

THE FED DOES
THE TWIST
JAMES PETHOUKOUS

the weekly

Standard

OCTOBER 3, 2011 • \$4.95



James Pethoukous

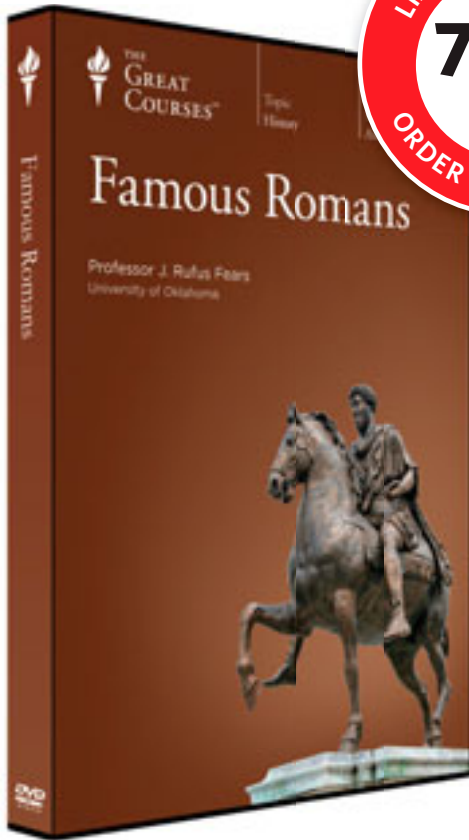
PRESIDENT SOLYNDRA

Obama's Mean Green
Wealth-Wasting Machine

STEVEN HAYWARD



THE
GREAT
COURSES®



Meet the 27 Men Who Made Ancient Rome

Scipio. Pompey. Caesar. Cicero. Augustus. Vergil. Trajan. Their names are famous in the annals of the Western world. And their importance in the history of ancient Rome and their legacies in our own modern world are undeniable.

Now you can learn about the lives of these and other remarkable individuals—the statesmen, thinkers, warriors, and writers who embody the glory and grandeur of the Roman Empire—in **Famous Romans**. Master storyteller and award-winning Professor J. Rufus Fears uses the stories of these significant figures to probe fundamental questions about the political and cultural history of the Western world's greatest ancient civilization. Vast in scope and rich in depth, these 24 lectures are an engrossing and insightful journey into the past.

Offer expires 10/13/11

1-800-832-2412

WWW.THEGREATCOURSES.COM/7WKS

Famous Romans

Taught by Professor J. Rufus Fears
UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

LECTURE TITLES

1. Publius Cornelius Scipio
2. Hannibal
3. Gaius Flaminius
4. Quintus Fabius Maximus
5. Scipio Africanus the Elder
6. Scipio the Younger
7. Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus
8. Crassus
9. Gaius Julius Caesar
10. Caesar and Vercingetorix
11. Pompey the Great
12. Cato the Younger
13. Brutus and the Opposition to Caesar
14. Cicero
15. Augustus
16. Vergil
17. Claudius
18. Nero
19. Trajan
20. Hadrian
21. Epictetus
22. Apuleius
23. Plutarch, Suetonius, and Tacitus
24. Marcus Aurelius

Famous Romans

Course no. 349 | 24 lectures (30 minutes/lecture)

SAVE UP TO \$185

DVD ~~\$254.95~~ **NOW \$69.95**

CD ~~\$179.95~~ **NOW \$49.95**

+\$10 Shipping, Processing, and Lifetime Satisfaction Guarantee

Priority Code: 51879

Designed to meet the demand for lifelong learning, The Great Courses is a highly popular series of audio and video lectures led by top professors and experts. Each of our more than 300 courses is an intellectually engaging experience that will change how you think about the world. Since 1990, over 9 million courses have been sold.

U.S. GOV'T GOLD AT-COST

TODAY - The U.S. Money Reserve has scheduled the final release of U.S. Gov't Issued \$5 Gold Coins previously held at the U.S. Mint at West Point. These Gov't Issued Gold Coins are being released on a first-come, first-serve basis, for the incredible markup-free price of only \$199.80 each. This "at-cost" Gov't Gold offer will be available for only a limited time, so do not delay. Call a Sr. Gold Specialist today.

OWN GOV'T ISSUED GOLD COINS

DUE TO STRICT LIMITED AVAILABILITY, TELEPHONE ORDERS WILL BE ACCEPTED ON A FIRST-COME, FIRST-SERVE BASIS ACCORDING TO THE TIME AND DATE OF THE ORDER.

Markup-Free Price of ONLY

\$199⁸⁰
EACH



If you've been waiting to move your hard-earned money into precious metals, the time is now to consider transferring your U.S. dollars into United States Government

Gold. The Gold market is on the move, up more than 500% over the past 10 years - outpacing the DOW, NASDAQ and S&P 500. Call immediately to order your United States Gold Coins direct from our Main Vault Facility, "at-cost", for the amazing price of only \$199.80 per coin. Special arrangements can be made for Gold purchases over \$50,000. Order your Gold today!

1 - Gov't Issued Gold Coin \$ 199.80
(PLUS INSURANCE, SHIPPING & HANDLING \$31.00)

5 - Gov't Issued Gold Coins \$ 999.00
(PLUS INSURANCE, SHIPPING & HANDLING \$31.00)

10 - Gov't Issued Gold Coins \$ 1,998.00
(PLUS INSURANCE, SHIPPING & HANDLING \$36.00)

DUE TO MARKET FLUCTUATIONS, AT-COST PRICES ARE VALID FOR A MAXIMUM OF 30 DAYS FROM AD PUBLICATION DATE. DISTRIBUTOR OF GOVERNMENT GOLD. NOT AFFILIATED WITH THE U.S. GOVERNMENT. SPECIAL AT-COST OFFER IS STRICTLY LIMITED TO ONLY ONE LIFETIME PURCHASE OF 10 AT-COST COINS (REGARDLESS OF PRICE PAID) PER HOUSEHOLD, PLUS SHIPPING AND INSURANCE.

CALL TOLL FREE (7 Days A Week)

1-855-386-4050

MASTERCARD • VISA • AMEX • DISCOVER • CHECK

Coins enlarged to show detail.

U.S. MONEY
RESERVE

Distributor of Government Gold. Not affiliated with the U.S. Government.

Vault No. TWS1-19980

*Join Us in Fabulous Las Vegas
for the*



THE WESTERN REPUBLICAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE IS DESIGNED TO EDUCATE, MOBILIZE, & EMPOWER REPUBLICANS IN THE WEST.

Held at **The Venetian® | The Palazzo®** in Las Vegas, the WRLC will begin on October 18, 2011. A **CNN-Hosted Republican Presidential debate** will kick-off this exciting week of events.

The WRLC will feature Republican candidates, operatives, media, and elected officials from the Western Region and throughout the United States.

In addition to an engaging agenda of speakers, WRLC attendees will have an opportunity to attend a diverse schedule of breakout sessions covering Websites & Social Media, Campaign Strategy, Grassroots Planning, Outreach, & much more.

October 18-21, 2011 • Las Vegas, Nevada

The Venetian® | The Palazzo®



FOLLOW US ON TWITTER @WesternStatesLC

REGISTER ONLINE AT

www.WesternRepublican.com

All solicitations of funds in connection with this event are by the Western Republican Leadership Conference and not by any federal candidates. Contributions to Western Republican Leadership Conference are not tax deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes. Paid for by the Western Republican Leadership Conference and not authorized by any candidate or candidate's committee. P.O. Box 401477 Las Vegas, Nevada 89140 WesternRepublican.com

Contents

October 3, 2011 • Volume 17, Number 3



- 2 The Scrapbook *Just your typical rocket scientist, vegan porn & more*
5 Casual *Christopher Caldwell, man on a plan*
7 Editorials
What Hath Obama Wrought
Lawyers, Guns, and Money
BY LEE SMITH
BY MARK HEMINGWAY

Articles

- 10 Twisting in the Wind *Ben Bernanke's diminishing returns*
BY JAMES PETHOKOUKIS
12 Jackie, Oh No *The Kennedy apparat swings into action again*
BY ANDREW FERGUSON
14 Rebrander in Chief *The Defense Department's new man at Gitmo hits the reset button*
BY WILLY STERN
16 The Frontrunner Stumbles *Rick Perry's can't-do campaign*
BY STEPHEN F. HAYES
18 The Reactionary in the White House *Barack Obama, throwback*
BY FRED BARNES
19 A Brief, Brilliant Career *Why we can't forget Sandy Koufax*
BY DAVID G. DALIN

Features

- 21 President Solyndra *And his mean green wealth-wasting machine*
BY STEVEN F. HAYWARD
26 The People, No *Egypt's populist problem*
BY JAMES KIRCHICK

Books & Arts

- 30 Paging Mr. Inside *How Bob Strauss operated without drawing blood*
BY ROBERT W. MERRY
32 Natural Harmony *The complex prettiness of Japanese art*
BY EVE TUSHNET
34 Seriously Flawed *When a cultural critic doesn't quite comprehend Culture*
BY ALEC MOUHIABIAN
35 Good News Bears *The complicated, contradictory world of evangelicals*
BY A. THOMAS WALKER
37 Never Enough *A chronicle of Britain's privileged underclass*
BY SONNY BUNCH
38 Return of the Zombies *Still vital, versatile, and very much undead*
BY DAWN EDEN
39 L.A. Surreal *A film noir pays homage to the 1980s*
BY JOHN PODHORETZ
40 Parody *The president's photo-op*
COVER BY THOMAS FLUHARTY

The Young and the Old Self

THE SCRAPBOOK's attention was drawn the other day to a photograph in the *New York Times*. It accompanied the obituary of Sidney H. Asch, a New York politician and judge who was famous for his scholarly opinions. The photograph, seen here, depicts Judge Asch as he swears in Robert Morgenthau as Manhattan district attorney in January 1975. (Mr. Morgenthau, now 92, retired just two years ago.)

THE SCRAPBOOK examined the photograph very carefully and concluded that, with the possible exception of the design of the eyeglasses, and the size of the knot in Mr. Morgenthau's necktie, this picture might have been taken yesterday. That is, if you exclude the figure standing roughly in the middle: The young man dressed in the jacket with wide lapels, wearing aviator glasses, and sporting an exuberant 'fro and unkempt beard, is Mr. Morgenthau's son, Robert P. Morgenthau.

Almost instantly, THE SCRAPBOOK was transported back to that halcyon era of bell bottom trousers, generation gaps, long sideburns, psychedelic drugs and graphic design, burnt draft cards, early disco, and men's collar points that seemed to end at

their navels. Richard Nixon had just been driven from the White House, and Olivia Newton-John was about to release "Have You Never Been Mel-

search engine. All sorts of possibilities came to mind—school board president in Vermont, organic farmer in Oregon, professor of sociology at the University of Colorado—and we were relieved to discover that Robert Morgenthau, *fils*, is now a successful money manager in Manhattan and pillar of New York civic life, as well as (involuntarily) devoid of that afro and, altogether, a trimmer, handsomer, slightly more austere version of Judge Asch (see accompanying photograph).

Which proves, as THE SCRAPBOOK occasionally suggests, that the spirit of youth is, unfortunately, eternal; but things tend to sort themselves out in the end.

THE SCRAPBOOK is no more enchanted than anybody else by the vogue for polychrome tattoos, gangsta rap, and the *Real Housewives of Orange County*. But today's annoyances are tomorrow's nostalgia, as former New York representative Anthony Weiner recently demonstrated. ♦



Morgenthau the younger, then and now



low." Indeed, without any particular knowledge of the Morgenthau family, THE SCRAPBOOK imagined some heated discussions around the dinner table about the relevance of higher education, the role of the military in American life, and the *Whole Earth Catalogue*.

But of course, since THE SCRAPBOOK is first and foremost a journalistic enterprise, we immediately set to work to find out what became of Robert P. Morgenthau; that is to say, we typed his name into the Google

Just Your Typical Rocket Scientist

THE *Washington Post*, like many major metropolitan newspapers, employs a handful of "local" columnists whose work appears on the front page of the *Post's* Metro section. Their quality is immensely variable, of course, but they all have one thing in common: They write, almost exclusively, about local affairs and concerns

and are supposed to be a little closer in spirit to the average *Post* subscriber than the average reporter is.

