters, notably Republican leaders John Boehner, Eric Cantor, and Kevin McCarthy.

The REINS concept is not anti-regulation. It simply would require transparency and accountability. The hope is that under this improved process, Congress would block unnecessary regulations, and necessary regulations would be less costly. Davis claims to have received positive feedback—privately—from EPA officials.

In the Senate, Davis found his first partner in Jim DeMint (R-S.C.), who introduced the bill in September 2010 with 12 cosponsors. This year, DeMint handed off REINS to Senator Rand Paul, making it, fittingly, a Kentucky-led effort. Rogers had been a tireless campaigner for Paul, organizing DAV and VFW units around the state.

One of the toughest things to do in a political campaign is get businesses to take sides. They worry about angering part of their customer base. But Paul told me that Rogers personally persuaded hundreds of Campbell County businesses to display Rand Paul signs. Paul had long been concerned about unelected bureaucrats' writing laws; he saw the issue as perfect for Tea Party activists determined to hold government accountable. After hearing Davis explain the REINS Act, Paul featured it prominently in his insurgent campaign. He called it a "good government, nonpartisan issue," adding that even liberal colleagues can be persuaded that regulation shouldn't be left to unelected bureaucrats.

Especially now. The Dodd-Frank Act alone is expected to result in more than 500 rulemakings affecting the financial sector, while the Congressional Research Service (CRS) reports that the number of rules to be imposed by the new Consumer Financial Protection Bureau is potentially limitless. The president's recent decision to defer his job-crushing ozone regulations until after the next election notwithstanding, the EPA is still busily discovering within 40-year-old laws the power to pursue an anti-energy agenda that Congress and the American people have already rejected. The National Labor Relations Board is telling companies where they can and can't locate facilities. And Obama's health care law created an indeterminately large number of new bureaucratic entities (CRS literally cannot ascertain how many). Without reform, none of these regulations will be subject to congressional approval.

In the REINS Act, three Kentuckians have given America a tool that can fix the regulatory process and solve one of the basic structural problems destroying jobs and economic freedom. The vote, expected by late November, will put every member of Congress on record: Will elected representatives of the people responsibly exercise the legislative power entrusted to them, or will they sit on their hands while regulators undermine our economy? ♦

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The Medicare Monster

An entitlement problem too big to ignore

By Yuval Levin

It is gradually dawning on Washington that a meaningful reform of the Medicare program will be unavoidable in the coming years. Medicare is at the center of both our health care dilemma and our fiscal crunch, and it will be very difficult to avoid a calamitous debt crisis without making changes to the program's basic structure.

Medicare's problem is not just overspending. In a sense, the program's travails mirror (and severely exacerbate) those of our economy and welfare state more generally: The stifling of competition and innovation creates a crushing inefficiency that makes the system unsustainable—giving off a strong whiff of institutional decline, and intimations of a terrible crash to come. Yet correcting the problem, in Medicare's case as with our broader predicament, presents an enormous political challenge, because recipients of benefits are powerfully resistant to change.

Democrats have long used the prospect of changes to Medicare as a way to scare older voters, and Republicans have long responded by avoiding serious talk of reform. But this spring, Republicans in the House of Representatives broke with this pattern and passed a bold and promising reform as part of their annual budget resolution, produced by House Budget Committee chairman Paul Ryan. Democrats, however, have stuck to their pattern and sought to use the Republican proposal as election-year ammunition. When she was asked in May what the Democrats' top three election issues would be in 2012, House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi said they were "Medicare, Medicare, and Medicare."

Polls this spring and summer suggested a surprising degree of openness among the public to Ryan's kind of reform, but the Republican presidential candidates are clearly concerned that once the campaign really gets going, the Democrats' scare tactics will again succeed. While a few GOP contenders have offered passing good words for the Ryan budget in general, they have largely steered clear of Medicare so far—neither endorsing nor rejecting a serious reform. They are surely aware that fixing Medicare is essential to the nation's fiscal future, but they also know the issue can be politically explosive. They are thus badly in need of a Medicare reform proposal that could implement significant structural change while effectively assuring voters that seniors will not be put at risk—a proposal that would overcome the potential political challenges of the House Republican approach while retaining its substantive benefits.

The organizing principle of such a proposal should be not austerity, but innovation—not the need to reduce costs as such but the need to unleash creativity and enterprise to find more efficient ways to provide higher quality care more affordably. That is what our health sector lacks above all. Focusing on innovation and dynamism can help us learn from both the strengths and the weaknesses of the Ryan proposal, and could provide a Republican presidential candidate with a politically appealing and substantively promising proposal of his own.

If it is properly conceived, such a proposal could also offer a model for reforming the welfare state more generally—unleashing the kind of innovation and efficiency that our entire economy so sorely lacks today.

ELWOOD H. SMITH

Yuval Levin is the Hertog fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center and the editor of National Affairs.

THE DISASTER AHEAD

The record deficits of the past few years have largely been a function of an explosion of discretionary spending. But the utterly unprecedented debt disaster we confront in the coming years——the projected ballooning of spending and borrowing that has our creditors nervous and will leave us with a national debt larger than our economy in just a decade and twice as large in the 2030s—is a function of an explosion of health-entitlement costs and especially Medicare costs. The Congressional Budget Office projects that the already immense cost of our health programs will double as a share of the economy by the early 2030s and nearly triple by 2050, while all other federal spending combined (except interest payments) will actually *decline* as a share of the economy. Health-entitlement costs will thus account for essentially the entirety of our debt explosion, and Medicare will account for the bulk of those costs—as our population ages and the program's grossly inefficient design pushes health inflation ever upward.

That design is at the heart of our health care crisis too. Today's "fee-for-service" Medicare pays all doctors and hospitals the same price for a given service—regardless of quality, efficiency, outcome, cost to the provider, or patient satisfaction. Medicare recipients play no part in determining who gets paid and how much, and have no sense of what their care costs. Health care providers have no financial incentive to deliver better care at lower cost since they get paid the same regardless. All this creates an enormous incentive for volume rather than efficiency—which yields massive economic distortions and higher costs. And because Medicare is the largest payer for health care in most parts of the country, its structure defines the entire health care system: Hospitals and doctors shape their accounting and billing (and therefore also their practice of medicine) to suit Medicare's demands; Medicaid and most private insurers often use Medicare's payment codes and methods to make things easier on doctors. Medicare shapes how nearly everyone in the American health care system thinks about economics, and it does so in a way that makes very little economic sense—spreading staggering inefficiency throughout the system, and inflating the costs that leave more and more people uninsured.

This calls for real structural reform of Medicare, not just tinkering at the edges or increasing taxes to pay for an unreformed program. President Obama has acknowledged as much—saying in July that "if you look at the numbers, then Medicare in particular will run out of money and we will not be able to sustain that program no matter how much taxes go up"—though he has yet to offer any solution.

The health care law he signed last year avoided structural reforms of Medicare, opting instead for still more price controls, which reduce the amount that Medicare pays per procedure. But such price controls, which have been tried for decades, only exacerbate the problem. By paying less for each service, they drive doctors to segment their work into more individual procedures and to perform more such procedures, undermining efficiency and further inflating costs.

Obamacare's only nod toward addressing the problems of the fee-for-service system were small pilot programs to reward providers for organizing their work more efficiently (as determined by experts in Washington), rather than simply billing for volume. But such small experiments, which also have been attempted in Medicare for decades, have no hope of succeeding precisely because the structure of the larger program shapes the economics of the entire health sector. Pilot programs (and even the Medicare Advantage program, under which some seniors choose to have private insurers manage their benefits) are not significant enough to change how doctors and hospitals approach the business side of their work. They therefore often end up being less efficient than even the larger Medicare program, since they do not enjoy the advantages of command-and-control health care (like using Medicare's muscle to force price reductions that shift costs elsewhere) but cannot change the providers' incentives and so cannot draw on the far greater advantages of market economics either.

An effective reform would have to loosen the stranglehold of the fee-for-service system, which means it would have to fundamentally change the way Medicare works. If Medicare is going to shape the economics of health care, it should at least do so in a way that comports with modern economics—creating efficiency through consumer pressure, competition, and innovation, not through central planning and price controls.

PREMIUM SUPPORT

The basic outline of that kind of reform has been clear for decades. Rather than providing insurance directly to all American seniors—setting payment rates, making coverage decisions, and directly paying doctors and hospitals—Medicare would assign to each senior roughly the amount it would have spent on his coverage and allow him to spend that "premium-support" subsidy on a private health insurer of his choosing. The private insurers would have to provide at least the same minimum level of coverage as Medicare does, but they could organize their plans—any coverage beyond the minimum, their payment rates, their arrangements with doctors, and so on—as they liked. If a senior chose an insurer that charged less than the premium-support payment provided by Medicare, he could keep some or all of the difference, giving him a strong incentive to shop around and choose carefully (and giving

insurers a strong reason to offer cheaper plans). If he chose a plan that cost more than the premium-support level, he would have to make up the difference out of his own pocket.

More efficient ways of organizing and providing health care have to come from physicians and hospitals, but those providers have to be motivated by the people who pay their bills—that is, the insurers—who in turn need a good reason to provide attractive comprehensive health coverage at the lowest possible cost. A premium-support system would use the leverage of Medicare's enormous budget to make that happen—essentially turning the problem into the solution. Seniors would still have a heavily subsidized and guaranteed health-insurance benefit, but it could be provided at a sustainable cost, and without badly distorting the economics of the broader health sector. This would not make Medicare cheap or keep health costs from rising, but it should dramatically constrain the rate of their growth, using consumer pressure to encourage the kind of business-model innovations that American medicine badly needs.

Different versions of the premium-support model have been proposed by various experts over the years. One was even championed by a bipartisan commission established by President Clinton and House speaker Newt Gingrich in the late 1990s, and headed by Democratic senator John Breaux and Republican congressman Bill Thomas. But in each case, the politics of Medicare and the fact that the program's fiscal collapse was still some way off in the future meant that Congress and the president chose not to act—preferring to buy more time with counterproductive price controls and empty rhetoric.

But the collapse of Medicare is no longer far off in the future, even by the myopic standards of Washington. According to the Congressional Budget Office and Medicare's trustees, the program has a long-term unfunded liability of more than $30 trillion and is about a decade from insolvency. The trustees' latest annual report, released in May, notes that the Medicare trust fund is now projected to run out of money five years sooner than was projected just last year. The program's current trajectory would swallow up the federal budget, and taxes could not be raised high enough fast enough to keep up with its growth without crushing the economy.