Who the *Post* employs for this delicate task tells us considerably more about the *Post* than about the average *Post* subscriber. THE SCRAPBOOK's favorite Metro columnist is an ex-reporter in early middle age named Petula Dvorak who, all things considered, is as close to an infallible barometer of conventional newsroom

wisdom as it is possible to be. Last week, for example, she assembled an assortment of nine "working moms" to attend a screening of a movie called *I Don't Know How She Does It*, a Sarah Jessica Parker vehicle based on a novel of the same name about the trials and tribulations of a career woman with husband and children. The group watched the movie and then (for Dvorak's journalistic purposes) discussed it afterwards.

TOP LEFT, MEYER LIEBOWITZ; THE NEW YORK TIMES / REDUX; TOP RIGHT, AMANDA GORDON, BLOOMBERG

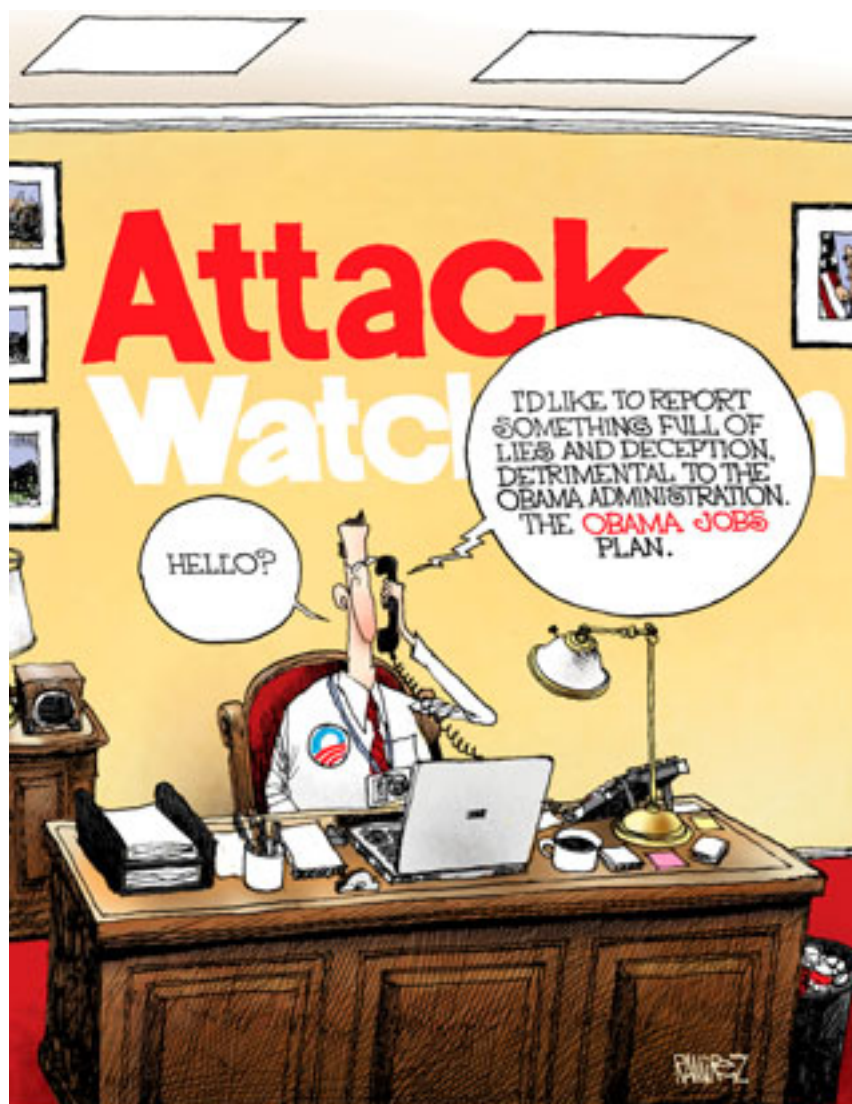
According to her own description, here are the nine working moms who joined Petula Dvorak at the cinema after she “cast a wide net” for her impromptu focus group: a statistician, an international lawyer, a psychology professor, a banker, an editor, a hotel general manager, a public policy advocate, “an energy lawyer and—I swear—a rocket scientist.”

Now, THE SCRAPBOOK confesses that it would be more than happy to discuss *I Don't Know How She Does It* with the neighborhood rocket scientist or banker or public policy advocate. As who wouldn't? But does Petula Dvorak—or more important, do her editors at the *Post*—genuinely believe that this random assortment of upper-middle-class professionals (who happen to be best buds with a *Washington Post* columnist) is in any way representative of “working moms”? Surely, somewhere within a few blocks of the *Post* building, they might have found a waitress or two, or a retail clerk or security guard or teller or secretary-receptionist at some federal agency.

There was a time, not so long ago, when a city columnist in an American newspaper would have hesitated to include herself in the professional company of international lawyers, bankers, and psychology professors. But those days are gone—and so is the appeal of large metropolitan newspapers to growing masses of subscribers. ♦

A Kelo Apology

SCRAPBOOK readers and eminent domain obsessives may recall the sad dénouement of *Kelo v. New London*, the Supreme Court case which constitutionally expanded the power of government to seize private land to include, basically, any justification it cared to put forward. As we recounted on this page not long ago, after the High Court found in favor of New London, upholding a decision of the Connecticut Supreme Court, the town took Susette Kelo's land (along with several other private properties) and



prepared to develop it into a pulsing, urban mixed-use utopia. Except that the developer was never able to get financing, the project fell through, and seven years later, the once nicely middle-class neighborhood is now a barren wasteland. In the wake of Hurricane Irene, the city was reduced to encouraging residents to dump trash from the storm at the dead site.

Well last week, there was another development, courtesy of *Hartford Courant* reporter Jeff Benedict. Benedict wrote the book on *Kelo* (literally, it's called *Little Pink House* and it's the definitive account of the case), and in May last year he gave a speech at the New Haven Lawn Club about eminent domain. In attendance was

Susette Kelo and also, uncomfortably enough, Justice Richard Palmer, who was the swing vote in the Connecticut Supreme Court's decision against her. As the dinner was breaking up, something astounding happened. Here's Benedict's account:

Afterward, Susette and I were talking in a small circle of people when we were approached by Justice Richard N. Palmer. Tall and imposing, he is one of the four justices who voted with the 4-3 majority against Susette and her neighbors. Facing me, he said: “Had I known all of what you just told us, I would have voted differently.” . . .

Then Justice Palmer turned to Susette, took her hand and offered a heartfelt apology. Tears trickled down

her red cheeks. It was the first time in the 12-year saga that anyone had uttered the words “I’m sorry.”

It was all she could do to whisper the words: “Thank you.”

Then Justice Palmer let go of her hand and walked off.

When contacted by Benedict about publishing this exchange, Justice Palmer asked only that he include the following clarification: “Those comments were predicated on certain facts that we did not know (and could not have known) at the time of our decision and of which I was not fully aware until your talk—namely, that the city’s development plan had never materialized and, as a result, years later, the land at issue remains barren and wholly undeveloped.” Palmer noted that the reason he could not have known of these facts at the time of the hearing is “because they were not yet in existence.”

And it’s not clear that if Palmer had changed his vote and the Connecticut supremes had found for Kelo it would have changed the ultimate verdict in the case. As it was argued before the state court, *Kelo* was fought on constitutional grounds, which means that the city would have been able to appeal the verdict, and the U.S. Supreme Court would have heard virtually the same case.

Even so, it’s incredibly rare to hear one of our robed masters, both privately and publicly, acknowledge regret. And heartening, too. ♦

Vegan Porn

We were so drowsy last week after one of our typical lunches of delicious crate-raised veal that we nearly missed the news that PETA, the pro-hunger group determined to keep human beings from enjoying what we like to call creature comforts (namely, red meat and fur coats), has decided to enter the pornography business.

According to an AP report, “People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals is planning to launch a pornographic website to promote its animal rights

and vegan diet message.” As PETA spokesperson Lindsey Rajt explains, “the site will feature ‘tantalizing’ videos and photographs, which will lead viewers into animal rights messages.” While PETA may believe the site will broaden their appeal, THE SCRAPBOOK, a confirmed carnivore, is inclined to believe that injecting pictures of Bessie the Future Hamburger into erotica will do less to save Bessie than it will to steer people away from pornography.

PETA’s founder famously declared, “When it comes to pain, love, joy, loneliness, and fear, a rat is a pig is a dog is a boy.” But not, apparently, a woman. You might think that a group that routinely harasses people on their way into circus tents and throws paint on their (expensive) private property simply because it used to say “Moo” would be disturbed at the idea of paying our sisters and daughters to do whatever it is they will be paying them to do.

But then we remembered: PETA may claim, “Whether it’s based on race, gender, sexual orientation, or species, prejudice is morally unacceptable,” but the organization has always been somewhat selective about protecting victims of exploitation. After all, they have been exploiting people—well, celebrities—for years, asking them to disrobe in ads to help liberate the world’s Mr. Eds and Rin Tin Tins. Even more telling, they have had nearly three years to voice support for the Swiss government’s historic declaration of plants’ rights, yet there is no evidence anywhere that they have done so. In fact, quite the opposite: Their website is littered with gleeful articles about the pleasures of the plant holocaust that has continued unabated since herbivores first came on the scene.

So while you may be outraged about PETA’s forthcoming venture, we suggest you save your energy. No use wasting it on a plant-hate group with a half-hearted commitment to ending species-based prejudice. Just have a steak and a smile, and watch some cat videos on YouTube. They’re hilarious. ♦

the weekly Standard

www.weeklystandard.com

William Kristol, *Editor*

Fred Barnes, *Executive Editor*

Richard Starr, *Deputy Editor*

Claudia Anderson, *Managing Editor*

Christopher Caldwell, Andrew Ferguson, Victorino Matus, Lee Smith, *Senior Editors*

Philip Terzian, *Literary Editor*

Stephen F. Hayes, Matt Labash, Jonathan V. Last, *Senior Writers*

Matthew Continetti, *Opinion Editor*

Jay Cost, John McCormack, *Staff Writers*

Mark Hemingway, *Online Editor*

Daniel Halper, Emily Schultheis, *Deputy Online Editors*

Kelly Jane Torrance, *Assistant Editor*

Michael Warren, *Reporter*

Theresa Civantos, Zack Munson, *Editorial Assistants*

Philip Chalk, *Design Director*

Barbara Kytte, *Design Assistant*

Carolyn Wimmer, *Executive Assistant*

Max Boot, Joseph Bottum, Tucker Carlson, Noemie Emery, Joseph Epstein, David Frum, David Gelernter, Reuel Marc Gerecht, Michael Goldfarb, Mary Katharine Ham, Brit Hume, Frederick W. Kagan, Robert Kagan, Charles Krauthammer, Tod Lindberg, Robert Messenger, P.J. O’Rourke, John Podhoretz, Irwin M. Stelzer, *Contributing Editors*

Terry Eastland, *Publisher*

Nicholas H. B. Swezey, *Advertising Director*

Catherine Lowe, *Digital Business Director*

Richard Trocchia, *Fulfillment Manager*

T. Barry Davis, *Senior Advertising Manager*

Kathy Schaffhauser, *Finance Director*

Taybor Cook, *Office Manager*

Andrew Kaumeier, *Staff Assistant*

Advertising inquiries:
202-293-4900

The Weekly Standard (ISSN 1083-3013), a division of Clarity Media Group, is published weekly (except the first week in January, third week in April, second week in July, and fourth week in August) at 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington D.C. 20036. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 421203, Palm Coast, FL 32142-1203. For subscription customer service in the United States, call 1-800-274-7293. For new subscription orders, please call 1-800-283-2014. Subscribers: Please send new subscription orders and changes of address to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 421203, Palm Coast, FL 32142-1203. Please include your latest magazine mailing label. Allow 3 to 5 weeks for arrival of first copy and address changes. Canadian/foreign orders require additional postage and must be paid in full prior to commencement of service. Canadian/foreign subscribers may call 1-850-682-7644 for subscription inquiries. American Express, Visa/MasterCard payments accepted. Cover price, \$4.95. Back issues, \$4.95 (includes postage and handling). Send letters to the editor to The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th Street, N.W., Suite 505, Washington, DC 20036-4617. For a copy of The Weekly Standard Privacy Policy, visit www.weeklystandard.com or write to Customer Service, The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington, D.C. 20036. Copyright 2009, Clarity Media Group. All rights reserved. No material in The Weekly Standard may be reprinted without permission of the copyright owner. The Weekly Standard is a registered trademark of Clarity Media Group.



Doctor, My Eye

Three or four years ago, during the Neronian decadence that preceded the financial crash of 2008, we got a glossy brochure in the mail from one of our doctors. It announced that for a modest fee—about a hundred dollars per person—our family could enjoy a whole range of special perquisites known as the Platinum Recognition Plan. What would we get with Platinum Recognition? Well, for one, our doctor would return our calls himself. If any of us got really, really sick, he would see us within days. Not only that, he would come up with a “personalized” health regimen to suit whatever symptoms and conditions we might develop in his branch of medicine.

My wife checked the postmark to make sure it was not April 1. Listening to one’s patients talk about their symptoms, treating them in sickness and in health, recognizing that they are suffering humans and not just chess problems—surely this is what being a doctor is. What today’s doctors call “Platinum Recognition” is what doctors of the old school called the Hippocratic Oath. But almost every doctor that our extended family uses has an answering-machine message that runs “If this is an emergency you should go to the hospital,” pedantically enumerates the hours he works (which don’t coincide with any hours when you would actually call him), and implies that you should jump in a lake.

Apparently Platinum Recognition (a name I have embellished slightly) is part of a growing trend known as “concierge medicine.” There is something particularly shocking about seeing a doctor try to peel a bit more money out of you this way, but it seems to be in the spirit of the times. Consider banks. Banking used

to mean borrowing short term at low interest and lending long-term at high. But banks don’t lend any more—they just shave money out of their depositors’ accounts through various penalties and hidden charges. The other day it occurred to me that banks no longer return the checks you write, either. Apparently this allows them to save money by firing the people who



used to sort the checks and mail them out. You would think that would make your checking account cheaper, but no! My bank now charges me a “check safekeeping fee” for not mailing back my checks. They are charging more for providing less.

Having watched levels of service erode in almost every walk of life in the past decade, I have begun to detect certain patterns. Seldom does a company or a contractor tell you he is going to do crummier work and charge you more for it. Instead, from check-free banking to Obamacare, his work deteriorates by a confusing multistep process, many stages of which appear at first to make things better.

Step 1 is a pure advance for free-

dom. There’s a new, better way of doing things—let’s say, paying your bills online—and you can participate, if you want, for a premium. You don’t have to embrace it if you’re going to be an old fuddy-duddy and still pay your bills by check. You can just keep doing what you’ve been doing. It’s your choice. You can “keep the plan you have.”

Step 2 comes when you are informed, as you inevitably will be, that the old way of doing things is being canceled, having become so uncool that no customer in his right mind any longer wants it. If that assertion is too manifestly fraudulent, a semi-honest argument will be brought out: The old way of doing things has become “inefficient.” It is inefficient in the sense that it cuts into the profits the business can now make by ceasing to worry about the customers.

Step 3 comes when the elimination of the old way of doing things means there is no longer any alternative to the new way. At that point, every incentive to keep it running efficiently disappears. You get service of lower caliber than you got under the old technology, but with higher fees. To take one example, at my bank, ATMs were an attractive alternative to free checking because they told you your recent transactions. Now that most people have been lured out of their checking accounts, these ATMs demand a fee for that service.

I mentioned my gripe to an editor at the STANDARD, and she asked me to write a Casual about it. When I didn’t hand it in, she got all bent out of shape. But she shouldn’t have. She just needs the Platinum Privileged Editor Plan. For only a few hundred dollars on top of what I am already paid, she would be entitled to copy filed on time with 100-percent beer-stain-free hard copy! You know, those little extras that are the sign of professionalism. As a bonus, I might even agree to spell-check it.

CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL



**Enjoy the 100 Greatest Books
of All Time and
Never Have to Read a Word!**



FOR LESS THAN \$1 A BOOK, you'll be captivated by the stories from the 100 greatest literary classics of all time... without ever having to read a word. Listen to them in audio book format, preloaded on the included personal MP3 player.

Your collection includes:

- ✧ 100 greatest books in audio format
- ✧ Adapter for listening in the car
- ✧ Personal headphones
- ✧ Belt clip
- ✧ Bonus Gift: The 50 most beloved classical music performances
- ✧ Just \$99!

*So simple to use...
Just push 'play' and enjoy!*

You Are 100% Protected

If you're not completely satisfied, you are fully protected by our no-questions-asked, **LIFETIME MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE**. Simply call us and we'll refund your full purchase price.

*Wuthering Heights • Sherlock Holmes
Scarlet Letter • Gulliver's Travels
Pride and Prejudice • Little Women
Black Beauty • Romeo and Juliet
Tom Sawyer • Tale of Two Cities*

Plus 90 More!

FREE GIFT for Acting Now

Order now, and you'll receive a special FREE gift: *50 of the most enchanting classical music works* (a \$50 value) by the world's great composers: Beethoven, Brahms, Tchaikovsky... all your favorites!

**Call now for limited time special
price and free gift!**

888-348-6180

24 hours a day



What Hath Obama Wrought

Mahmoud Abbas holds a copy of the letter that he delivered to United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, during his address before the 66th United Nations General Assembly at U.N. headquarters in New York, September 23, 2011.

Some have praised President Obama's September 20 speech at the U.N. as his most rousing defense of Israel to date. Perhaps so—though that's not saying much. It rather seems to us that the president merits some credit—but only some—for a growing self-awareness, both of his own limits and of the finer points of American Middle East policy.

"Peace will not come through statements and resolutions at the U.N.," Obama told the General Assembly. "If it were that easy, it would have been accomplished by now." But, as Palestinian Authority president Mahmoud Abbas noted, the president mapped out precisely such a prospect just last year. The most potent instruments at Obama's disposal, it seemed then, *were* statements—mostly directed at Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu. But, instead of creating a Palestinian state, the president merely forged a stalemate that led Abbas to bring matters to a head at Turtle Bay, where a unilateral declaration of Palestinian statehood would spell bad news for American interests.

Obama misread the Middle East from the moment he came to office. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict is not the central issue in the region. The Arab Spring shows that

what matters most to the inhabitants of the Greater Middle East are domestic, even local concerns. And yet it also has to be said that the peace process does matter. Which is why it has to be handled carefully.

Now there is no logical reason why the Palestinian cause should touch off the emotions of the entire Muslim world. Indeed it is strange to suggest that Muslims are particularly sensitive to Palestinian suffering, when it is European and American taxpayers who provide for most of the Palestinians' daily needs. There is no necessary reason that the Palestinian cause should be deemed central to the region except that Arab rulers claimed it was so, and their Western counterparts conceded the point.

In the 1930s the Sunni Arab powers that were also British clients—Egypt, Transjordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia—vied for control of the Palestinian cause in order to compete with each other for regional prestige. The mandate for Palestine was in British hands, and whether the Brits were already uncertain of their imperial prerogative to rule or simply anticipated the outbreak of another great war that would require access to the region's energy resources, they allowed the Arabs to have a say regarding policy in a place

where they had no business meddling. London washed its hands of Palestine after World War II not just because it was incapable of managing a conflict between the Arabs and the Jews, but also because it could not balance the Arab powers against each other.

Where an empire in twilight could see Palestine only as a headache, a rising power like postwar America saw it as a stepping stone to regional dominance. If the Arab powers made so much of Palestine, the thinking went, that's where they could be tied down. Nixon's airlifts to Israel in the 1973 Yom Kippur war showed the Arabs that, with America backing Jerusalem to the hilt, there was no point in fighting Israel. America became a virtual sultan, conferring its gifts on all who stuck by the rules: \$2 billion a year in aid for Egypt; \$3 billion a year for Israel; money for Jordan and the PA; arms for the Saudis; and so on.

President Obama is right to emphasize that a Palestinian state can only come from a negotiated settlement, because there is a U.S. national interest in the "process" part of the "peace process." In reality, there already is peace. When Egyptian president Anwar Sadat signed the treaty with Israel in 1978, he moved Cairo out of the Soviet camp. And there is no strategic realignment that will issue from a PA-Israel accord, since Mahmoud Abbas is already an American ally. If he wages war on Israel, he will lose the support of the White House, which pays most of his bills on the West Bank.

Washington wants a Palestinian state as much as, or perhaps more than, the PA itself. Certainly Abbas's verbal assault on Israel last week did little to convince the undecided that such a state would promote peace and comity with its Israeli neighbor. With all the noise at the U.N., including Abbas's, we should not forget that the Palestinians have rejected various offers of statehood, the first tendered at the U.N. itself in 1948. What Abbas wants, as he has explained, is a better bargaining position. That's certainly a reasonable desire, but the danger is that he may negotiate himself out of the American orbit. That would be bad not only for Washington, which requires the peace process to secure its role as power broker, but also for Abbas and the Palestinians.

It's unpleasant for many people to think of the United States as the world's policeman. So perhaps it's better to think of Washington as a financial adviser, whose role is to make sure its clients have the wherewithal to do the things they really want to do without unnecessary risk. As we saw last week at the U.N., the Obama administration, by mishandling the peace process portfolio, exposed American clients—both Israel and the PA—to too much risk.

The result is that other powers are eager to step in where the United States has faltered. French president Nicolas Sarkozy is drooling at the prospect of picking up an account as prestigious as the peace process. What he fails to recognize is that France is no more qualified to manage this portfolio than, say, Turkey was able to mediate

between Israel and Syria. The fact is that no one is able to offer the goods and services that Washington provides its allies, in the region and throughout the world.

If the president is beginning to see the nuances and difficulties of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in many of its details, he still lacks an understanding of the larger architecture that everything hangs on: American leadership. Nations, like individual investors, do not always know what's best for them. Both history and Wall Street are replete with the tragic stories of those who confused opportunities and risks. When Washington fails to lead competently, the world is a riskier place, for our friends and for ourselves.

—Lee Smith

Lawyers, Guns, and Money

Last December, U.S. border patrol agent Brian Terry was murdered in a fire with three Mexican nationals in Arizona. Two guns recovered at the crime scene were traced back to an ongoing Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) investigation, informally known under the code names "Gunwalker" and "Fast and Furious."

As part of this investigation, ATF had allowed American firearms dealers to sell more than 2,000 guns to Mexican criminal gangs with no plan to interdict or recover the guns. Several ATF agents had expressed concern about the operation. One of the firearms dealers involved had even emailed the ATF agent in charge to express concern that the operation was putting the lives of border patrol agents at risk—six months before Terry's murder.

Thanks to some whistleblowers, there's now a congressional inquiry into the Gunwalker operation. But, closing in on a year after Terry's death, we still have no clear idea of what law enforcement goals Gunwalker was supposed to achieve. In a recent conference call with reporters, House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform chairman Darrell Issa could only conclude, "This was dumb, it was useless, and it was lethal."

The Justice Department, meanwhile, continues to impede attempts to determine what happened. Brian Terry's mother Josephine has been blunt about her frustration. "Justice, to us, is not beating around the bush. If the government wants to hide something, that's what irritates us. If you made a mistake . . . say you did. Just say you did," she told the Associated Press earlier this year.

So we can only imagine the outrage Josephine Terry must have felt last week, when leaked audio hit the Internet in which one of the dealers involved in the operation—now a witness for Issa’s committee—describes Brian Terry’s murder as “collateral damage,” while an ATF agent mumbles in agreement.

Josephine Terry is hardly alone in her grief. On last week’s conference call, Issa confirmed that Mexican attorney general Marisela Morales believes at least 200 murders in Mexico have been linked to Fast and Furious weapons. Over on the U.S. side of the border, authorities announced earlier this month that the alleged perpetrators of a March 2010 assault against police detectives in Phoenix used two guns linked to the scandal. More than 1,400 of the guns involved in the ATF operation have yet to be recovered.

Why hasn’t more pressure been brought to bear on the Obama administration to take responsibility for the scandal? After all, this was not the work of a handful of rogue ATF agents. In a September 9 letter to White House national security adviser Tom Donilon, Representative Issa and Senator Charles Grassley of Iowa revealed that the ATF special agent in charge of the operation was briefing the administration on the details as early as the summer of 2010.

Yet the Justice Department tried to prevent acting ATF head Kenneth Melson from cooperating with congressional investigators. He eventually testified before the Oversight Committee in July, with his own legal representation.

Then, in August, the Justice Department “reassigned” him to the Office of Legal Policy.

Congressional investigators also fired off an angry letter to the Justice Department last week after Justice handed the audiotapes of conversations between witnesses to the U.S. attorney’s office in Arizona rather than Congress. In the letter, Issa and Grassley worry that the department’s decision may obstruct their investigation while raising the possibility of collusion between witnesses.

As the Obama administration continues to be less than forthcoming, we’re left to speculate as to potential political motives behind this baffling and obviously dangerous operation. Unfortunately, we’re unlikely to hear an explanation for the scandal until more political pressure is applied on the White House and Justice Department. Congressman Issa is rightly calling for a special investigator. But, in the meantime, national Republicans need to speak out loudly and often until the situation is resolved. American law enforcement agents have died and there’s not been a single mention of the scandal at a GOP debate. If Fast and Furious were to become a campaign issue, the president might be forced to respond.