These grim realities, combined with the results of the 2010 congressional elections, are what motivated House Republicans to offer the Ryan proposal in April—the most significant step yet toward a meaningful reform of Medicare.

The Ryan reform would leave all current seniors and workers who will retire in the next decade in the existing Medicare system to avoid displacing those who have planned their retirements around that system, and to avoid the political fallout of changing the arrangements of today's retirees and near-retirees. Everyone younger than 55, however, would eventually retire into a redesigned Medicare system in which, rather than be insured by the government directly, they would choose from a list of approved private coverage options. Their Medicare benefit would take the form of a government payment for the coverage they chose—and if they opted for coverage more expensive than that payment, they would pay the difference. Poor seniors and those in the worst health would get significantly greater support, while the wealthiest would receive less and so need to use more of their own money to buy coverage.

The level of the base premium support payment would start at what Medicare spends per patient today and grow at the rate of inflation, so that the program's future rate of growth would be far slower than it has been in recent decades, putting downward pressure on insurance costs and forcing providers to find more cost-effective ways to do their work.

Ryan's proposed reform has been enormously controversial. Democrats have vilified it as an assault on seniors.

The savings from such a reform would be immense. Ten years after implementation of the Ryan reform, according to the Congressional Budget Office, the federal government would spend $240 billion less per year on Medicare than it would under current law. Beyond that first decade, the cost of Medicare would actually *decline* as a share of GDP. By 2040, Medicare would account for about 4.75 percent of GDP each year, down from 7.75 percent if the program were not reformed—a difference of some $900 billion *per year* at that point. Such dramatic savings would rescue the Medicare program from collapse and allow the federal budget to ease back toward balance—and thus help the country find a path toward prosperity again.

But of course Ryan's proposed reform has been enormously controversial. Congressional Democrats and President Obama have vilified it as an assault on seniors, and seem intent on making the prospect of such an assault a centerpiece of their 2012 campaign strategy.

Most of their attacks on the Ryan proposal have been patently demagogic lies. Almost every Democrat in Washington has argued that the proposed reform would end Medicare, when in fact it would save the program (and increase spending on it each year, if less quickly than would otherwise happen). Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, chairwoman of the Democratic National Committee, has said the reform would allow private insurers to deny coverage to

seniors with preexisting conditions, when in fact the Ryan bill specifically prohibits such exclusions. Others, including Health and Human Services secretary Kathleen Sebelius, have suggested that Ryan's reform would replace comprehensive insurance with a limited voucher for care, which is also flat false.

But the most politically potent critique of the plan has also been the most substantively serious. It has focused on the rate at which the premium-support payment would grow, and on seniors' fears that their costs would rise. The concern, voiced by some congressional Democrats and by liberal health care experts like former Clinton budget director Alice Rivlin, has been that the competitive pressures unleashed by the Ryan plan would not be sufficient to cause health care costs to grow only at the rate of inflation—which is far lower than their growth rate in recent years—so that the premium-support payment would not keep up with the cost of insurance, and seniors would face a steady increase in out-of-pocket costs over time to cover the gap. It is hard to gauge exactly what the gap would be (and most Democrats voicing this concern have used figures that assume that competition would not bring down costs *at all*, which is ridiculous), but it is not unreasonable to worry that there would be some such gap, as even in a competitive marketplace health care costs are likely to continue rising faster than inflation, especially if inflation remains fairly low.

This concern about increasing out-of-pocket costs has been the most effective line of attack against the Ryan budget, and has even been voiced by some Republicans. Rep. Michele Bachmann, a Tea Party stalwart and Republican presidential candidate, has said that while she voted for the Ryan budget and supports its discretionary cuts, she would put "an asterisk" over its Medicare reform because she's "concerned about shifting the cost burden to senior citizens."

Ryan's response to this critique has been that the critics underestimate the power of competition to bring down costs, and that the particular growth rate of the premium-support payment in his plan is in any case open to negotiation and could be adjusted over time if it proved inadequate. Other reformers have also sought to address this concern by adjusting that rate: The debt-reduction task force of the Bipartisan Policy Center, chaired by Rivlin and former Republican senator Pete Domenici, proposed a Medicare plan very similar to Ryan's but with a premium-support payment that would grow at one percentage point above the rate of growth of the gross domestic product each year, rather than at the rate of inflation. This, they argue, might be a more realistic pace of growth given the savings likely to result from competition.

But of course, this last proposal might be subject to the same critique—especially from those who simply deny that competition would lower prices. And at the same time, setting ever-higher growth rates risks undermining the potential of markets to bring down costs. Costs would not fall *below* the preset growth rate, since insurers would have no incentive to push them below the level of payments already promised. Searching for the perfect growth rate thus sends reformers on a fool's errand without neutralizing the political case against shifting the risk of higher costs onto seniors.

More important, searching for the perfect growth rate puts austerity—and the need to cut the cost of Medicare—at the heart of the reform proposal. If we instead put innovation itself, driven by competition, at the heart of our search for an effective Medicare reform, we will find our way to a version of the premium-support solution that is both politically and substantively superior—a reform with tremendous potential to address our fiscal problems and our health care problems yet also with a very real chance of easing voters' concerns and being enacted into law. The work of a series of conservative policy experts over the past two decades points the way to just such a solution.

THE CONFIDENT MARKET SOLUTION

If the promise of the premium-support model is its potential to unleash genuine competition in health insurance, then a preset rate of growth for the premium-support payment is not an essential feature of a meaningful reform. In fact, the goal of the reform would be better served by allowing market competition to set the growth rate, as well as to drive the cost of coverage downward.

How would that work? First, Medicare would define the minimum insurance benefit it would seek to provide to all covered seniors—presumably at roughly the level of coverage it now provides. Then, in each region of the country (Medicare is already divided into geographic regions), there would be a competitive bidding process each year in which private insurers would offer bids proposing to provide that (or a greater) benefit at the lowest cost they could. The level of the premium-support payment in each region for that year would be set at, for instance, the level of the second-lowest of the bids. Seniors would then be able to apply that amount toward the purchase of any of the plans on offer in their area. Thus, in each region, there would be at least one option that would cost less than the Medicare benefit, and seniors choosing that option would get the difference back as cash in their pockets; there would be at least one plan that cost the same as the benefit, so that seniors could obtain it with only the same out-of-pocket costs they have today; and there would be other plans that cost more (perhaps because they offered more, or because they failed to find ways to drive greater efficiency in their networks of doctors and hospitals) and for which

seniors would pay an additional premium if they chose.

Such a system could even allow a form of the traditional fee-for-service Medicare to be one of the bidders—offering government-provided insurance, but on the same terms as the private insurers, and thus with its ability to throw its weight around suitably constrained. This would appease some on the left concerned about the disappearance of "Medicare as we know it," but would not take much away from the effectiveness of the new system if the rules allowed for real competition.

In such a system, the premium-support benefit would grow exactly as quickly as required to provide a comprehensive insurance benefit, since the growth rate would be determined by a market process rather than a preset formula. Information about costs and prices would flow from those who had more direct on-the-ground knowledge (insurers, doctors, and hospitals) to those with less (Medicare administrators) rather than the other way around, as now happens. Insurers and providers would have a strong incentive to innovate, to improve efficiency, and to cut costs while offering high-quality services, and the broader health care system would be liberated from the stranglehold of the economically obtuse fee-for-service system. But seniors would not face the risk of greater out-of-pocket costs—if markets failed to bring down costs, the federal budget would suffer, but Medicare recipients would not. The risk would be borne by the government, not the elderly.

The time has come for a candidate or officeholder to propose in detail the transformation of Medicare.

Such a reform would be a way for advocates of market-friendly health care to show confidence in their own expectations of competition. If market forces did drive costs down, as conservative health care experts expect, the reform would save the government an enormous amount of money (perhaps no less than the Ryan or Rivlin-Domenici plans), leaving both our budget and our health care system in vastly better shape. If market forces did not drive costs down, then we would have to find another way to address our entitlement costs. We would be back where we started, which is where Democrats want to end up anyway. Whether the reform succeeded or failed, seniors would have a guaranteed benefit and essentially no added financial risk.

The Democrats' case against Medicare reform would thus be reduced to nearly nothing—especially if seniors could even opt for a public fee-for-service program if they were willing to pay the premium. And voters' concerns about Medicare reform should be very greatly alleviated, since the pace of change under such a reform would be set by the market in a way that would minimize disruption for the elderly.

Some on the right might complain that this would leave in place a highly managed and administered Medicare program, and indeed one that resembles some elements of Obamacare—perhaps even a kind of public insurance option. But this misses a crucial distinction: This reform, like the Ryan plan, would transform today's lumbering single-payer fee-for-service Medicare program into a much more market-based and competitive system for providing a public benefit. If we believe that the government should heavily subsidize health insurance for the elderly, this is a far better way to do it. Obamacare, by contrast, will make our existing health care system even *less* market-oriented—leaving in place today's failing Medicare program for the elderly and turning our private health-insurance sector into a series of public utilities.

Indeed, a market-based reform of Medicare like the one proposed here would require the repeal of Obamacare, and would work best in tandem with a reform that moved the under-65 health care system in a more market-friendly direction—eventually transforming the tax exclusion for employer-provided insurance into a universal tax credit for the purchase of private coverage by individuals and turning Medicaid into an income-based add-on to that credit.

Other conservatives might complain that such an approach would be less aggressive than Ryan's, and thus save less money. But if competition could bring the growth of health care costs to roughly the level of general inflation, then a reform like this could work just as well if not better than the Ryan plan. If it couldn't, then the growth rate of the benefit under Ryan's plan would likely have to be adjusted over time in any case. In fact, a system that set the pace of benefit growth using competitive bidding would actually be *more* market-based than Ryan's proposal. It would, in a sense, be a more profound or radical reform, yet it would also (and in part for that very reason) be far less problematic politically. Indeed, Ryan himself has said he would welcome this approach, and would even be open to offering fee-for-service Medicare as an option—since it is a version of precisely what he is trying to achieve.

Why, then, did Ryan not propose this form of the premium-support model himself? The reason seems largely to be that the "scoring" conventions of the Congressional Budget Office made it impossible. Put simply, CBO refuses to estimate the effects of competition on prices—or indeed the effects of any policy on the behavior of consumers or providers. The agency scores only blunt changes in funding, but does not make economically informed projections about

dynamic effects. So while CBO is perfectly happy to offer a (perfectly meaningless) projection of what the unemployment rate will be in the year 2083 (5 percent, by the way), it declines to assume that having insurers compete for customers will result in lower costs than having the government pay a universal preset rate for every medical procedure. The agency has acknowledged that its failure to account for such market effects is, as its director has put it, "a gap in our toolkit," but it has so far not sought to fill that gap.