It won’t be enough to tell Josephine Terry that mistakes were made, though she certainly deserves that and more. All Americans deserve to know how Fast and Furious happened—and, ultimately, who will be held accountable.

—Mark Hemingway

The Truth About Taxes

By Thomas J. Donohue

President and CEO
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

The tax debate is heating up—and so is the rhetoric surrounding it. The president recently delivered an impassioned speech calling for tax code “fairness,” arguing “wealthy” Americans aren’t paying their fair share. He also maintained Warren Buffett paid a lower tax rate than his secretary and proposed the “Buffett Rule” to prevent that from happening. But does the president’s rhetoric match reality? Is he telling the same story that the data tell? If we’re going to have a productive conversation about fundamental tax reform—and we need to—let’s get the facts right.

First, who pays what? Analysis by the IRS shows that for 2008, the most recent data available, the top 1% of households paid 38% of total federal income taxes while earning 20% of total income. The top 25% paid 86% while

earning 67.4% of income. The top 50% paid 97% with an income share of 87.3%. And Americans in the bottom 50% paid only 3% and often got money back from the government in the form of credits.

What about that Buffett Rule? According to IRS data, Americans earning upward of \$1 million had an average income tax rate of 23.3% in 2008. By contrast, those earning between \$30,000 and \$50,000 paid an average income rate of 7.2%.

Those are the facts. Here’s another—when you want less of something, tax it. So the president is suggesting we tax investment, successful small businesses (who often file as individuals, which makes them “wealthy” in the eyes of the administration), and our most productive and important industries, such as oil and gas. Do we really want less investment, fewer small businesses, and fewer successful industries? Is that the right way to create jobs and grow our economy?

We do agree with the president on

some things. We believe in reforming the current complex system—not through endless tinkering around the edges, but through fundamental reform that simplifies the code, lowers individual and corporate rates, and makes American companies more competitive. We also agree with what he said a year ago: “Raising taxes in the middle of a recession is exactly what we don’t want to do.” While we’re technically not in a recession, for most Americans, it sure feels like we are.

Without question, we need to modernize our arcane tax code to help stabilize the economy, spur growth, and create jobs. But if we’re going to be serious about tax reform—and we must be—let’s be honest about the facts and realistic about what will and won’t work.



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

Twisting in the Wind

Ben Bernanke's diminishing returns.

BY JAMES PETHOKOUKIS



It didn't take long for the snark attack to begin among the Big Money crowd. Less than 24 hours after the Federal Reserve announced its latest easy-money plan to goose the flaccid U.S. economy, investors were already deriding "Operation Twist" as "Operation Fail." Almost everything that was supposed to go up went down—and vice versa. Global stock markets plunged, oil prices fell, the dollar rose, and inflation expectations tumbled despite the central bank's decision to swap \$400 billion of short-term Treasury bonds for ones of longer duration over the next nine months. It was like *Opposite Day* on Wall Street.

"If one knew nothing else but simply looked at the market response to what the Fed did [on Wednesday], it would look like a tightening, not an easing of policy," MKM Partners economist Michael Darda told clients. "We think it's fair to say that things are not playing out the way the Fed probably expected them to."

Well, that's not completely true, nor completely fair. First, understand what's happening here: Federal Reserve chairman Ben Bernanke is trying to stimulate economic growth by bringing down long-term interest rates—already at multi-decade lows—closer to short-term rates. (What's undergoing a "twist" is the Treasury yield curve.) With 10- and 30-year Treasuries yielding less, banks would, in theory, have more incentive to use their cash for lending to small businesses and other borrowers rather than buying more government debt. Just as important to Bernanke, lower mortgage rates—which track long-term government bond rates—might add a bit of life to the moribund housing market.

At least that's the theory. And an untested one it is. The original Operation Twist, a joint Treasury-Fed effort in 1961, was much smaller and had a completely different goal, preventing the flight of U.S. gold reserves to Europe. The results were at best mixed, with former Fed boss William McChesney Martin terming the

James Pethokoukis is a columnist for Reuters.

effort's rationale "hopelessly naïve." Even some on the current Federal Open Market Committee are dubious, with three members publicly opposing Operation Twist.

Yet as Fed staffers say, if you see a central banker talking on CNBC and that person doesn't have a beard, he doesn't really matter. This is still Bernanke's Fed, and to the chairman's likely relief, long rates immediately moved lower on news of the action. So far, so good. Lower rates, though, are intended to be merely a means to an end: encouraging faster economic growth and preventing deflation. That's what policymakers have really been trying to accomplish by trotting out all these creative monetary tools

The Fed's already been incredibly accommodating—putting short rates to near zero, two massive rounds of bond buying—with little to show for all that pump priming.

during the past three years. But it's just as likely that rates moved lower because of growing investor concern that financial crisis may be about to engulf the global economy for the second time in three years. Last time the spark was dodgy U.S. mortgage debt, this time too much EU government debt. Despite America's budgetary woes, Treasuries are still the top destination when investors get jittery, pushing rates lower.

Markets have less confidence, though, in the Fed's ability to do much about either sinking stocks or an American economy dangerously close to sliding back into recession, particularly if Europe goes pear shaped. (Even the Fed concedes that the effect of Operation Twist is "difficult to estimate precisely.") Few economists think tight financial conditions are the problem right now. The Fed's already been incredibly accommodating—putting short rates to near zero,

two massive rounds of bond buying—with little to show for all that pump priming. The U.S. economy is barely growing, and most forecasters, including those at the White House and the Federal Reserve, think the unemployment rate will stay at 9 percent or higher until 2013. Indeed, the Federal Open Market Committee's statement last week stressed that there was "significant downside risk" to its outlook.

It certainly doesn't seem, for instance, that even lower mortgage rates will do much for housing where measures of affordability would suggest the sector should be thriving. It isn't, of course, not with a huge overhang of existing unsold homes and growing shadow inventory of homes likely to enter the market as mortgage defaults continue. Fear of continuing price drops, along with consumer confidence at its lowest levels since the nadir of Jimmy Carter's presidency, means there's not nearly enough demand to sop up that excess supply.

But impotence is hardly the worst-case outcome to Operation Twist, especially in light of an emerging financial crisis overseas that could spread to America. To the extent that the Fed's gimmicky maneuver works, a flatter yield curve cuts into bank profitability by shrinking the interest margin between borrowing short and lending long. That, along with the impact of Dodd-Frank financial reform, could weaken a U.S. financial sector that may soon come under intense stress if its opposite number in Europe begins to implode from the impact of a Greek debt default. Indeed, the Fed's super-low interest rate policy actually heightens the risk of more market volatility, giving investors access to deep pools of cheap money that can be rapidly shifted between various financial assets.

Markets used to believe in the Greenspan Put, that the Fed would save them in times of crisis. Bernanke has done his best to try and justify that faith. But attendance at the Church of Easy Money is starting to thin, and Operation Twist won't be the miracle needed to restore the flock or the economy. ♦

FROM THREE TO FIVE
A NOVEL ABOUT THE 2012 ELECTION
By Hank Adler

Can The Country Withstand Three Viable Political Parties?

Available at **amazon.com**

Jackie, Oh No

The Kennedy apparat swings into action again.

BY ANDREW FERGUSON

Is there a more empathetic person in the world than Diane Sawyer, the top newsreader at ABC TV? I'm sure there must be—around seven billion of them, probably. But is there anyone who *looks* more empathetic than Diane Sawyer? Not a chance. When she peers at you through the camera she has the look of someone who's just seen your lab results and is trying to figure out how to break the bad news. It must be terribly unnerving to see it close up, firsthand, in person—especially while she's sitting next to you on a couch, no less.

I give Caroline Kennedy a lot of credit for retaining her composure with those two moist peepers trained in on her. This was during a long interview conducted for a two-hour TV special that ABC aired September 13 called *Jacqueline Kennedy: In Her Own Words*. (Diane Sawyer told us the proper pronunciation of Mrs. Kennedy's first name is “Zsock-leen,” though everybody called her Jackie, which must have made life less embarrassing.) The special was the trumpet blast alerting the nation to the publication of another product of the Kennedy apparat, *Jacqueline Kennedy: Historic Conversations on Life with John F. Kennedy*. The book consists of previously unheard interviews Mrs. Kennedy gave Arthur Schlesinger in early 1964—eight CDs' worth.

Every time you think that the Kennedy apparat is dead, there's some new burst of publicity that makes you realize it's still humming, or at least wheezing. These guys know how to move units. Here in the twenty-first century, in keeping with contemporary “best practices,” a good deal of the work

previously done by Kennedy toadies—court historians, speechwriters, bagmen, PR wizards—has been outsourced, and ABC is one of the chief contractors. For 36 hours the network became the Zsock-leen Channel, from *Good Morning America* to *Nightline*, and a week later, *Historic Conversations* was the bestselling book in the country.

The apparat continues work begun by the patriarch, Joe Kennedy, in the 1930s. One of his first moves was to hire Hollywood cinematographers to

In the normal course of the apparat's work, elevating the Kennedys requires the denigration of the Eisenhowers, the 1950s, and the supposed dullness of the country that the Kennedys rescued us from.

record the everyday doings (staged) of his toothy and, in a few cases, toothsome children, in Technicolor, on 35mm film. The scenes were then inventoried and cross-tabulated by activity and Kennedy kid—*Touch Football w/Eunice, Part xxxvii*; *Touch Football w/Eunice, Part xxxviii*—and stored in a flameproof warehouse in the Bronx. It was destroyed by fire, and the film canisters went up with it. That damn Kennedy curse.

The photographers kept at it, needless to say, and the stills and movies produced over the course of half a century are essential to the Kennedy mystique. It's as if Joe foresaw that future generations of his family were going to have to seduce a population that was quickly sliding into a post-literate age. But he didn't ignore the

written word, or the potential that books carry to turn myth into fact. In 1940, old Joe hired the *New York Times* columnist Arthur Krock to “edit” Jack Kennedy's senior thesis from Harvard, which was published under the title *Why England Slept*. It became an instant bestseller, after Joe instantly, and quietly, bought up 30,000 copies. The tradition of improbable bestsellers has continued even up to Caroline, who made a tremendous success a decade ago with a book called *The Best Loved Poems of Jacqueline Kennedy-Onassis*—not poems written by her mother; just poems sacralized into objects of veneration by the mere fact of her mother's liking them.

This new campaign—the book itself and its flogging on ABC—is slightly different from past Kennedy productions. Yes, there were the usual iterations of the Kennedy myth: lots of pictures and film of the photogenic family; vast overstatements about the political importance of the Kennedy administration and the cultural importance of Jack and Jackie (Zsock-ee?), along with dewy phrasemaking from Diane Sawyer about their “cultural claim to the American century” and how the newly released taped interviews “held the promise of a brand new century.” (This is chronologically confusing, but you get the idea.)

In the normal course of the apparat's work, elevating the Kennedys requires the denigration of the Eisenhowers, the 1950s, and the supposed dullness of the country that the Kennedys rescued us from—“our country of suburbs and Ozzie and Harriet, poodle skirts and one kind of cheese,” as Diane Sawyer oddly put it, while the screen showed a golden brick of Velveeta. Jackie by contrast wore clothes by designers who would have gone into a dead faint at the sight of a poodle skirt. When the Kennedys moved in, added the court historian Michael Beschloss, “we had a White House that looked like a bad convention hotel.” The Kennedys brought French cuisine to the White House, Diane Sawyer added. “No more Eisenhower cheese sauce and cole slaw. . .

Andrew Ferguson is a senior editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD and the author, most recently, of *Crazy U*.

In our middle-class nation, it wasn't easy for us to fathom this first lady." Jackie herself is heard complaining about the marks that Ike's golf shoes left in the flooring. Dwight Eisenhower, lumbering ox.

On the tapes Mrs. Kennedy makes a few snippy comments about Mamie Eisenhower, but not only about Mamie, and here's where the defensiveness proved necessary. While on the screen those sumptuous Kennedy images swim by, you can hear the protective tone in the voices of the apparat.

"She helped America come of age," Beschloss said.

"She finds her voice," Diane Sawyer continued. "And she arguably changes history, global history, for America in the way she deals with foreign leaders because she's a very effective [advocate] of a very different kind of politics. And she gets it done."

Thank heavens for that word "arguably," for without it Diane Sawyer's statement would be thought self-evidently absurd by—well, by anyone who knows anything about anything. This is extravagant even according to the standards of the apparat. But overstatement is necessary because the Jackie that Schlesinger spoke to back in 1964, and that we hear on the tapes, is not at all someone concerned with changing global history or introducing a new kind of politics.

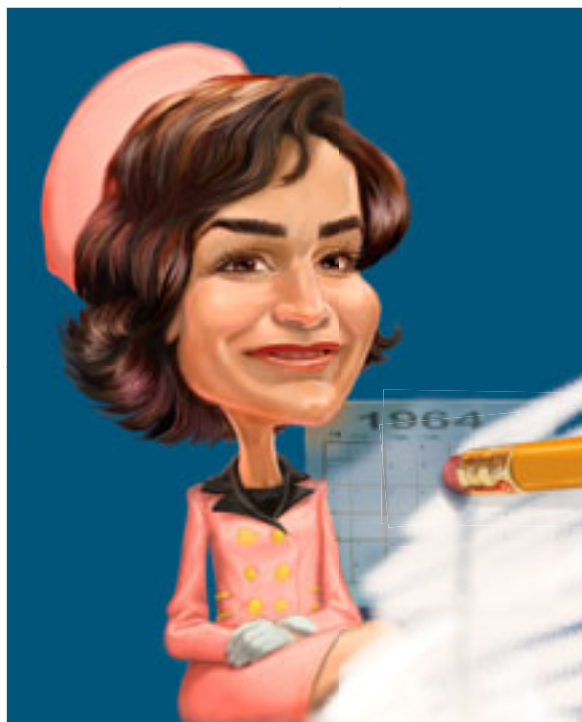
The tapes make clear that Mrs. Kennedy's politics were of the old kind. She boasts that she gets all of her political opinions from her husband. "Why wouldn't I?" she asks. He was the professional politician, not her. "His opinions were the best." She's annoyed at women who assert themselves in the world of politics, like Madame Nhu in South Vietnam or Clare Boothe Luce closer to home. "Why are these women like her and Clare Luce, who both obviously are attractive to men, why are they—why do they have this queer

thing for power?" And then, whispering to Schlesinger, she answers her own question: "I wouldn't be surprised if they were lesbians."

She says she never bothered her husband with questions about world affairs, except for one occasion when she inquired about Vietnam and got an annoyed dismissal: "Don't remind me of that all over again." At one point during the White House years she asked to receive intelligence reports but found they made her "bored" and depressed. "I stopped reading all those

recording an orgy arranged for (and perhaps by) King in a Washington hotel, she remarked, "I just can't see a picture of Martin Luther King without thinking, you know, that man's terrible." (She adds that when Jack heard about the tape, he said only, "Oh, well." "He would never judge anyone in any sort of way," she says. Certainly not in *that* way.) In a footnote to Mrs. Kennedy's remark, Beschloss, who edited the transcripts for the book, writes: "The FBI tape to which Mrs. Kennedy refers was of King and his colleagues relaxing at the Willard Hotel"—a comical euphemism, but a good example of how the apparat cushions the unpleasant facts of history.

Mrs. Kennedy's personal approach carried over into diplomacy. Meeting world leaders, Diane Sawyer said, "she was able to analyze and see with clinical detachment what their strengths and weaknesses were." But the tapes themselves show some-



one with rather different interests. When, at dinner, Nikita Khrushchev tried to recite some statistics about wheat production in the Ukraine, she demurred. "And I said, 'Oh, Mr. Chairman President, don't bore me with that,'" trying

to draw the conversation back to Ukrainian folk dancing. She disliked de Gaulle because he was too haughty. (Who knew?) *Clinical* isn't the word for her appraisal of Indira Gandhi either. "She is a real prune—bitter, kind of pushy, horrible woman. You know, I just don't like her a bit. It always looks like she's been sucking a lemon."

The revelation of these taped remarks, and many more like them, has been treated as though they were somehow scandalous, an affront to our modern, progressive sensibility. And maybe they are.

briefings and things, because I didn't want to have to worry about anything." Other public figures she assesses in entirely personal terms, more according to their effect on her husband's public fortunes than anything else.

"I suppose women are terribly emotional," she says, "and you never want to speak to anyone again who said something mean against your husband."

Her disdain for Martin Luther King has been widely broadcast in the last few weeks. She calls him "really a tricky person." After she was told about the infamous FBI tapes

But here's the thing: Mrs. Kennedy was right. Indira Gandhi *was* an old prune! Madame Nhu *was* power-crazed! And Martin Luther King—most scandalous of all—he *was* tricky, certainly from the vantage of mulish politicians, like John Kennedy, whom he tried to manipulate into doing the right thing. Martin Luther King was a pain in the neck, by profession. If he's become something grander in death it's partly because he was so irritating to powerful men while he was alive. His beatification has obscured the workaday political realities he lived with, as well as his personal failings as a husband, none of which diminish his greatness as a symbol or a man. So they should stop worrying.

Symbols are what the apparat is in the business of preserving, which accounts for the tone offered by Diane Sawyer and Caroline and the crew at ABC, by turns disbelieving, apologetic, and exculpatory. *Who you gonna believe—us or your lyn' ears?* They're worried we'll pick up the wrong symbol: not "a woman absolutely in her own right," as Sawyer said, but a wife with an abiding devotion to her husband and his work and a strong interest in clothes, personalities, history, and interior decoration. Those interests led her to sturdy achievements—restoring the White House with original artifacts, preserving Lafayette Square and other landmarks from hideous, 1960s-era urban development. She was a thoroughly admirable woman, just not in the way the apparat would have liked her to be.

On *Good Morning America*, George Stephanopoulos selected one quote in particular: "I think women should never be in politics. We're just not suited for it."

He turned, incredulous, to Caroline. "That's your *mom*?"

"She would have winced," Caroline assured us later.

The tapes offer "the private history we never thought we'd learn," Diane Sawyer said, "the voice we never thought we'd hear." She looked, as always, as if she might cry, but I think maybe this time she meant it. ♦

Rebrander in Chief

The Defense Department's new man at Gitmo hits the reset button. **BY WILLY STERN**

'M" sent in James Bond. MacArthur ordered in the 1st Marine Division. Today, when the Department of Defense has a complex crisis requiring brawn and brains, Brigadier General Mark Martins gets the call. His latest job: Hit the reset button at Gitmo.

The actual job title is "chief prosecutor, Office of Military Commis-

Mark Martins will oversee the prosecution of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. He will also sell the world—our allies, enemies, even the 'Washington Post'—on the legitimacy of these military tribunals.

sions." Martins is the legal stud who will oversee the prosecution of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and his fellow apparent jihadists. Martins will also sell the world—our allies, enemies, even the *Washington Post*—on the legitimacy of these military tribunals.

And why not? Martins's last two assignments were also reset jobs.

For years, U.S. military detention and interrogation policy in Afghanistan had been an awful mess. Ugly politics at home. Tensions with allies. And we were losing the battle for the hearts and minds of the Afghans. Then David Petraeus slapped a star on Col. Martins's chest in 2009 and effectively said, "Now you're a general:

Willy Stern has written for THE WEEKLY STANDARD from Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel, Mali, and other places.

Go fix the darn thing." And, with help, Martins did just that, instituting new policies based on joint mantras of transparency and accountability. (Actually, with a lot of help. Martins worked under a hard-charging, no-nonsense Navy SEAL named Vice Admiral Robert Harward, leader of the detentions task force.)

When did you last read a *New York Times* screed detailing abuses in a coalition prison? Harvard Law professor Jack Goldsmith, a terrorism expert, terms the determined effort to overhaul and rebrand detention policy in Afghanistan "an unqualified success." Detentions were detoxified.

Then last September, Martins set up his own command, the Rule of Law Field Force-Afghanistan (ROLFF). It's another reset job. In a vacuum of law and order, the Taliban had put in place a brutal legal system, mostly in southern and southeastern Afghanistan. You know the drill: A hungry shepherd steals a slice of bread to feed his family and, chop, off comes his hand.

Martins's assignment was to promote the rule of law in these disputed areas where bullets were often still flying. The legal system must be one that the Afghans both used and trusted, a core tenet of Petraeus's counterinsurgency strategy. Martins's ultimate aim was to set up local detainee, judicial, and criminal structures within which the Afghans themselves would do the work.

The jury's out on whether these rule-of-law initiatives will take and last. Martins lists among accomplishments to date the new national security Justice Center in Parwan Province, where, quite remarkably, 253 trials have been held since May 2010. Martins and

colleagues have gone to great lengths to build up Afghan forensic-evidence capacity, including testing for residues of explosives. Martins says, quite proudly, that his team has “assisted the Afghan government in positioning officials in 23 key districts recently cleared of Taliban and in competing with so-called Taliban justice.”

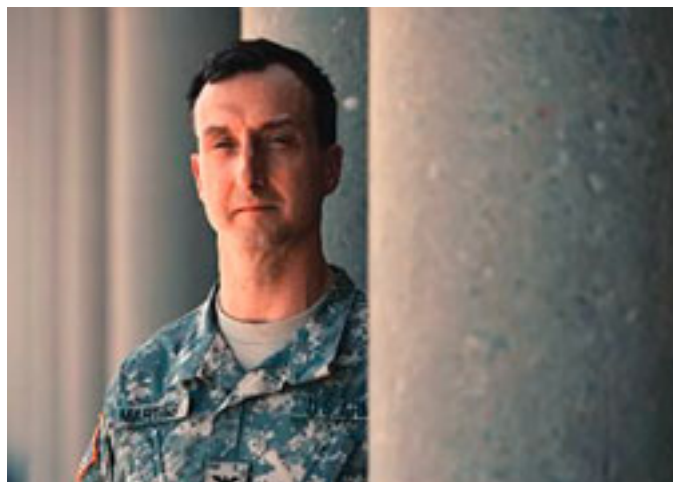
Who is this General Martins who thinks he can go head-to-head with Taliban justice and win? Think 6’4”, 185 lean pounds with an imposing schnoz and even more impressive résumé: valedictorian at West Point, a first at Oxford on his Rhodes Scholarship, magna cum laude graduate of Harvard Law (a relatively obscure second-year student named Barack Obama joined him on Law Review and was later voted its first black president). Martins married his West Point sweetheart (now a retired Army helicopter pilot); their two kids attend Princeton and—where else?—the Point. He hasn’t seen much of his family in the last five years, which clearly wears at his soul. He doesn’t complain, at least not much.

Martins officially started his new gig at Guantánamo on September 15. He is effectively running an 80-attorney law firm. In an interview from Kandahar, he said this of the Military Commissions: “I believe that within the space defined by our values, we must be relentlessly empirical and pragmatic in the means that we use to protect our people and our national security interests. While this new assignment has significant challenges, I am a soldier and will certainly do my best to prosecute these cases in a manner that contributes to the legitimacy of all that we undertake in opposing terror networks of global reach.”

A soldier, indeed. Martins, 51, has humped it as an Army commander and attorney for getting on 25 years now, often working directly under Petraeus. The two are good buddies.

In fact, I first met Martins when I was in Iraq in 2007 to go running with Petraeus for a *Runner’s World* story. Martins came along and is, like Petraeus, a gifted harrier; they finished the 5.7-mile run stride-for-stride in the stifling desert heat at the pace of 6-minutes-per-mile.

I got in touch with Petraeus the night before he started his own new gig at the CIA to ask about Martins’s assignment at Guantánamo. Was the retired general too anxious about his upcoming nonuniformed life at Langley to discuss his former lawyer? Heck no. Here’s a short excerpt



Holder of the Gitmo portfolio: General Mark Martins

from our top spy’s meaty two-page email, which started by saying he “applauded” the decision to send Martins to Gitmo. “There is no one I know better prepared for this than Mark Martins. His background is uniquely situated to such a critical mission.” Petraeus added that Martins “believes in military commissions being responsible, effective institutions within our larger system of national security institutions. Extraordinary. Truly impressive.”

Petraeus is not alone in his admiration. The official who pulled the strings behind the scenes to bring Martins into the chief prosecutor’s job was DoD general counsel Jeh Johnson, who says he “wanted somebody who (1) was a fantastic lawyer; (2) brought the right sense of values to Military Commissions reform and process;

and (3) was a recognized superstar.” Explains Johnson, “Mark had all three. I didn’t want somebody who was necessarily after the most convictions but rather was focused on making Military Commissions a credible and sustainable process. Martins has instant credibility both at Harvard Law School and with the *Washington Post*.”