Other government analysts, like the actuary of the Medicare program, do model market effects, and have found that a premium-support reform would significantly reduce costs and improve efficiency. "It can get you to the lowest cost consistent with good quality of care," the program's chief actuary, Richard Foster, said at a congressional hearing in July. But because CBO does not score market effects, it cannot score a version of premium support based on competitive bidding. Because budget resolutions in the House of Representatives need to be scored by CBO, Ryan had to employ a preset spending level. The Rivlin-Domenici panel also wanted a plan that CBO could score, and so proceeded along the same lines.

But other reformers over the years have seen the appeal of a system that sets premium-support levels through competitive bidding. The Breaux-Thomas commission of the late 1990s proposed a version of this approach. The Medicare prescription-drug benefit, designed by the Bush administration and enacted in 2003, works along these general lines and has achieved impressive savings. Scholars Robert Coulam, Roger Feldman, and Bryan Dowd proposed a more limited application of the idea in a 2009 book. And last year, Thomas Miller of the American Enterprise Institute and James Capretta of the Ethics and Public Policy Center proposed a form of this approach as part of a broader transformation of the health care system. Some on the left, including Alice Rivlin, have praised the idea too.

IN SEARCH OF A CHAMPION

The appeal of the Ryan proposal, and the lessons to be drawn from the political response to that proposal, suggest the time has come for a candidate or officeholder to propose in detail the transformation of Medicare into a truly market-based guaranteed insurance benefit.

Such a proposal would be ideal for the platform of a Republican presidential candidate. A candidate would not have to worry about a CBO score, and his campaign could explain the potential of this approach with the help of academic economists and modelers. Because such a reform would be inherently gradual and might retain the current system as an option, the candidate could also propose to implement it sooner than 10 years from now, and so have it begin bearing fruit far more quickly.

Most important, a candidate could champion this approach as a safe and reasonable attempt to lower costs and address the country's monumental fiscal crisis without shifting risk onto seniors. Such a proposal could serve as a way to educate voters about just how central our entitlement crisis is to our coming debt crisis, while showing them that —if we set clear goals and rules and then allow the market economy to work—solutions are possible without causing undue disruptions in the lives of the most vulnerable Americans. It would thus also function as a model for other reforms of our moribund welfare state—pressing the point that what our economy badly needs today is innovation and enterprise, and that these must be at the core of every facet of our domestic policy.

Much of the left would certainly oppose a market-based reform, which would after all strike at the conceptual core of the liberal welfare state. But on what grounds would liberals base their opposition and seek to scare the elderly? This reform would retain Medicare's guaranteed benefit, and would simply test whether market competition could dramatically lower the cost of providing that benefit while freeing our health care system from the shackles of command-and-control economics. If it worked, our fiscal prospects would improve dramatically and liberals would have to acknowledge the case for transforming the rest of our welfare state along similar lines. If it failed, we would need to find other means of addressing our fiscal problems, and conservatives would have to acknowledge that their vision of American government beyond the welfare state requires a profound rethinking. Either way, seniors would have their comprehensive health insurance subsidized by Medicare, just as they have for decades.

Our disastrous debt projections mean that there is really no alternative to a market-based Medicare reform. It is the only solution conservative experts have come up with, and liberals have offered essentially nothing at all—burying their heads in the sand and insisting all is well. For the moment, voters might still be inclined to do the same. But, like so much else in our politics, that appears to be changing in light of economic realities.

The need for Medicare reform has never been more urgent, or more clear. We simply cannot avert a debt crisis without it. But the case can be made most easily and effectively if it is made in the service of a politically palatable reform idea focused on innovation rather than austerity.

Years of work by conservative health care experts have produced such an idea. All we need now is a conservative presidential candidate who can see beyond the political peril of Medicare politics to the political promise of offering the country a solution to its mounting woes that is both appealing and achievable. ♦

€gads!

Merkel didn't say yes and can't say no to bailing out the Greeks

By Christopher Caldwell

German chancellor Angela Merkel is spending this weekend the way she spent the last two—struggling through an election. This weekend, her Christian Democrats will get drubbed in Berlin, as last week they lost 4 points off their previous tally in Lower Saxony and the week before they failed in Mecklenburg. Her Free Democrat coalition partners are doing even worse—leader Philipp Rösler lives in Lower Saxony himself, yet the party fell below the hurdle required to qualify for parliamentary seats. In Mecklenburg, the FDP got fewer votes than the neo-Nazis.

Merkel's problem is that her country is trapped sharing a currency—the euro—with a lot of nations that have overborrowed: Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Greece, and Spain. Not all of the so-called PIIGS countries are corrupt, and not all of them are profligate, although Greece is both. What they all have in common is that they had no business borrowing for the past decade at the low interest rates appropriate to a sluggish German economy that was simultaneously rebuilding East Germany's Communist wreckage and reforming West Germany's leviathan welfare state. Now all of these countries are flat broke or near it. Greece's three-year bonds carry a yield of 172 percent. And the solution that they and the leaders of the European Union in Brussels are suggesting is that all of them should be dealt out a piece of Germany's massive current-account surplus, its sterling savings rate, and its triple-A credit rating, preferably through the creation of a common "Euro-Bond."

Merkel cannot say no. She leads the country whose arrogant un-neighborliness the European Union was set up to abolish. But she cannot say yes without violating the law and colluding in the looting of the people who voted her into office. So she and her government are in the position of a man who yearns to get divorced but has religious scruples against it. The Germans are saying things they hope will provoke their European "spouse" to file for divorce herself. The country's European commissioner, Günther Oettinger, suggested that the flags of the continent's *Schuldensündern* (or "debt-sinners") be flown at half-mast. Rösler has called on Germans to prepare for Greece's "orderly default." Finance minister Wolfgang Schäuble has urged austerity on Germany's neighbors and suggested that European integration continue only "as long as this process is legitimized by a strong democratic mandate." (In other words, he wants it to continue in theory but not in practice.) Horst Seehofer, the head of Merkel's Bavarian coalition partner, the Christian Social Union, probably spoke for most Germans when he pronounced himself opposed to more integration of any kind. *Maybe that'll push the old lady over the edge, and I'll be a free man again*.

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OF EUROBONDAGE

Over the summer, things have gone from bad to worse in the eurozone. The two austerity programs imposed on Greece in the last year and a half are failing. Greece collects 37 percent of its gross domestic product in taxes and shells out 53 percent in benefits, leaving its government 16 percent in the hole. Only one other government in the West has been so reckless over the past three years, and that other government happens to control the Federal Reserve and can print the world's reserve currency.

Greece has been able to borrow money from its European brethren in two massive, hundred-billion-dollar tranches, but the austerity programs insisted on as a condition for that aid have been less popular. The bevy of new taxes suggested—like the property tax dreamed up suddenly last week—aren't working because they are driving growth down way below projections. The savings agreed on—such as the firing of 7,500 state workers and the selloff of $70 billion in state assets—won't work because the Greeks are too divided to carry them out. And wary AAA-rated Northern European creditors have made their participation in this bailout contingent on the Greeks' obeying these conditions to the letter. The Finns have demanded collateral out of privatized assets. The Austrian parliament has put off until later this fall its vote on whether to pay up the country's share of last

summer's rescue package. Greek workers, having borrowed and spent with abandon ever since their admission to the eurozone, now march against privatization plans with the defiant boast that their country is "not for sale." A different society—one that was capable of, say, forgoing vacations for two years—might be able to right its fiscal ship. But Greece is going broke, and there ain't no two ways about it.

European leaders' preferred solution of last resort—a eurobond that would turn Greece's debts into Germany's—is highly unpopular in Germany. To understand why today's Germans object to eurobonds is not hard—you have only to understand why Americans of the 1980s, rightly or wrongly, objected to welfare fraud. This being Europe, popular opposition normally poses few obstacles to the country's governing classes. But the conviction is growing in Germany that even the modest European bailouts that have taken place thus far are outright illegal. And they are.

The major European Union treaties since Maastricht have "no bailout" clauses, meant to keep the EU from turning into a "transfer union." The two packages of loan guarantees offered to Greece raise Germany's borrowing costs and lower Greece's. These guarantees will likely need to be paid out. On top of that, the European Central Bank has undertaken a plan to buy the bonds of struggling countries, and these purchases are made with funds backed up by the AAA countries. This summer, when Italy's bond yields began to rise, the ECB head Jean-Claude Trichet extended the program to Italy, which has a nearly $2 trillion bond market.

GARY LOCKE

In early September, the German constitutional court ruled on a suit brought by a group of distinguished economists and law professors against German participation in the various euro bailouts. Handed a gun and asked to murder a currency used by half a billion people in 17 countries, the German judges demurred. They did insist, however, that any further bailouts be subject to approval in the Bundestag, which dooms the prospects of a eurobond for the near future. Two days later Jürgen Stark, the chief economist and the top-ranking German at the European Central Bank, resigned, three years before his term was scheduled to expire. According to the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, which has good relations with Stark, he "no longer wished to carry the responsibility for buying government bonds through the ECB." The Germans appear ready to take their macroeconomic ball and go home.

You begin to suspect eurobonds might be a very bad idea when you note the mockery and ad hominem scorn heaped on those who oppose them in public. Look at the headlines in the weekly *Die Zeit*: "The Fearmongering of Eurobond Opponents," "The Weak Arguments of Eurobond Opponents," and so on. Those who worry about German yields rising should admit that, even with eurobonds, yields would scarcely be higher than they were in the 1990s, *Die Zeit* thunders. Maybe that's true. But the 9 percent German bond yields that existed in 1990 and a 9 percent bond yield today would be two very different animals. And anyway, as the wisest economists writing on the subject have understood, the argument over eurobonds is about sovereignty as much as efficiency. One of these, Daniel Gros of the Centre for European Policy Studies, writes

that eurobonds violate the principle of no taxation without representation, by "holding taxpayers in thrifty countries fully and unconditionally liable for spending decisions taken in other countries."

A subtler—and perfectly correct—argument in favor of introducing eurobonds is that, in her own sneaky way, Merkel has already introduced them. Sigmar Gabriel, chairman of the Social Democrats, refers to the various guarantees in which Germany has participated as "Merkel-Bonds" and says they are a de facto eurobond. He is right: Germany is putting its credit rating on the line for debts that Greece and other countries have incurred. But there is a distinction here that resembles the one between gay marriage and civil unions. Even if Merkel and her foes are arguing over a word, not a thing, the word is all-important. It is the difference between a grudging we-can-give-you-this-as-a-favor-if-you're-going-to-grouse-about-it and full recognition as by right. eurobonds are a scheme whereby wily European politicians want permission to pursue ad hoc solutions with Germany's money. Thus far, Germany has not given it to them.

WEN IN ROME

Over the summer Germans were given a graphic illustration of how much debtor countries can be trusted with AAA countries' money. Italy has—let us repeat it and shudder—about $2 trillion in outstanding debt. This has not generally been seen as such a big problem, for two reasons. The first is that relatively little of Italy's debt is owed to foreign creditors. The second, not unrelated, is that Italy's finance minister, Giulio Tremonti, is trusted by the markets. But Italy's premier, Silvio Berlusconi, got embroiled in a scandal that involved lurid stories of his making "bunga-bunga" with very young call girls. He seemed erratic. He quarreled with Tremonti. And bond dealers grew nervous.

At that point, in early August, Trichet extended the European Central Bank debt-buying program to Italy in exchange for Berlusconi's promise of an austerity program. As soon as the ECB acted, however, Berlusconi's government tried to back out of the austerity. The ECB made it clear that he would need to pursue it if the bank were to continue to buy Italian bonds. Italy said okay. But as the economists Alberto Alesina and Francesco Giavazzi detailed, the austerity plan enacted was not ideal. It relied on tax hikes instead of government cuts. It undid a flexible-work contract that unions had opposed, and it backed off a planned welfare reform.

Last week a rumor began to spread that China had stepped in and agreed to buy Italian debt. The two countries had indeed talked, but at Italy's instigation. China holds $3.2 trillion in reserves, which the United States was not slow to tap in the last crisis. For Europe, though, it appears Chinese aid will come at a steep price. Speaking at a World Economic Forum event in China, Premier Wen Jiabao called on the EU to recognize his country as a "market economy." Apparently, those two words have a formal meaning under World Trade Organization rules. A "nonmarket economy" can more easily be subjected to trade sanctions if a trading partner considers it to be engaging in protectionist measures. To declare China a market economy is the trade-war equivalent of unilateral disarmament.

The involvement of China in Europe's debt crisis led the financial blog *ZeroHedge* to note that many observers believed China might be running into a cash crisis of its own. "That's ok," the blog commented, "by the time China is insolvent, Chinese stabilization of Europe will be complete, and Europe can boldly step up and rescue China in turn. And so on . . . and so on . . . in the wacky wonderful Ponzi world of ours."

The word Ponzi is on many lips just now. It may not literally describe the welfare states of Europe and America, but it is at worst hyperbole. In the United States, Democrats' endless promises of benefits, Republicans' idea that funding the state is optional—these amount to promises that if you, the Western consumer, just sit in front of the television eating Twinkies, the Chinese will work to supply you with the luxuries to which you've become accustomed, just like back in the days when the coolies built the railroads. China, apparently, views the march of history a bit differently.

The postwar European social model was viable for a long time, but it, too, has always required accounting tricks, and over time these became too elaborate to sustain. First, the demographics of the past favored the system, since the generation of those who would have retired just after World War II had been decimated in World War I. Second, the demographics of the future favored the system, too, as the unusually large Baby Boom generation paid for the generation born in the 1920s—unusually small to begin with and then decimated by another war. Finally, by the time demographics began to look more foreboding, the welfare state had been going on for so long that even people who should have been able to do the math mistook the status quo for a law of nature. They borrowed from the next generation, confident that some trick would be found such as previous generations had enjoyed. When that didn't work, they cut the military. And when that didn't work? Well, here we are. ♦

The Lost Girls

China's One-Child policy is an epic disaster. Why does it have so many cheerleaders?

By Jonathan V. Last

A few weeks ago Vice President Joe Biden made, by his standards, a minor squall when he visited China and held forth on the country's One-Child policy. Biden didn't endorse One-Child, exactly, but said that he would not "second guess" it. He wasn't the first Westerner to look favorably upon the regime. Tom Friedman once mused that One-Child "probably saved China from a population calamity." The Associated Press lauded it recently as a "boon" to Chinese girls. Others believe One-Child to be so admirable that it ought to be replicated on a global scale. *Financial Post* columnist Diane Francis, former Planned Parenthood director Norman Fleishman, and Ted Turner—among others—have all said that the entire world ought to adopt China's One-Child policy.

It's hard to know what's at the root of all this admiration. Part of it may be a reaction to the gauche American habit of having children. Push environmentalists hard enough and eventually they devolve into overpopulation hysterics. Or perhaps appreciating One-Child is, like following professional soccer, just a way of peacocking moral superiority.

But the more charitable (and likely) explanation is that people who claim to admire China's One-Child policy simply don't know very much about it. Like where it came from. Or how it actually works. Or what it has *really* done to China's demographics. Joe Biden may not be willing to second guess One-Child, but many Chinese demographers are doing just that because they are terrified by what it has done to their country. The people who care most about One-Child—the Chinese—spend a lot of time these days not praising the policy but trying to figure a way out of it. Because it turns out that One-Child wasn't so much a policy as a trap.

Billboard near Beijing: "Continue the practice of the state policy of family planning to pursue the long term balanced development of population"

The One-Child policy didn't officially go into effect until September 25, 1980, but it was a long time in the making. Between 1950 and 1970, the average Chinese woman had roughly six children during her lifetime. In the West, this was viewed with alarm, as various Malthusians, from Margaret Sanger to the Ford Foundation to the Club of Rome to Paul Ehrlich, became increasingly haunted by the specter of overpopulation—especially in Asia—in the postwar era.

China was, for a while, indifferent to these worries. Malthus was viewed as an enemy of the people, rejected by both the Soviets and the Chinese revolutionaries. Both species of Communists viewed the idea of overpopulation as a "false alarm." But as the Cultural Revolution ground onward, the Chinese gradually became concerned about a problem that population growth presented to their fight for prosperity: Economic gains are easier to see when they aren't diffused over an increasing number of people.

Beginning in 1970, the government began urging a course of "late, long, few," instructing women to wait until later in life to have babies, put longer periods of time between births, and have fewer children overall. In a decade, the country's fertility rate dropped from 5.5 to 2.7. (In order for a society to maintain a stable population, it needs a fertility

NEWSCOM

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rate of 2.1. Any higher and population grows; lower and it shrinks.)

As this sea change was taking place, a Chinese scientist named Song Jian was taking an interest in demography. Song was an engineer by training—he got his start in the Ministry of National Defense working on missile technology—and this role protected him during the Cultural Revolution. When the shooting finally stopped he was one of the few academics not in the gulag or the ground. The party came to rely on his work, which increasingly concerned demographics.

In 1975, Song went on a junket to the Netherlands, where he met a mathematician named Geert Jan Olsder. (The story of their meeting is well told in Mara Hvistendahl's *Unnatural Selection.*) Olsder specialized in game theory and was assigned by chance as Song's host. It was a bit of serendipity: Olsder had recently worked on a game theory problem concerning population. As he explained to Song, he and his colleagues determined that the key to demographic stability was controlling the number, and timing, of births. Song would go on to incorporate Olsder's theoretical work into his own, which, in turn, shaped the formulation of One-Child. The reason game theory and complicated math were needed is that the One-Child policy is more complicated than it sounds.

Under One-Child, couples wanting a baby were required to obtain permission from local officials first. (In 2002, the government relaxed this provision; you can now have one child without government clearance.) After having a child, urban residents and government employees were forbidden from having another, with some exceptions. In rural areas, for instance, couples were often allowed to have a second baby five years after the first. There are a total of 22 exceptions which allow Chinese to have a second child, but they tend to be narrow: 63 percent of couples are bound to a single child. Any more than two—even for the lucky exceptions—and the government institutes penalties. Sanctions range from heavy fines to confiscation of belongings to dismissal from work. There are reports of violators having the roofs of their houses removed, or their doors and windows walled shut.

And then there were the forced abortions and sterilizations. On this score, the Chinese government had help from the West. In 1979, as China prepared to roll out One-Child, the government signed an agreement with the United Nations Population Fund, which pledged $50 million to help control births—a euphemism that in practice meant groups of government workers rounding up pregnant women and forcing them to have abortions. The U.N.'s presence opened the door for other Western organizations, including the Ford Foundation and the International Planned Parenthood Federation, which poured resources into China in an effort to kill babies. These groups were not unaware of what was happening. The IPPF's Benjamin Viel wrote admiringly, "Persuasion and motivation [are] very effective in a society in which social sanctions can be applied against those who fail to cooperate in the construction of the socialist state."

Others were less enamored by what they saw. In January 1980, an official from the IPPF sent a memo of caution to the group's director. "[V]ery strong measures [are] being taken to reduce population growth—including abortion up to 8 months," the memo said, before continuing:

> I think that in the not-too-distant future this will blow up into a major Press story, as it contains all the ingredients for sensationalism—Communism, forced family planning, murder of viable fetuses, parallels with India, etc. When it does blow up, it is going to be very difficult to defend.

Planned Parenthood's leadership ignored the warning. But although the story did ultimately blow up, it turned out that it wasn't so hard to defend after all. Just ask Tom Friedman. Just ask Vice President Biden.

The overall result of this concerted effort is a Chinese fertility rate that now sits somewhere around 1.54, depending on who's doing the tabulating. Demographer Nicholas Eberstadt notes, "In some major population centers—Beijing, Shanghai, and Tianjin among them—it appears that the average number of births per woman is amazingly low: below one baby per lifetime."

All of which brings us to the practical problems of One-Child. For starters, even when you consider the contemporaneous fears of overpopulation, One-Child was not particularly helpful. The Chinese government claims that One-Child has prevented 400 million births over the last 30 years. And it's possible they're right. But that number assumes that the Chinese fertility rate would have remained at its 1970 level without the policy. Which seems unlikely.

Chinese fertility was already falling when One-Child was instituted, and the policy certainly steepened the curve. Other projections suggest that it has prevented 100 million births, which isn't nothing. But either way, One-Child has been a gigantic failure by demographic standards. Whether One-Child was the driving force, or simply responsible for the fertility decline at the margin, the country is now on the brink of radical population shrinkage. By 2050, China will be losing, on net, 20 million people every five years.

And whatever effect One-Child had on China's fertility

rate, it also produced two unexpected changes in the country's demographic profile.