Even so, Martins will no doubt be hammered by those on the left who don’t think we’re at war and see terrorism as a criminal offense better handled by U.S. courts. And some of the 171 detainees at Gitmo have been locked up a very long time. He’ll also take shots from those on the right who—more reasonably—want to see a kill, capture, convict strategy and aren’t too concerned what squeamish editorial writers or European politicians opine about Gitmo.

This much is clear: Martins will have his hands full at Guantánamo. Republicans harp at the president. Bloomberg harps at Holder. Lefty lawyers harp at the U.S. military. Our allies harp at us. The ACLU harps at everybody. The media are only too happy to churn out stories portraying detainees as victims. Into this mess rides The Rebrander.

Here are a few highlights of what Martins terms the “lesser-known facts” about the military prosecutions. He’s spinning, but he’s got a legitimate yarn. Says Martins:

- The Military Commissions are grounded in positive law, including Congressional Acts in 2006 and 2009.
- They are an important part of the United States commitment to using all instruments of national power and authority to counter terror networks; I believe that we must continue to use all of the military, law enforcement, intelligence, diplomatic, and economic tools at our disposal, selecting in each case the particular method that is most effective under the circumstances, consistent with our laws and values; military

commissions and federal courts are both lawful and appropriate forums for trying crimes committed during this long conflict.

- As with federal courts, military commissions procedures incorporate fundamental protections designed to ensure fairness and justice—these include the presumption of innocence and the requirement that guilt be proved beyond a reasonable doubt.

- Military commissions will feature new measures to ensure transparency, including a venue enabling victims and media to observe proceedings near-real-time in the continental United States (40-second delay to ensure safeguarding of national security information).

So what should these high-profile detainees expect from General Martins the prosecutor? Here's what Petraeus anticipates: "An exceedingly competent chief prosecutor—a true legal expert with total integrity, unparalleled work ethic, broad experience."

To be clear, Martins doesn't walk on water. His rule-of-law command has been accused in some quarters of being a ridiculous nation-building effort that is sorely out of touch with the true nature of the threat and with the financial woes of the United States. But such criticism hasn't stuck to the Teflon general.

The smooth-tongued Martins has a lovely wit. A couple years back, he and I were bouncing over a dirt road in an up-armored vehicle outside the wire on the outskirts of Kabul. Martins remarked that working with journalists was like dancing with elephants—you just didn't know when you might get squished.

When his appointment to Gitmo was announced, Martins got some favorable coverage; I kidded him that he must have taken waltzing lessons. Martins responded, "I am not a waltzer (though I did like *Just and Unjust Wars* as well as *Spheres of Justice*), and I'd just as soon keep the pachyderms at a distance."

The punning general was of course referring to books by social theorist Michael Walzer. This is vintage Martins—always the smartest guy in the room. ♦

The Frontrunner Stumbles

Rick Perry's can't-do campaign.

BY STEPHEN F. HAYES

Orlando, Florida

Belinda Kapaun came to the Republican presidential con-fab in Orlando last Thursday wearing a Rick Perry sticker. She was not wearing it Friday.

"He was my number one," she said the morning after the FoxNews/Google presidential debate here.

Perry lost Kapaun with a weak performance marked by misstatements of fact, missed opportunities, and general incoherence. "When he was talking to Mitt Romney there was a part of that—if you printed it, I don't think it even made sense," she says.

Here's the botched (and obviously prepared) attack on Romney that Kapaun was referring to:

I think Americans just don't know sometimes which Mitt Romney they're dealing with. Is it the Mitt Romney that was on the side of against the Second Amendment before he was for the Second Amendment? Was it was before he was before the social programs from the standpoint of he was for standing up for *Roe v. Wade* before he was against *Roe v. Wade*? Ah, he was for Race to the Top. He's for Obamacare, and now he's against it. I mean we'll wait until tomorrow to see which Mitt Romney we're really talking to tonight.

Not strong. But it was Perry's defending Texas's policy of charging in-state college tuition to the children of illegal immigrants, and the insult he directed at the opponents of his position—"I don't think you have a heart"

Stephen F. Hayes is a senior writer at
THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

—that proved decisive for Kapaun. "He lost me with that one line."

Myra Adams, a Florida media producer who worked on Republican presidential campaigns in Florida in 2004 and 2008, said that the energy and enthusiasm for Perry in the debate hall disappeared when he flubbed his attacks on Mitt Romney.

It has been clear for a long time that Florida would play a significant role in determining the next president of the United States. Florida may well be the most important state for winning the general election, and its early primary ensures that Republican voters here will have an outside voice in determining the GOP nominee. But Perry's poor performance in last week's debate had many here wondering whether it could be a turning point in the GOP nomination process—even though it's only September. Did the Orlando debate end the Perry surge and mark the beginning of a long and fatal Perry slide?

Perry supporters downplayed those concerns. One bad debate doesn't end a candidacy, they reasonably say, and no one has ever claimed that Perry is strong in such a setting.

In a speech to the Florida Conservative Political Action Conference on Friday, Perry made a similar argument, saying voters don't want "the slickest candidate or the smoothest debater" but a true conservative and a man of conviction.

He's right. But Perry's missteps were the kind that seemed to undermine his claim to be the candidate with those attributes. How often do conservatives criticize their opponents as having no heart? "That sounds like a compassionate

conservative,” said Belinda Kapaun, her tone making clear that assessment was not a compliment.

At another point in the debate, Perry was asked how he would respond if he received the proverbial 3 A.M. phone call informing him that the Taliban had obtained nuclear weapons. He stumbled through a reference to the Haqqani network and shifted rather abruptly to India and Taiwan. His main point seemed to be something about the need for strong alliances—an odd comment given the inherent urgency of the situation as it was described to him—and a peculiar first instinct for a take-charge conservative.

Perry went quickly from non-candidate to frontrunner because he reflects, both temperamentally and ideologically, the energy of the base of the Republican party. He’s a conviction-driven, confrontational conservative at a time when most Republicans are in the mood for a fight about the size and scope of government. So when Perry horrifies the

inside-the-Beltway set by saying Ben Bernanke would be “almost treasonous” if he played politics with the Fed or by calling Social Security a Ponzi scheme, he endears himself to the very voters likely to determine the Republican nominee.

Perry came into the debate determined to deepen conservatives’ suspicions about Romney. Instead, several Republicans at the Florida CPAC told me the next day that Perry’s uneven performance had driven them instead to reconsider Romney.

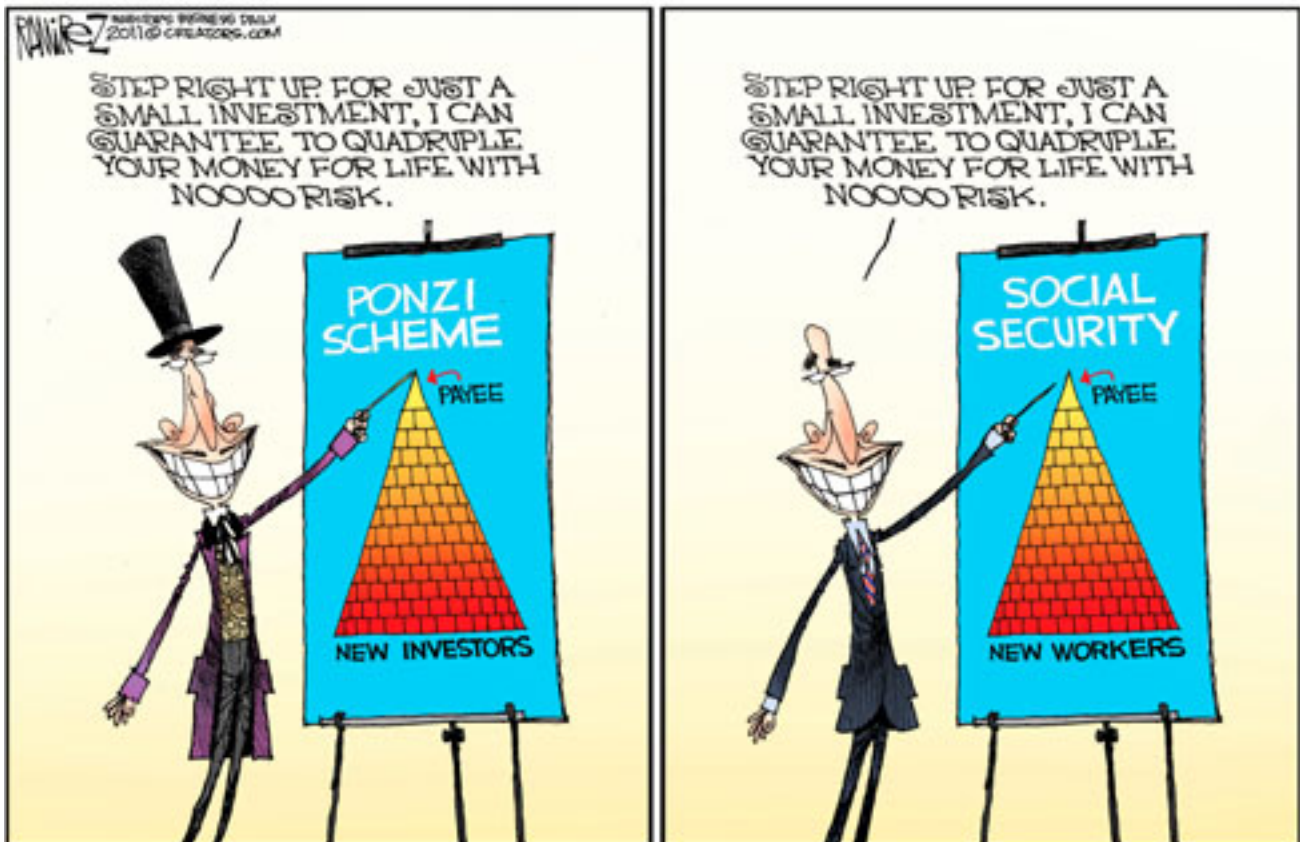
In that sense, he is the anti-Mitt Romney. The critique of Romney is that he’s a conservative of convenience, a poll-driven candidate whose decisions are based as much on

political considerations as core values. When he needed to win in Massachusetts, he was a moderate. When he was the alternative to John McCain, he was an across-the-board conservative.

Perry came into the debate determined to deepen those suspicions about Romney. Instead, several Republicans at the Florida CPAC told me the next day that his uneven performance had driven them to reconsider Romney. L.W. Belanger, a movement conservative who grew up politically as an activist in Young Americans for Freedom, invoked the “Buckley Rule”—support the most conservative candidate who is electable—to suggest that Romney could end up being an acceptable option for conservatives.

He might be right. The day after the debate the head of FreedomWorks, a group that had previously promised to oppose a Romney nomination, told Jon Ward of the *Huffington Post* that Romney “has an opportunity to rehabilitate himself.”

The question is, does Perry? ♦



The Reactionary in the White House

Barack Obama, throwback.

BY FRED BARNES

President Obama's plan for taxes and spending has been hailed by the media as "populist." A more accurate word to describe his agenda is "reactionary." It won't, to use Obama's catchphrase, "win the future." It probably won't even win the past.

The Obama administration has adopted the fiscal strategy of the Greek government. The Greeks favor raising taxes on the wealthy and massive borrowing to freeze in place the present size, scope, and spending of the government. So does Obama, thus the reactionary nature of his plan.

The Greeks have balked at laying off a single government worker or privatizing any of the immense assets—in land, resorts, and a lot more—owned by the government. When told recently by a visiting delegation from the EU, IMF, and European Central Bank that Greece must cut spending and the bureaucracy deeply to qualify for another bailout, the Greek finance minister abruptly left the room—and didn't return.

Now Obama has left the room. His speech in the Rose Garden last week vowing to veto any budget compromise without large tax increases means a deal with Republicans is off the table. Assuming he's serious, the bipartisan congressional "super-committee" assigned to come up with \$1.2 trillion in deficit reduction might as well disband. Obama is demanding tax hikes on the wealthy and various business interests—a poison pill to nearly all Republicans and many Democrats who fear a new recession.

The president led a crowd in Cincinnati last week in chants of "Pass this bill," referring to his \$467 billion "jobs bill." Those in the crowd should have saved their breath. That measure is dead, too, killed by Obama's insistence it has to be "paid for" entirely by raising taxes.

Obama seems to believe that higher taxes pave the road to a prosperous future. He touts tax reform as a way, as he put it in his White House speech, "to get rid of the decades of accumulated loopholes, special interest carve-outs, and other tax expenditures that stack the deck against small business owners and ordinary families who



can't afford Washington lobbyists or fancy accountants."