First, One-Child created an enormous sex imbalance in the population. In nature, 105 boys are born for every 100 girls. But in China (and other Asian countries) there is a strong cultural preference for sons. Once Chinese were limited to one or, at most, two children, it became enormously important to parents that their one child be a male heir. The combination of ultrasound technology, which allowed sex-determination *in utero*, with industrial-scale abortion created an atmosphere in which it was thoroughly routine for mothers to abort female babies. This practice has become so widespread in China that there are a mind-boggling 123 boys born for every 100 girls.

This grisly reality is behind the Associated Press's happy talk about China being a paradise for girls. The relative scarcity of girls has meant that women are prized and treated exceptionally well by parents, who can devote all their resources to them, and suitors who want to marry them. Things really are great for Chinese girls—if they survive until birth.

China has a mind-boggling 123 boys born for every 100 girls. This grisly reality is behind the AP's happy talk about China being a paradise for girls. The relative scarcity has meant that girls are prized by parents and suitors—if they are lucky enough to be born.

China's sex imbalance means that the country has a large cohort of men for whom marriage will be a statistical impossibility. By the late 2020s nearly one in five Chinese men will be "surplus males." This has all sorts of cultural consequences—increased violence and political instability historically attend gender imbalances. But from a demographic standpoint, it means that China's already low fertility rate is functionally lower than it looks—because of the sex disparity among children who are born, many fewer than half will be females who have the opportunity to reproduce.

The other unintended consequence is that One-Child has radically altered China's age structure, giving it many more old people than young. In 2005, the country's median age was 32-years-old. By 2050, it will be 45-years-old, and a full quarter of the populace will be over 65. That means 330 million senior citizens, most of whom will have little or no family to care for them.

China has no pension system to speak of and will have only 2 workers per retiree—which isn't much of a tax base from which to build one. The age ratio may cause a labor shortage, too: In the next 10 years, the number of Chinese aged 20 to 24 will drop by 45 percent. All age-cohorts will shrink, except among the elderly. It is a looming demographic catastrophe—Eberstadt calls it a "slow-motion humanitarian tragedy." All of these problems are as obvious as they are unavoidable; yet they are rarely acknowledged in the West.

They are not lost on the Chinese. The government has tried to correct the sex imbalance by making sex-determination illegal and allowing rural parents who have a girl first to immediately try for a son. Neither reform has had much effect. The government is now worrying about how to change its demographic trajectory, since it needs new young workers to support the coming wave of retirees and instead is facing imminent population decline.

A group of Chinese demographers, both in the government and at universities, has been cautiously arguing for the last several years that they must reform the One-Child policy in order to escape the demographic trap in which the country is caught.

But they're not optimistic. One-Child may have altered the foundations of Chinese society to the point of being irreversible. In modern countries with access to contraception and abortion, the theoretical upper limit on a society's fertility rate is its "ideal fertility"—that is, the number of children women say they would like to have in a perfect world. This ideal number is always higher than achieved fertility, because parents bump into various real-world constraints. For example, although most Western countries have an ideal fertility number above 2, the only Western country with a fertility rate above 2.0 is America.

In 2006, Chinese demographers began studying the Jiangsu province, where couples are allowed to have a second child so long as one of the parents was an only child. They surveyed women who were eligible for a second child, trying to get a handle on what China's ideal fertility number might be. Among women who could have two children if they wanted, 1.46 was the ideal number.

For the Chinese, this is the scariest number of all because it suggests that even if One-Child were lifted tomorrow, it might not matter. If One-Child has eroded not just real fertility, but even the desire of the Chinese to have children, then there is no way out. Governments have tried coaxing and coercing people into having more children than they want to for centuries and it never—literally never—works.

China's One-Child policy has been a demographic disaster for China. And the worst is yet to come. ♦

'Entry of Alexander the Great into Babylon' by Johann Georg Patzer (1704-1761)

Top of the World, Ma

Why Alexander really was great.

BY J. E. LENDON

Four years ago, at the climax of fashionable handwringing about the war in Iraq, there was rushed into print a crabbed and cranky book entitled *Alexander the Great Failure*, a volume whose author portrayed the conqueror as the Donald Rumsfeld of the ancient world. Too arrogant and feckless to care about the rule or the future of the titanic empire he had won by the spear, this NPR Alexander died leaving his conquests both ungoverned and ungovernable. The pointed parallel seems rather quaint now that the progress of our arms has rendered most of Iraq safer than Duluth, and the United States has nearly brought to a quiet end one of the most successful anti-insurgency campaigns in the history of the world.

Alexander the Great Failure
by John D. Grainger
Hambledon Continuum, 256 pp., $34.95

Alexander the Great
by Philip Freeman
Simon and Schuster, 416 pp., $30

Yet even that angry author's indictment of Alexander the Great by recounting the wars fought between his successors could not conceal the fact that those successors were Macedonian—that for centuries Macedonians of Greek speech and culture ruled most of the realm Alexander conquered from what is now western Turkey to what is now Pakistan. The Macedonian achievement in establishing long-term, stable rule over bloodied and alien extents—even over districts through which Alexander himself merely galloped, and where few Macedonians were left behind to sniff the ozone of his thunderbolt—is one of the abiding marvels of history.

To Alexander's conquests and their legacy, Philip Freeman's new *Alexander the Great* is a more useful guide. Born of the author's own wonder at the achievements of the greatest soldier in the history of the West, Freeman's book

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has, unlike *Alexander the Great Failure*, no tedious political agenda. Clear, concise, stripped-down, and in prose with little unnecessary ornament, it does not soar and wheel like Robin Lane Fox's immortal *Alexander the Great*, perhaps the best-written book on ancient history since Gibbon, but neither does it creep and grovel and seek ticks in its tail like *Alexander the Great Failure*. In his choice of anecdote—a historian of Alexander must decide how many of the countless stories told about Alexander to believe and recount—Freeman uses a sieve neither so generous as to try the reader's credulity nor so stingy as to deny the reader the story's joy.

The part of Freeman's tale of particular interest at this hour is Alexander's 329-327 B.C. conquest of Afghanistan, a tract of his empire which by the 250s had evolved into an independent Macedonian kingdom extending north to the Aral Sea, and whose kings subjugated much of northern India early in the next century. This so-called Greco-Bactrian Kingdom survived until the late 100s B.C., the origins of its rulers regularly marked on their handsome coins by their confident Macedonian sun-hats. Alexander and his successors were perhaps the last people in history to establish an untroubled dominion over this tragic territory, and in the Thousand Cities of Bactria a Hellenic civilization rooted, budded, and flowered, and when winter finally came, left things of beauty to mark its passing. Even now, when one sees an unprovenanced "Greek" sculpture in the window of an antiquities dealer, it is likely to come from one of the successive sacks of Kabul's National Museum in the 1990s. And one hardly knows whether to thrash the dealer or shake his hand: for much that was too heavy to be carted away into the illicit antiquities trade was destroyed by fanatical sledgehammers in 2001, when the Taliban belatedly decided that Muslim hostility to icons extended to classical statuary.

How did Alexander control the regions he conquered? He understood naturally what Americans have learned in Iraq and Afghanistan: that in a traditional society power lies in the hands of individuals rather than institutions, and so can far more easily be found already in existence than created anew. As he marched east into strange territories, Alexander did all he could to keep the existing local authorities in place. Many a proud satrap of Persia—if he surrendered his province to the Macedonian with alacrity enough—emerged from a single brief interview with his conqueror a satrap still, but serving a new master. And so the satrap, perhaps with a Greek or Macedonian left to look over his shoulder, continued to rule as he always had, as a local magnate who happened to be satrap, putting his great personal power in the service of government, since the office of satrap had little power of its own. Some of these men proved monsters to their subjects, and others—not surprisingly—traitors to Alexander: Those Alexander was obliged to depose. But that risk had to be taken, because appointing as ruler a person without locally rooted power would usually mean that he had no power at all.

In a traditional society a position in government (as one of my teachers used to say) is like a pretentious hat: It acknowledges the existing power of its holder, but gives him little power to govern that he does not already possess by virtue of his own private resources. The strategy of Alexander and his successors was to entwine Macedonian authority around existing local power like a clinging vine, depending on it and taking nourishment from it while Macedonian power was new and weak. When the Macedonians had lived long in the east and gathered their own power—not least by founding colonies of far-from-home Greeks and Macedonians in their domains—the vine of their rule might finally strangle the supporting tree of native power and stand, ghostly, on its own.

Aristotle instructing Alexander

If the power to govern was the property of individuals rather than of the offices that adorned them, it followed that hostile power was held by individuals as well. If great inimical personalities could be destroyed, broader resistance to the new rulers would collapse. Alexander had an easier time defeating the Great King of Persia, Darius, in battle, than he did pursuing him, after his defeat, through Persia and over the high Caspian Gates. After the fugitive monarch was murdered on the verge of capture, Alexander chased his murderer—Bessus, who had proclaimed himself Great King in turn—over the mighty Hindu Kush from Kandahar to Kabul and on into the plains of central Asia, north towards Samarkand. Once Bessus was finally captured (and flogged,

and mutilated, and handed over to the family of Darius to be finished off), Alexander fought a counterinsurgency campaign, which historians regard as the hardest of his wars, in Sogdiana—the plain north of today's Afghanistan, now split between several former Soviet republics. This came to an end (in one version) when his opponent Spitamenes, a local dynast and sometime ally of Bessus, was finally murdered by his own wife, with whom he had made the error (fatal to a resistance leader) of being in love.

Whatever the hardships of his four-year chase over some of the cruelest landscape in the world, Alexander knew that enemy chiefs had to be hunted down, for the power to oppose him lay in men—not in states, not in peoples. Nor have things changed very much in the realms Alexander conquered: The much-mocked deck of playing cards adorned with the faces of Iraq's fugitive Baathist leaders, intended to aid Americans in Iraq in identifying and arresting them, in fact represented a good rough-and-ready understanding of the realities of power in Iraq. And similarly sound in principle is the use of guileful drones to kill individual Taliban leaders in Pakistan. This tactic may fail for lack of political will or good targeting data, but it is based on perfectly valid ethnographical assumptions about the structure of power among our enemies in that part of the world.

The ancients paid a curious tribute to the troubles of Alexander's Afghan campaign, for it was about his adventures in that region that later men spun fantastic legends: Here it was that Alexander met with giants, and centaurs, and headless men, and three-eyed lions, and fleas as big as frogs, and fish that cooked themselves in a bucket. This was the land where the Alexander of story learned the limits of what is allowed to man, where he gave up his yearning to descend to the bottom of the sea in a glass jar, and despaired to reach the heavens in a bag pulled by great white birds of carrion.

"Turn back, wretch! Turn back!" cried other birds with human heads and an eerie command of Greek. "Turn back, O mortal, and tread upon the land that has been given you!" And so Alexander turned back from the Isles of the Blessed (as we all must) and returned to the realms of our own troubles, the realms that the Macedonians conquered so quickly and ruled so subtly, in times so long ago. ♦

B&A

Cops at Sea

'NCIS' gets no critical respect, but should.

BY ELI LEHRER

Pauley Perrette, Mark Harmon

NCIS (the title is short for "Naval Criminal Investigative Service") is almost certainly the most popular television show in the world.

It topped the 2010-11 Nielsen ratings for scripted programming and runs today—to universally high viewership—on at least three different networks. On one July Sunday, a Northern Virginia cable television system offered at least 11 hours of the show; a 2010 Harris poll found that it was America's all-time favorite TV series. Even previously aired regular time (Tuesday, 8 P.M. ET/PT) *NCIS* episodes on home network CBS regularly outperform new episodes of critically praised shows like the Canadian cop drama *Rookie Blue*, vampire thriller *True Blood*, and the Steven Spielberg-produced *Falling Skies*. The show is also a global hit: It regularly ranks among the top dramas in countries ranging from France to Brazil and is translated or subtitled in at least 30 languages in no less than 60 markets.

If you aren't one of its millions of viewers, however, there's a decent chance you may not have heard of *NCIS*, or its almost-as-popular spinoff *NCIS: Los Angeles*. It received

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mixed reviews on its debut in 2003, and while a few media outlets have run stories on its commercial success, not a single major television critic for a leading daily or newsmagazine has written about it since at least 2008. Even CBS's own talk and news shows pay only token attention to its cast and their doings. Not even television people give it much respect: In eight seasons the perennial Top 20 show has gotten only two Emmy nominations (neither one for the show's leading creative talents or regular cast).

Not since the never-even-*nominated*-for-an-Emmy, bikini-heavy *Baywatch* got more than one billion global viewers in the mid-1990s has a show found so much popular success and so little critical acclaim. Unlike *Baywatch* and some other popular-success/critical-flop shows, however, *NCIS* is actually decent television that's successful, in part, because it's one of the few television shows that demonstrates an essentially conservative worldview.

First, the basics: Despite its military trappings, *NCIS* is a pretty conventional police procedural with a few medical/forensic elements and a decent dose of sitcom-style comedy. The stories, set in an entity based loosely on the Navy's real agency of the same name (a civilian body that polices the Navy's own ranks and does counterintelligence), are usually 45-minute mysteries involving the murders of Navy men and women. In most plots, Leroy Jethro Gibbs (Mark Harmon) leads the wisecracking men and women of Major Case Response Team through a search for someone who murdered a member of the Navy.

The show has predictable twists and turns: The first "surely guilty" suspect didn't commit the murder, the geek/computer whiz Tim McGee (Sean Murray) and goth-girl forensic scientist Abby Sciuto (Pauley Perrette) produce important evidence from thin air, agent Tony DiNozzo (Michael Weatherley) finds vaguely embarrassing things in his colleagues' desks, NCIS director Leon Vance (Rocky Carroll) gets fed up with Gibbs's antics but ultimately lets him off easy. And so forth. Everyone has stock quirks and foibles (Abby sleeps in a coffin! McGee likes comic books!). In the end, the bad guys almost always get caught.

Nevertheless, *NCIS* is not lightweight and easily surpasses the narrative sophistication of onetime hits like *Magnum P.I.* or *The Dukes of Hazzard* that got stratospheric ratings in the pre-Fox, pre-cable world. Those shows, like nearly all TV dramas before the 1990s, relied on people just to "tune in" to individual episodes and thus avoided sophisticated episode-to-episode storytelling, meaningful character development, and (except sometimes during sweeps weeks) anything that might make one episode different from another.

NCIS is different. Plot threads continue from episode to episode. Main cast members have died at least as much for narrative reasons as for contract disputes. A lot of the wisecracks are funny (if not necessarily laugh-out-loud) and most plots, if predictable, are smartly written. The single-camera setup, and a budget big enough for helicopter and crane shots, gives location shots a cinematic quality. Episode-to-episode continuity is good, and at times, the show can even be pretty frightening. A multi-episode arc about the search for a serial killer that ended the most recent season could have made a good thriller movie.

Above all, *NCIS* is plain old entertaining. Plots move along at a good clip. Viewers learn enough about the characters to care about them. But the long, politics-ridden, angst-driven episodes that critics lap up in second-rate entertainments like HBO's *Treme* are absent. And *NCIS*, although rarely profound, is also comforting: Good guys win, the United States is supreme. Sure, there are bad apples in the Navy; but it is (to quote its own recruiting slogan) "a Global Force for Good." Families—which, interestingly, aren't part of the major characters' lives—are seen as an ideal, although one that's not always consistent with a career. (One episode ends with most of the major characters sharing a family-style Thanksgiving dinner.) Everyone works hard. Long-term service members are almost always honorable, selfless, and brave even when they screw up. Uniforms are always shiny and pressed, and even British medical examiner Donald "Ducky" Mallard (David McCallum) is an American patriot. While there's no great emphasis on divine intervention, religion is clearly part of the characters' lives: Special agent Ziva David (Cote de Pablo) is a Jewish former Mossad operative, Abby and Gibbs mention their Roman Catholic faith.

With the exception of a few pro-Israel stories involving Ziva, however, "issue" plots, such as they are, rarely take on truly controversial issues but instead focus on big-picture, commonly held values such as courtesy, charity, courage, obedience to the law, patriotism, and honesty. Of course, hardly anyone openly criticizes these values, but they aren't the sort of virtues that characters possess in critically acclaimed but decidedly lower-rated shows, like the incredibly funny *30 Rock* (characters are smart, accomplished, and funny but decidedly selfish) or dramatic *True Blood* (major characters are creative and virtuous, by some standards, but continually break the law). Just as important, these are values that everyone can reasonably aspire to. Being super-creative requires special talent and leads to a desire for the spotlight; good character alone can make someone brave and law abiding.

Much of this reflects the thinking of creator Donald Bellisario and his family members (a son, stepson, and daughter all serve as *NCIS* franchise producers, although Bellisario himself has no day-to-day involvement). Bellisario once described himself as a sort of pro-military libertarian: "liberal socially and conservative fiscally and especially conservative when it comes to the military." And his previous shows—the military drama *JAG* (of which *NCIS* is a spin-off) and *Quantum Leap*—demonstrated similar values.

Despite its overall grounding in modern social realities (Gibbs speaks

in favor of gay rights), *NCIS* engages in conservative, even reactionary, wish fulfillment more than occasionally. The show's pilot episode involved the lead characters foiling a plot to assassinate George W. Bush (portrayed on stage), but Barack Obama has never appeared. A coda to another episode contained a homage to the "richer" lives people led prior to modern electronics. More significant, perhaps, is that just as NBC's police procedural franchise *Law & Order* takes place in a left-wing quasi-Marxist fantasy world where business executives murder and rape to boost profits, *NCIS*'s agents track down community organizers from ACORN-like organizations who murder Marines for kicks and rich liberals in gated communities who form terrorist cells to protest foreign wars. Indeed, nearly anyone on the show who expresses left-wing political views, or has a fancy high-end civilian job, is almost certainly a bad guy, while almost any mechanic or factory worker is a good guy.

Is *NCIS* great television? No. It's formulaic, lacks hugely compelling characters, and rarely turns out a memorable line of dialogue. It would have to lay aside the things that make it appealing and popular if it ever went in a direction to make it interesting to *New Yorker* readers, an Emmy voter's choice, or a buzzworthy topic on the Georgetown/Upper West Side cocktail party circuit. There's better stuff on TV for sure. But *NCIS* is popular, comforting, good entertainment that speaks to a part of America that rightly finds its worldview, even its fantasies, missing from most mainstream television dramas.

Doesn't everyone deserve a little wish fulfillment? ♦

B&A

Eminent Victorian

It's not easy reducing the phenomenon of Viscount Palmerston to words. **BY BARTON SWAIM**

"David Brown's multi-faceted Palmerston," says a blurb on the back of this volume, "in its archival mastery, scope and insight, outdistances any other." I thought I detected a note of ambiguity in that verb "outdistances," and I was right. Brown knows everything it's humanly possible to know about his subject, and he has documented that knowledge in well over 2,000 endnotes. But he has no gift for narrative, and the life of this extraordinary statesman often gets lost amid long explanations of complex historical matters—the creation of Belgium, the reasons for the Quadruple Alliance, and many other things of limited relevance to the subject.

Palmerston
A Biography
by David Brown
Yale, 584 pp., $50

In Brown's defense, it should be said that Palmerston's must be a terrifically difficult life to write. When he died in 1865, two days shy of his 81st birthday, he had been in Parliament almost his entire adult life, much of it as either foreign secretary, home secretary, or prime minister. He was involved in virtually every major foreign question faced by Great Britain from the Napoleonic Wars to the (American) Civil War. He had a piercing intellect and wrote huge numbers of letters and diaries and policy memos; he was exceedingly charming and yet hated by subordinates; and both his energy and sexual drive were boundless. Putting the life of such a man between hard covers would tax the talents of even the most efficient biographer.

Henry Temple, later 3rd Viscount Palmerston, born in 1784, attended Harrow and caught the attention of the school's headmaster, so advanced was the boy's mind. Brown quotes from a letter written by a nine-year-old Henry to his father, asking for shooting lessons: He would be "most terribly laughed at," he says, "as it is reckoned almost a disgrace not to shoot, and indeed there is hardly another boy of my age here, that does not." He went on to Edinburgh University at the very pinnacle of that institution's prestige and influence; he studied under, and lodged with, Professor Dugald Stewart, the teacher of Walter Scott, Sydney Smith, James Mill, and many others.

Fresh from his studies, family connections guaranteed the young man a ministerial post in government; only he had to find a seat, and several attempts to get himself elected failed. At last he bought a pocket borough in the Isle of Wight for £4,000. The borough's owner agreed to the transaction on the strict condition that Palmerston "never set foot in the place." Spencer Perceval made him war minister, and he worked himself (and his staff) mercilessly and acquired a reputation for diligence and resourcefulness. His working habits were legendary: In 1818 a deranged ex-soldier shot him at point blank range, though his aim was faulty and Palmerston was only bloodied. When the doctor arrived, Palmerston made him wait while he finished a brief.