That's fine as far as it goes. But tax reform has two parts, one to broaden the tax base, the other to reduce tax rates. The lower rates are an incentive for investment, innovation, entrepreneurship, economic growth, job creation, and a brighter future. Tax reform, properly understood, aims to stir investment in the private sector, rather than promote crony capitalism in which the financiers and business moguls seek favors in Washington. Obama prefers cronies.

Since his rebuke in last November's election, the president has talked up deficit reduction. His new plan, he says, will shrink the deficit by \$3 trillion over the next decade. The Republican staff of the Senate Budget Committee, which has far more credibility than Obama on budget numbers, says the "actual deficit reduction" is \$1.4 trillion, none of it from spending cuts. The Obama plan would leave federal spending at 24 percent of GDP in 2021, the staff said, "a stunning 18 percent increase in the size of government relative to the historical average." And it would add \$9.7 trillion to the national debt over 10 years.

This would put America on the brink of an endless cycle of increased borrowing, rising debt, and less money for both private and public investment. Throw higher taxes into the mix and we have the story of Greece. Its future is grim. Greece is becoming an honorary member of the Third World.

To avert what's happened to Greece, structural reform of the main drivers of debt—Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security—is required. This is not a secret. Obama pays lip service to it. Yet he offers only "modest adjustments" to Medicare and Medicaid that would do practically nothing to restrain spending. He wouldn't tinker with Social Security at all.

Instead, entitlements would be left essentially unchanged. So would food stamps, Pell grants, and a whole host of other social programs, except that

GARY LOGKE

Fred Barnes is executive editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

Obama has made them more generous than ever. The result: All this spending and debt is bound to cramp America's future.

For one thing, the ability of the military to project power around the world will be lessened. Soaring domestic spending has already seen to this, siphoning off billions from defense and rendering America weaker on the world stage.

Obama advocates taxpayer subsidies for electric cars. This hardly represents a leap into the future, at least for the next few decades. For now, electric cars are smaller, slower, and inconvenient because of their constant need of recharging. Though the Big Three auto companies are profitable again, Obama's allies in Congress refuse to offset spending for disaster relief by cutting the Energy Department's Advanced Technology Vehicle Manufacturing loan program. Heaven forbid!

Obama is quite a throwback. In some ways, he would return us to centuries past. His administration is spending trillions to build high-speed trains, despite minimal consumer demand. Trains are a 19th-century technology. Subsidies are also doled out for wind power, a medieval technology. Meanwhile, the space program is all but jettisoned.

Rather than rely on fossil fuels, the president would make America run on renewable energy. The last renewable in widespread use was the horse.

The biggest worry, though, is the fate of innovation. Under the rule of Obamacare, will pharmaceutical companies still have the lofty profits required to fund research and development of a multitude of lifesaving wonder drugs? I doubt it. Will higher taxes curb the enthusiasm of oil and natural gas companies for exploration? Maybe.

In Cincinnati, Obama dismissed anxiety over raising taxes on the well-to-do and big corporations during an economic downturn. No problem, he said. If he gets his way, their taxes won't go up until 2013. The future, it turns out, is in more jeopardy than we thought. ♦

A Brief, Brilliant Career

Why we can't forget Sandy Koufax.

BY DAVID G. DALIN

For five memorable seasons, Sandy Koufax dominated baseball as no other major league pitcher ever had before. From 1962 to 1966, Koufax led the National League in earned run average, the only pitcher ever to do that. At the same time, he compiled a record of 111-34, a winning percentage of .766, that has never been equaled. Koufax led the National League in wins, ERA, and strikeouts for three consecutive seasons. He pitched 4 no-hitters, including a perfect game. In 1963, he threw 11 shut-outs, more than any other pitcher has since in one season. In 1965, he went 26-8 and set a major league record by striking out 382 batters in one season. In 1972, he was elected to Baseball's Hall of Fame, becoming Cooperstown's youngest member at the age of 36. He remains today only the second Jewish player to enter the pantheon.

Born in Brooklyn on December 30, 1935, Koufax attended Lafayette High School in Bensonhurst, where one of his friends was the television talk show host Larry King. At Lafayette, Koufax played on the basketball team, earning a reputation as one of the best players in Brooklyn. He didn't play on the baseball team until his senior year, and then usually as a first baseman who would sometimes pitch in relief of another friend, Fred Wilpon, Lafayette's pitching star and later the co-owner of the New York Mets.

Koufax won a basketball scholarship to the University of Cincinnati,

where he planned to study architecture. In the spring of his freshman year, he became the overnight pitching sensation of the university's baseball team, striking out 34 batters in his first two games and gaining the attention of sportswriters and baseball scouts throughout the country. Before long, close to a dozen major league scouts, including the Brooklyn Dodgers' Al Campanis, converged on Cincinnati and offered him contracts. Accepting the Dodgers' offer of \$20,000—a salary of \$6,000 and a signing bonus of \$14,000—Koufax left college after his freshman year for Ebbets Field.

The Dodgers owners, as Koufax biographer Jane Leavy has noted, were overjoyed, regarding “the signing of a Jewish ballplayer the way others regarded the coming of the messiah. The Dodgers were so desperate for a Jewish presence, given the demographics of Brooklyn ... Koufax was a marketing godsend.” The team's owner, Walter O'Malley, proclaimed him “the great Jewish hope” of the franchise, telling a reporter: “We hope he'll be as great as Hank Greenberg.”

At first, Koufax failed to meet such exalted expectations. His first few seasons were mediocre at best, a disappointment to management and fans alike. Koufax pitched in only 12 games in 1955, winning 2 and losing 2. In 1956, his second season with the Dodgers, Koufax won 2 games and lost 4. In 1957, his record was 5 and 4. Ironically, it was only after the Dodgers moved from Brooklyn to Los Angeles that Koufax began his remarkable ascent to superstardom. In August 1959, pitching against the San Francisco Giants, who had also recently moved west from New York, Koufax tied the major

David G. Dalin, a rabbi and a professor at Ave Maria University in Florida, is the coauthor (with Jonathan D. Sarna) of Religion and State in the American Jewish Experience.

league record of 18 strikeouts set by Bob Feller in 1938.

With the 1962 season, his metamorphosis complete, Koufax began to make baseball history, pitching the first of his 4 no-hitters, striking out 18 batters in a game for the second time in his career, and leading the major leagues with an ERA of 2.54. In 1963, the season in which he pitched his second no-hitter, his statistics were monumental. He led the National League with 25 games won, a 1.88 ERA, and 306 strikeouts, winning the pitcher's Triple Crown. He was the unanimous winner of the Cy Young Award, as the National League's best pitcher, and was voted the National League's Most Valuable Player as well. In the 1963 World Series against the New York Yankees, during which he won two games, Koufax set a new World Series record by striking out 15 batters in one game, and was voted the World Series MVP.

For many baseball fans, Koufax's meteoric rise symbolized the coming of age of baseball in the American West. A virtual unknown when the Dodgers moved to California in 1957, Koufax, by the time of his retirement in 1966, was a household name. He had become the greatest pitcher of his era, a baseball celebrity second only perhaps to Willie Mays.

In 1965, despite arthritis in his elbow, Koufax had what many consider the best season any pitcher ever had, leading the major leagues in victories, strikeouts, complete games, innings pitched, and ERA. Then on September 9, 1965, in a game against the Chicago Cubs, he pitched his fourth no-hitter and his first perfect game. Like Willie Mays's over-the-shoulder catch during the 1954 World Series and Bobby Thomson's home run "heard round the world" three years earlier, Koufax's perfect game

would become the moment for which he would be remembered.

And yet, Koufax's contribution to baseball that season cannot be measured by statistics alone. Less than a month after the perfect game, Koufax achieved, as Jane Leavy put it, "another kind of perfection by refusing to pitch the opening game of the World Series because it fell on the holiest day of the Jewish year," Yom Kippur. By refusing to pitch, "Koufax defined himself as a man of prin-

reinforced Jewish pride and enhanced the sense of belonging—a feat as prodigious as any he had accomplished on the baseball field."

So, too, his successful joint salary holdout with his teammate Don Drysdale, in their 1966 preseason contract negotiations with the Dodgers, as several baseball historians have pointed out, was a "transforming event" that paved the way for Marvin Miller's challenge to the reserve clause and the beginning of free agency. In hir-

ing an attorney to bargain for them and in demanding contracts of more than \$100,000 annually—a salary ceiling no player had ever exceeded—Koufax believed they were fighting for a basic principle: "That ball-players aren't slaves, that we have a right to negotiate."

The Dodgers gave in to Koufax's contract demands, and in 1966 he earned \$135,000, the highest salary ever paid a baseball player. That was his last season, and he won 27 games, with a phenomenal 1.73 ERA, and received his third unanimous Cy Young Award, despite the fact that the chronic arthritic condition in his pitching arm that had afflicted him through much of his pitching career had worsened. At season's end, in constant pain and warned by physicians that if he continued pitching he might lose the

use of his left arm, Koufax shocked the baseball world with his announcement that he was retiring at the age of 30.

Today, 45 years after his retirement at the top of his career, Sandy Koufax should be remembered as the last of the greatest pitchers of baseball's golden age. Now 75, Koufax should also be admired for his refusal to pitch on Yom Kippur and his refusal to win the right of a baseball player to negotiate over salary—achievements off the field that have done much to shape his enduring legacy. ♦



A man for all too few seasons

ciple who placed faith above craft." Like Hank Greenberg's similar decision 31 years earlier, this became a defining moment for a new generation of American Jews, and a source of inspiration for Jewish baseball fans. Bruce Lustig, the senior rabbi at the Washington Hebrew Congregation in Washington, D.C., and a fan since childhood, has pointed to Koufax's decision not to pitch "as a transforming event, providing the catalyst" for many Jews "to acknowledge and honor their religion." Koufax's action "both

President Solyndra

And his mean green wealth-wasting machine

BY STEVEN F. HAYWARD

The spectacular collapse of Solyndra has all of the trappings of an epic Washington scandal, with serial revelations of embarrassing and potentially improper White House machinations to secure a \$535 million federal loan guarantee for a startup company with dubious prospects of success. The sudden bankruptcy of the Fremont, California, manufacturer of solar panels—after it was feted as a model creator of “green jobs” by President Obama and Vice President Biden—has already featured FBI raids, contentious congressional hearings, and demands for a special prosecutor to investigate. The plot thickened further last week when Solyndra’s two top executives, who made 20 trips to the White House while their loan application was under consideration, invoked the Fifth Amendment rather than answer questions from the House Energy and Commerce Committee.

Even if the administration eventually escapes any finding of legal wrongdoing, Solyndra threatens to haunt the green energy campaign in much the same way that the collapse of Lincoln Savings became the emblem of the savings and loan industry’s recklessness in the 1980s. The Solyndra story includes Obama campaign donors and everybody’s favorite Wall Street whipping boy, Goldman Sachs, in the middle of the whole sorry mess. Yet it would be a mistake to mark the story down as merely another excrescence of crony capitalism. It is much worse.

The green energy lobby is probably hoping that



Hey, it looks creditworthy to me: Obama tours Solyndra, May 2010.

Solyndra’s failure can be portrayed as an isolated case of illegal influence, lest it cast a shadow over the entire edifice of massive subsidies that green energy requires to survive. But Solyndra is merely the most spectacular of several recent green energy failures. And beyond the domain of green energy, the Solyndra fiasco is emblematic of the Obama administration’s economic philosophy, which harks back to the mid-20th-century hubris of state-planned enterprise. It is also fair to note that the origins of this fiasco predate the Obama administration, and illustrate the continuing incoherence and wishful thinking of U.S. energy policy.

Here’s what we know so far: Solyndra was founded in 2005 on the concept that lightweight, high-efficiency thin-film solar panels in a unique tubular design could compete effectively with traditional silicon-based flat panels. Thin-film solar is the energy equivalent of thin-thigh diets—dazzling results are always promised but seldom delivered. Still, the high price of silicon solar panels at the time, along with \$78 million in initial capital from

several investors, including the Walton family (of Walmart fame) and George Kaiser, an Oklahoma energy billionaire and subsequent donor to the 2008 Obama campaign, were enough to get the company up and running in 2006. At roughly the same time, Congress passed and President George W. Bush signed the Energy Policy Act of 2005, another in a long series of energy acts that essentially gave a little to “all of the above” on everyone’s wish list. One section of the law created a new loan guarantee program in the Department of Energy “to support innovative clean energy technologies that are typically unable to obtain conventional private financing due to high technology risks.” In other words, it was *intended* to back projects too unpromising for the marketplace.