Notoriously, though, his life wasn't all work. He had many affairs, his diaries referring to encounters with the locution "A fine day" or "Another fine day." Contemporaries called him "Lord Cupid." His longest affair was with Emily Cowper, wife of Lord Cowper, whose death allowed the two

Barton Swaim is the author of Scottish Men of Letters and the New Public Sphere: 1802-1834.

to marry in 1839. Before the marriage, Lord Melbourne, Emily's brother and then prime minister, advised her that "you mustn't deceive yourself about it—if you do you must take the consequences." Yet Lord and Lady Palmerston made a durable and, for the most part, happy pair: Emily charmed her husband's allies and pacified his enemies. They never had any legitimate offspring, although three of Emily's children—William Cowper, later Lord Mount Temple; Emily, later the wife of the great philanthropist and Christian Zionist Anthony Ashley-Cooper, 7th Earl of Shaftesbury; and Frances, later wife of Viscount Jocelyn—were almost certainly Palmerston's.

He was among the most successful foreign ministers of the century. It is true, as Jasper Ridley says in a more readable Life than this one, that "in foreign policy, Palmerston acted on a very simple principle: to advance the interests of England. All other things had to be sacrificed to this end." For Palmerston, however, advancing England's interests meant, above all, fostering the birth and growth of limited constitutional government.

On the one hand, Palmerston's approach was utterly without illusion; he was the most "realistic" of diplomats. He had no faith in the power of gestures when interests were at stake; the growing hostility between Britain's allies and the Iberian states, he said in the 1830s, "is not one of words, but of things; not the effect of caprice or will, but produced by the force of occurrences."

On the other hand, he had the prescience to see that constitutionalism was Europe's best hope for peace. Britain, he wrote in a letter to Lord Melbourne, must "pursue a policy of our own, aim at objects of our own . . . act upon principles of our own, [and] use other govts as we can." Yet in the same letter he wrote,

> The system of England ought to be . . . to throw her moral weight into the scale of any people who are spontaneously striving for freedom, by which I mean rational government; and to extend, as far and as fast as possible, civilization all over the world.

Critics accused him of betraying that aim. He was dismissed as foreign secretary by Lord John Russell for backing the 1848 coup in France, an event that led directly to Napoleon III assuming dictatorial power, and during the American Civil War he remained neutral and allowed British shipyards to supply the Confederacy. Yet in France there was no attractive alternative, and in America both sides were constitutional governments, even if the South's economy depended on slavery, which in any case Palmerston had always worked to suppress.

Lord Palmerston, circa 1850

When things went wrong, he was attacked as a starry-eyed idealist. In 1837, after Palmerston had put British military prestige at risk in an ineffective attempt to bring about a constitutional government, one Tory opponent (James Harris, later foreign secretary) alleged him to be a "zealot" who, though "conscientious" in his aim to secure "the blessings of liberty," had forgotten that "pure liberty has never yet sprung from such a fratricidal field." The country in question was Spain.

Brown is at his best in delineating the ways in which Palmerston's thought and policies were the fruits of the training he'd received at Edinburgh. Many of his memos read almost as if they were taken directly from the pages of Adam Smith or the lectures of Dugald Stewart. "Protecting duties," Palmerston wrote, "are taxes laid upon the bulk of the community & expended in paying a few individuals for the loss they sustain in carrying on an unprofitable trade." He was among the first great politicians to embrace the press as a force for liberty—although, true enough, his practice didn't always match his ideals: As foreign secretary he set aside a fund for the sole purpose of bribing journalists.

Nor was he without contradiction on the greatest domestic question of the century, electoral reform. He cultivated and enjoyed popularity with the masses; indeed, as Brown puts it, "Palmerston was the 'People's Minister,' long before anyone thought to call Gladstone the 'People's William.'" Yet he consistently opposed expanding the franchise except as a necessary evil. In notes on the subject written in 1864, a year before his death, he criticized Gladstone's position—Gladstone had said that "every sane man" deserved the franchise—by asking, "If every sane man has that right why does it not also belong to every sane woman?"

> The truth is that a vote is not a *right* but a *trust*. All the nation cannot by any possibility be brought together to vote, and therefore a selected few are appointed by law to perform this function for the rest.

This latest biography will exhaust its readers just as Palmerston exhausted his friends and opponents. In his seventies we find him still working tirelessly on Italian unification and hunting foxes in the rain. His final days were spent in a state of lethargy, the result of a bladder infection. His last words are a source of speculation. One version, probably apocryphal, has him saying, "Die, my dear Doctor? That's the last thing I shall do!" Jasper Ridley's version is more in keeping with his character: "In his last delirium, his thoughts were on diplomatic treaties. His last words were, 'That's article 98; now go on to the next.'" ♦

B&A

Caught in the Web

An English monument goes digital.

BY EDWARD SHORT

In 1747, eight years before the publication of his pioneering dictionary, Samuel Johnson wrote that his "chief intent" in compiling his great work was "to preserve the purity and ascertain the meaning of the English idiom," which he characterized as "the exact and pure idea of a grammatical dictionary." But he also recognized that "in lexicography, as in other arts, naked science is too delicate for the purposes of life." And it followed from this, "The value of a work must be estimated by its use." Dictionaries had to present the language as it was, not merely as it should be: "It is not enough that a dictionary delights the critic, unless at the same time it instructs the learner."

James Murray (1837-1915), the self-taught Scot who became the founding editor of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, would reaffirm that principle, concurring with the Philological Society that "the literary merit or demerit of any particular writer, like the comparative elegance or inelegance of any given word, is a subject on which the Lexicographer is bound to be almost indifferent." At the same time, he devoted himself for over 30 years to capturing the dynamic richness of the language. In 1879, he equipped his famous Scriptorium in North Oxford with over a thousand pigeonholes to store the alphabetical slips of readers and assistants from which he compiled the dictionary's definitions and quotations. And although he did not live to see the completion of the 10-volume *New English Dictionary* in 1928 (which would become the 12-volume *OED* in 1933), Murray's vision has always animated the evolving character of this most authoritative, protean dictionary.

The Online Oxford English Dictionary
John Simpson, Chief Editor
Oxford, Annual Subscription: $295

The new online *OED* enables readers to access the evolution and use of more than 600,000 words over 1,000 years through three million quotations at the click of a keyboard. It has also woven the *Historical Thesaurus of the Oxford English Dictionary* into its digital design, which serves as an indispensable map of the *OED*. In bringing the *OED* into the 21st century the new chief editor, John Simpson, has exhibited something of Murray's zest and good judgment. He has also shown how well-suited Murray's method is to digitalization: As he told the *Times*, "the way that [Murray] structured the dictionary with its series of branches, nested senses, meanings and the way that the quotations are arranged converts very easily on to computer."

In her wonderful biography of her brilliant grandfather, *Caught in the Web of Words: James Murray and the Oxford English Dictionary* (1977), Elisabeth Murray recalled how

> His life was all of a piece, and varied as were his interests, they can all be traced back to his childhood and youth. … He never lost his enthusiasm. … Only this continual feeling of wonder, adventure and delight could have sustained him through the tedious advance, year after year, among the words of the English language.

That the *Historical Thesaurus* has been added to the online festivities makes browsing all the more amusing. For the adjective *vast*, for example, readers can now access this dazzling catalogue: *huge* (1275), *infinite* (1385), *unmeasurable* (1386), *giant* (1480), *immense* (1490), *unportable* (1536), *enormous* (1544), *monstrous* (1553), *gargantuan* (1596), *Polyphemian* (1601), *prodigious* (1601), *gigantical* (1604), *leviathan* (1625), *elephantine* (1631), *Titanical* (1642), *colossal* (1664), *Brobdignagian* (1728), *Patagonian* (1786), *mammoth* (1801), *dimensionless* (1813), *Titan* (1851), *behemothian* (1910), *supercolossal* (1934), *mega* (1968), and *humongous* (1970).

Apropos English synonyms, C.T. Onions, Murray's great successor, once wrote, "It has been held by some that a language is at a disadvantage that has such a plethora of epithets as *hateful*, *odious*, *loathsome*, *repulsive*, *offensive*, together with *disgusting*, *distasteful*, *nauseating*, *sickening*, *noisome*; but the discerning will know what is the right place for all of these"—a truth which the *OED*'s well-chosen quotations exemplify.

The online *Historical Thesaurus* is infinitely easier to use than the two-volume print version. There are, for example, 36 different sets of synonyms for *proof*, each of which is clearly defined and readily accessible, without any delving into labyrinthian indexes. Dyed-in-the-wool print aficionados—or if you like, *thoroughgoing*, *sworn*, *confirmed*, *ingrained* print aficionados—will doubtless find having to concede this painful, but it is undeniable.

Although serendipity is not as likely with the digital as the print version, the online *OED* does feature a sidebar listing proximate words. Thus, in the case of *vast*, readers can view, among other words, *vassalage*, which the *OED* illustrates with Macaulay's *History of England* (1849): "How our country, from a state of ignominious vassalage, rapidly rose to the place of umpire among European powers." It was only eight years after Macaulay wrote this that the Philological Society recommended that a new dictionary be compiled. The same Victorian confidence inspired both.

When it comes to that astringent genre, the style guide, there are only three books worth reading: H.W. Fowler's *Modern English Usage*, Sir Ernest Gowers's *The Complete Plain Words*, and the *OED*. And the *OED* is

Edward Short is the author of Newman and his Contemporaries.

the best of the lot. Dip into the quotations and you will see why. For *hobble*, defined as "an awkward or perplexing situation from which extrication is difficult," the *OED* cites George Washington: "I think you Wise men of the East, have got yourselves in a hobble." Winston Churchill offers this salvo for *pharisaicalness*: "I must put pen to paper to ask you what you think of Coolidge's Armistice Speech. Its coldness, smugness, self-sufficiency, boastfulness, Pharisaicalness & cant make me boil & freeze alternately." Robert Louis Stevenson observes of *Queer Street*: "The more it looks like Queer Street, the less I ask." And for *perseverance*, Edmund Burke supplies this quotation, which epitomizes the entire history of the *OED*: "There is nothing which will not yield to perseverance and method."

The online version has many new features, giving readers the ability to browse categories of words in terms of subject, usage, region, and language of origin. Thus, readers can browse words related to such subjects as arts, crafts and trades, law, military, philosophy, politics, religion, and technology. They can look at groups of words in terms of their usage, whether allusive, colloquial, slang, ironic, poetic, or literary. For example, the slang phrase *to make a hole in the water*, meaning "to commit suicide by drowning," is nicely illustrated by Dickens in *Our Mutual Friend* (1865): "This is the drunken old chap . . . wot had offered . . . to make a hole in the water for a quartern of rum stood aforehand, and kept to his word for the first and last time in his life."

Readers can also focus on words in terms of their geographical derivation, including Britain, North America, Australasia, the Caribbean, India, or Southeast Asia. And access groups of words listed by their linguistic origin. Thus, under European languages, readers can browse words having Germanic (10,830), Italic (64,155), Greek (8,238), and Celtic (587) origins. From this it is clear how considerable a contribution Latin and Greek made to our vocabulary, though a readiness to naturalize all foreign words into its magpie vocabulary has always been characteristic of English. Indeed, as Onions once quipped, "it was the salvation of English that it became a Romance language."

James Murray in the Scriptorium

Proof of this can be seen in the inveteracy with which English appropriates French words. In the Great War the English Tommy turned the French *estaminet* into *stay-a-minute* and *Il n'y a plus* (there is none left) into *napoo*, an all-purpose word meaning finished, gone, done for. *Verve* is an example of one of those French words that English simply pinched outright without bothering to change. The *OED* nicely illustrates it with something out of Ouida: "There isn't one half the verve among you new people there was in my young time"—a sentiment which oldies might wish to reconsider now that the young have produced this brilliant online *OED*.

Ouida also calls to mind the considerable contributions that individual writers have made to English vocabulary, though it is interesting that the *OED*'s greatest source for quotations is not Shakespeare but the *Times*, which is credited with 37,375. Still, Shakespeare ranks second with 33,174 and Sir Walter Scott third with 17,005. Every reader will enjoy ransacking the sources to see how their favorite authors rank: Chaucer, Milton, Tennyson, Carlyle, Macaulay, Pope, Defoe, Samuel Johnson, Thackeray, Swift, and Ben Jonson all figure among the top 50. Dryden ranks 12th with 9,276, just two above Dickens with 9,213 quotations. Dryden's strong showing confirms Johnson's estimate of the poet, about whom he wrote in *Lives of the Poets* (1779): "To him we owe . . . the refinement of our language, and much of the correctness of our sentiments. By him we were taught *sapere & fari*, to think naturally and express forcibly."

What finally makes the online *OED* so special is its incomparable convenience, a fact that would have pleased Murray, who was perpetually preoccupied with finding space not only for the dictionary, which was originally projected to span only four volumes and 6,400 pages, but for his assistants and himself in the cramped Scriptorium. In meshing the *OED* with the *Historical Thesaurus of the OED*, and making them available online in so seamlessly resourceful a format, the Oxford University Press has achieved what John Ruskin once called "the two great objects of utility and splendour." ♦

The Book of Ruth

The interrupted journey of a latter-day pilgrim.

BY THERESA CIVANTOS

The Appalling Strangeness of the Mercy of God
The Story of Ruth Pakaluk—Convert, Mother & Pro-Life Activist
by Ruth Pakaluk & Michael Pakaluk
Ignatius, 290 pp., $16.95

The word "saint" does not typically conjure up images of a Harvard alumna and New England housewife, but it may begin to do so if Ruth Pakaluk's story gets around. She was only 41 when cancer claimed her life. Her husband Michael has now collected the letters she wrote throughout her adulthood, and her own words compose the bulk of this biography.

In his introduction, Peter Kreeft of Boston College writes that, soon after her death in 1998, "people in Worcester [Massachusetts] wished to consider opening her cause for sainthood." So the reader wonders, was Ruth Pakaluk a "saint," or wasn't she? There's no question that this extraordinary, complex, outspoken woman is well worth getting to know. She came to Harvard as a nominal Presbyterian and practical atheist, but converted to Roman Catholicism and married her classmate in their junior year. He became an academic, while she raised their seven surviving children and took an active part in local anti-abortion politics. Not much given to emotion, or what she called "ditsiness," Ruth Pakaluk is not a gushy, stereotypically "saintly" writer but a sensible, plain-spoken woman who offers matter-of-fact advice and unvarnished opinions, even when she and her correspondents markedly disagree.

She was something of a political junkie and in many letters comments on current events with shrewd humor. Regarding *Planned Parenthood* v. *Casey*, in which Justice Anthony Kennedy unexpectedly sided with the pro-choice majority, she writes, "I would not want to be in [Kennedy's] shoes on Judgment Day." She is often funny—"One essential lesson for successful parenting is not to scruple about bribery. It works"—and she refers to "modern man" as "that shortsighted, hedonistic idiot." Candid to a fault, she informs a school principal that her son will not be participating in health class because "there is virtually nothing of academic merit in this program" and she considers it "a waste of the students' time and the taxpayers' money."

Yet shining through her correspondence is a deep joy in living and ability to see what is good in life—and in other people. "The life of an academic's wife is really the absolute best," she writes, but one senses she would have said the same if she were married to an architect or auto mechanic: "Life really is *just* as exciting and meaningful as a Wagner opera." In the literature of bereavement these are not the clouded memories of a grieving spouse—as in Sheldon Vanauken's *A Severe Mercy* or C.S. Lewis's *A Grief Observed*—but a distinctive voice that speaks for itself, with humor, deep insight, great sorrow, and transcendent joy.

"If the fallen world is this pleasant," she writes, "what could heaven be but irresistible?" ♦

Theresa Civantos is an editorial assistant at The Weekly Standard.

Spread the Word

A thriller that deserves the name.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

Contagion
Directed by Steven Soderbergh

The best Hollywood movie in ages, *Contagion* takes a subject that could be unbearably disturbing—the spread of a worldwide pandemic—and turns it into a dazzling detective story. We begin with Gwyneth Paltrow at an airport bar in Chicago, coughing a little. We cut to a young man in Hong Kong sweating as he leaves his workplace; a Japanese man on a plane breaking into the same sweat; and then Paltrow returning home feverish to Minneapolis to her husband, Matt Damon, and young son, whom Damon must pick up from school the next day with a 101 fever.

Director Steven Soderbergh, working from a masterfully conceived and extraordinarily intelligent script by Scott Z. Burns that should win an Oscar, subtly directs our eyes to the merest press of a finger—handing a credit card to a waitress, pulling the handle on a door. Kate Winslet, who plays an epidemiologist trying to contain the outbreak, tells a disbelieving

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

politician that we touch our own faces more than 2,000 times a day, or a few times every minute (try hearing that and not counting).

Soderbergh, who serves as his own cinematographer as well, has shot the movie in deliberately chilly tones reminiscent of the lighting in a hospital. This gives *Contagion* a somewhat clinical feel, especially as the authorities at the Centers for Disease Control (led by the likable Laurence Fishburne and the great British stage actress Jennifer Ehle) describe to others the way a contagion spreads.

That cool, clinical tone turns out to be a blessing, because if *Contagion* were more emotionally intense, the scale of the catastrophe we're watching unfold might prove intolerable to watch. There have been some thrilling disease movies before this one, dating back to the best of all, 1950's *Panic in the Streets*, a propulsive thriller shot by Elia Kazan on the streets of New Orleans in which disease hunters have to track down a crew of thugs (led by Jack Palance and, of all people, Zero Mostel) who killed a plague-riddled immigrant before the disease spreads to the entire city.

What makes *Contagion* different from *Panic in the Streets* and the movies that followed it is that it's not a triumphant story about how the disease was contained but rather a full-bore portrait of how it spreads and what happens when it does. What Soderbergh and Burns have done is to combine the sangfroid of *CSI* with the kind of dread you experience during the early going of a zombie movie. The combination proves inspired.

This is, in many ways, the movie that has made the best use of 9/11 so far, though the date is never mentioned. The new reality of American life after the attacks makes the kinds of large-scale actions we see and hear about—the closing of state borders, tanks on the streets and highways of Chicago, the president working in secure underground quarters whose location is undisclosed—seem not only plausible but likely in a comparable circumstance. Indeed, we

Kate Winslet as epidemiologist

CLAUDETTE BARIUS / WARNER BROS. PICTURES

hear Fishburne, the CDC director, tell CNN's Sanjay Gupta that he'd rather err on the side of saving lives in words almost exactly the same as those used by Michael Bloomberg in August when announcing the "mandatory evacuation" of parts of New York City due to Hurricane Irene.

Just as it would have seemed ludicrous for an American politician to use such a term before 9/11 but was hardly remarked upon when it happened, so the kind of mobilization we see in *Contagion* would have seemed like a ludicrous expression of Hollywood paranoia about the evil machinations of the all-powerful military had it been attempted before.

Instead, *Contagion* is a portrait not of government's power but of its relative powerlessness. Concerned about safety, Fishburne orders that all experiments on the disease take place within CDC headquarters, but an academic disobeys the orders and makes the first major discovery about it. A rogue blogger who seems to be based on Julian Assange (Jude Law, in the movie's best performance) delivers impassioned libertarian speeches about the profiteering of drug companies as he promotes a holistic cure in which he has his own profit interest—and the Department of Homeland Security can do little or nothing about it.

The portrait of the Assange-like blogger, in particular, shows how Burns and Soderbergh made a conscious decision to challenge the sorts of clichés we've come to expect from pop-culture works like *Contagion*. The disease is not the result of a government weapons program (which is where the plague that kills off 99 percent of the world's population in Stephen King's *The Stand* comes from). It's not due to runoff from a nuclear-power plant or the misbehavior of Big Pharma.

It's the result of a horrendous series of coincidences—though arguably those coincidences were set in motion by globalization, as a telltale logo on a bulldozer suggests in the movie's closing minutes. But wait. Globalization. Logo. Could the intellectual source for *Contagion* be the Canadian antiglobalization far-left maniac Naomi Klein, author of. . . *No Logo*? It's possible, because Scott Z. Burns was a producer of Al Gore's apocalyptic documentary, *An Inconvenient Truth*. If so, Klein could take lessons from Burns on how to make her arguments a bit more subtly. And Burns could take lessons in the future from his own clear-eyed depiction of Julian Assange about why ideas like Klein's should be approached with sterile gloves. ♦

PARODY

"President Barack Obama's reelection campaign just sent out this creepy email, with the subject line 'Sometime soon, can we meet for dinner,' asking supporters to donate to his campaign for a chance to have dinner with Obama. . . . Obama's team has run a similar fundraising gimmick before—and the email says he plans on continuing it throughout the campaign."
—BusinessInsider.com, September 14, 2011