Solyndra came knocking at the DOE’s loan office in December 2006 asking for a loan guarantee to enable it to

Steven F. Hayward is the F.K. Weyerhaeuser fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and the author of the Almanac of Environmental Trends.

build a brand new manufacturing facility in Fremont. (The loan amount requested in the initial application has been redacted from the publicly available documents.) This was only a few weeks after the DOE announced the program but before Congress had appropriated funds and before DOE had even begun the formal rule-making process for the program. DOE didn't issue the final regulations until October 2007, so the due diligence process for Solyndra and every other applicant spilled over into 2008. DOE's main interest with the loan program at that time was in pushing nuclear power technology and improvements to the electricity grid. So Solyndra's application proceeded slowly. Meanwhile, Solyndra raised another \$144 million in private capital during 2008.

In the closing days of the Bush administration in January 2009, the Department of Energy tried to get the Solyndra loan through the Office of Management and Budget's review, but the OMB team found Solyndra's application insufficient. OMB "remanded" the application back to DOE for further review and modification. As when the Supreme Court remands a case to lower courts for reconsideration, this step is usually tantamount to killing the application.

But then along came the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, better known as the Obama stimulus, which put the DOE clean-energy loan guarantee program on steroids. The stimulus nearly doubled the budget authority for loans (even though the existing program had yet to make its first loan), and set a deadline of September 30, 2011, to spend all the program's money. The emphasis now was more on creating jobs than generating energy; the DOE described the amended program as "a temporary program designed to address the current economic conditions of the nation." More than one DOE staffer told me at the time that they didn't know how they were going to be able to spend all the stimulus money being thrown at the department.

Over the next few months, the White House appears to have become intensely interested in the fate of the Solyndra loan guarantee, during which time Solyndra executives and investors made their multiple visits to the White House. In March 2009 DOE granted Solyndra's revised application with a "conditional commitment" for the loan—one of the first out of the chute—which is merely the first hurdle to final approval, even though an OMB staffer wrote in an email that "This deal is NOT ready for prime time." The DOE's credit review board and OMB still had to "score"

Solyndra's business plan again, and were unsatisfied with several aspects of Solyndra's outlook. A few people in the White House had misgivings. Vice President Biden's chief of staff, Ron Klain, noting the DOE's continuing reservations, emailed OMB staff to say, "Can we chat on Monday about the DOE flag in here on Solyndra. . . . If you guys think this is a bad idea, I need to unwind the W[est] W[ing] QUICKLY." One OMB email on March 6 said, "DOE staff just told me that there's a 99 percent certainty that President Obama, on March 19 in California for other reasons, will announce that DOE is offering a loan guarantee to Solyndra. As far as I can tell the obligation won't be entered into until May, but once the President endorses it, I doubt seriously that the Secretary will withdraw for any reason."

OMB continued to push back with complaints about the "time pressure" coming from the White House, leading to "rushed approvals." One OMB staffer said, "I would prefer that this announcement be postponed. . . . This is the first loan guarantee and we should have full review with all hands on deck to make sure we get it right." Even at the time of these email exchanges, DOE staff noted that a credit-rating agency

had warned that Solyndra would run out of cash by September 2011. The email trail makes clear that as the proposed September groundbreaking approached, the White House was interested in the political points they could score with Solyndra. An aide to chief of staff Rahm Emanuel wrote to OMB and DOE on August 11 to say, "As the closing of the Solyndra deal nears, we want to think about the potential announcement value in this." The September 4 date loomed large for the White House because, as the same Emanuel aide emailed on August 25, "It's the same day the unemployment numbers come out, and we'd want to use this as an example where the Recovery Act is helping create new high tech jobs." It appears that the groundbreaking date was moved up from September 8 at the request of the White House for this reason. On the other side of the ledger, by invoking their Fifth Amendment rights against self-incrimination in House hearings, Solyndra's executives no doubt hoped to avoid answering (among other things) pointed questions about whether they sought the administration's involvement in a splashy groundbreaking as a marketing tactic and means of attracting more investors.

The \$535 million loan finally went through on September 2, 2009, just two days before the scheduled groundbreaking for the new plant. Around this same

Energy Secretary Chu showed up at the groundbreaking of Solyndra's new factory, with Vice President Biden putting in an appearance by video link to praise the 'permanent jobs' Solyndra was creating.

time Solyndra attracted another \$219 million from private investors. This, despite the fact that Solyndra had already lost \$558 million in its five-year life, and that PricewaterhouseCoopers had warned that Solyndra “has suffered recurring losses from operations, negative cash flows since inception and has a net stockholders’ deficit that, among other factors, *raise substantial doubt about its ability to continue as a going concern.*” (Emphasis added.) Energy Secretary Stephen Chu showed up at the groundbreaking of Solyndra’s massive 300,000-square-foot, \$344 million factory two days later, with Vice President Biden putting in an appearance by video link to praise the “permanent jobs” Solyndra was creating. Solyndra soon closed its existing manufacturing plant nearby, raising the question of why it had needed to build the new plant in the first place. The existing plant was capable of producing 110 megawatts of panels a year; in 2010 Solyndra sold only 65 megawatts worth of panels. Employees began noticing that unsold solar panels were starting to stack up. “Everyone knew the plant wouldn’t work,” a former Solyndra employee told radio talk host Mark Levin.

Jobs weren’t the only thing Solyndra was creating with its temporarily flush coffers. Former employees told the *Washington Post* about lavish spending for frills such as “a gleaming conference room with glass walls that, with the flip of a switch, turned a smoky gray to conceal the room’s occupants. Hastily purchased state-of-the-art equipment ended up being sold for pennies on the dollar, still in its plastic wrap.” One employee told the *Post* that the massive federal fillip “made people sloppy.” Meanwhile, Solyndra submitted an application for an additional \$469 million from the DOE’s loan guarantee program. According to an SEC filing from Solyndra in 2009, the DOE had given an initial green light for the additional loan. It is not clear when this decision may have been reversed.

President Obama turned up at Solyndra’s new facility in May 2010 with Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger in tow to tout Solyndra as “leading the way toward a brighter and more prosperous future” and pronounce that “the true engine of economic growth will always be

companies like Solyndra.” (The photos of Obama’s visit, once prominent on Solyndra’s website, have now been scrubbed.) While Obama was praising Solyndra as his model of how to create prosperity, behind the scenes Solyndra’s management was looking frantically to find more capital and struggling to sell an uncompetitive product. Solyndra had already canceled plans to go public with a stock offering to raise still more private capital, but managed to raise another \$175 million in private equity. They also began spending more money on Washington lobbyists, in the usual manner of politically tethered businesses. Solyndra’s lobbying expenses jumped from \$160,000 a year in 2008 and 2009 to \$550,000 in 2010 as it ramped up efforts to secure the second loan guarantee.

Red flags began popping up all around both Solyndra and the loan guarantee program. In July 2010 the Government Accountability Office issued a critical report on the program, saying among other things that the DOE had weak controls on the loan evaluation and had taken shortcuts in its approval of several loans. GAO did not single out Solyndra, but congressional investigators say Solyndra is certainly one of them.

By late last year the Obama administration was starting to worry about Solyndra’s prospects and the political fallout to come if Solyndra folded. A January 31, 2011, email from an OMB staff member said presciently: “The optics of a Solyndra default will be bad. . . . The timing will likely coincide with the 2012 campaign season heating up.” Energy officials began sitting in on Solyndra board meetings at some point while various financial restructuring plans were considered. Solyndra continued to tell the White House that things were going well, saying in one email that the company had “good market momentum, the factory is ramping up and our plan puts us at cash positive later this year. Hopefully, we’ll have a great story to tell toward the end of the year.” Greg Nelson, the White House staffer who had been liaison to Solyndra (and who had dismissed pessimistic news stories about Solyndra as “B.S.”), wrote back: “Fantastic to hear that business is doing well—keep up the good work! We’re cheering for you.”

At length the Department of Energy capitulated with a questionable restructuring of the loan guarantee in



Solyndra execs pleading the Fifth, September 23, 2011

NEWS.COM

February of this year that put equity investors ahead of taxpayers in the event of a bankruptcy liquidation, an unorthodox move that may have violated the law. Solyndra argued that the debt subordination was necessary if Solyndra was going to succeed in attracting more private capital. George Kaiser came through with another \$75 million, but it clearly wasn't enough. Solyndra filed for bankruptcy on September 6, laying off nearly its entire workforce of 1,100 employees. A few days later the FBI raided the company's headquarters and the homes of its senior executives. Taxpayers would likely have received more of their money back if the plug had been pulled back in February. An email from an OMB analyst at the time warned, "While the company may avoid default with a restructuring, there is also a good chance it will not. . . . At that point, additional funds have been put at risk, recoveries may be lower, and questions will be asked." As of right now, we're only starting to get the answers.

While there seems little doubt that the White House took an inordinate interest in Solyndra and bigfooted the loan through the DOE, the Solyndra story should be understood more broadly for what it highlights about the economic illiteracy of liberalism today, especially in its "green energy" guise. Already the defenders of "green energy investment" are circling the wagons behind the fact that the Solyndra loan guarantee represents only 1.3 percent of the \$38 billion in federal loan guarantees extended to more than 40 entities, including some large and well-established conventional companies such as Areva (nuclear power), Ford, Sempra, and Valero Energy. But the bulk of the loan guarantees are for renewable energy and politically trendy outfits like Tesla Motors (\$465 million), which is producing a sporty high performance all-electric roadster that you, too, can own for the base sticker price of \$109,000. Tesla went public in 2010, but has yet to make a profit, despite several rounds of additional private capital. Kevin Drum, a defender of the administration, wrote in *Mother Jones*, "There was no scandal in the loan process, and there's nothing unusual about having a certain fraction of speculative programs like this fail. It's all part of the way the free market works." Solyndra may be the only loan to have gone bad so far, but stay tuned.

Quite aside from the issue of how many of the loans end up being squandered is the more fundamental question of why we're doing this on such a scale in the first place. How far we've come since 1979, when there was a serious national debate about whether it was appropriate for the government to provide a mere \$1.5 billion loan guarantee to Chrysler—a legacy company with more plausible prospects for profitability than Solyndra. Opponents argued then that once the government starts backstopping individual businesses, it will undermine the discipline of the marketplace

and create a moral hazard. Now we're bailing out auto companies directly and handing out billions in loan guarantees like Halloween candy to shaky *startups*, with scarcely any debate. Looks like the Chrysler loan critics had a point.

The rationale for the energy loan guarantee—that such "public-private partnerships" reduce risk and catalyze private capital where it otherwise wouldn't go—is probably wrong, and is certainly a less than productive use of private capital. One of the clichés of the green energy economy is that the miracle workers of the Silicon Valley venture capital community would do for energy what they previously did for tech and the Internet. This has proved to be wishful thinking. Daniel Yergin notes in his new blockbuster energy book *The Quest* that the venture capital community's experience in the world of "clean energy" has been bitter: "The general learning for members of the venture community is that energy is a harder road than they had thought from their experience in other sectors."

The "green tech" bubble is already bursting; even the *New York Times* has noticed, with a story in mid-August under the headline "Number of Green Jobs Fails to Live Up to Promises." There are actually fewer "clean tech" jobs in Silicon Valley today than 10 years ago, according to a recent Brookings Institution study. This has to be one of the most unusual bubbles in financial history. The "green energy" bubble is collapsing without the usual intermediate step of creating temporary paper value. In the case of Solyndra, the *Wall Street Journal* reported, the loan guarantee paradoxically made it *harder* for the company to attract private capital. Large government loans that ordinarily take priority in the event of failure deter many investors from participating. Meanwhile, the story of George Kaiser is becoming all too typical. Kaiser made much of his fortune in fossil fuels, natural gas in particular. Now he's squandered a portion of his assets on a green energy whim that is unproductively gobbling up lots of capital from lots of seemingly smart people.

The China card is the next fallback. China is massively investing in solar panel manufacturing, but the simple silicon flat panel design rather than expensive thin-film. It was costing Solyndra about \$4 a watt to manufacture its thin-film panels, while Chinese and other U.S. manufacturers such as First Solar were selling traditional solar panels for as little as 75 cents a watt. Not surprisingly the Chinese are starting to grab global market share. Hence the answer from liberals in the wake of the Solyndra debacle is—more subsidies for domestic solar! Solyndra is not the first solar company to bow to Chinese competition. Evergreen Solar in Massachusetts closed its facility in the Bay State and planned to relocate to China, despite receiving \$58 million in aid from

the state of Massachusetts. But Evergreen Solar filed for bankruptcy on August 15. The truth is China will always be able to make solar panels (and wind turbines) more cheaply than U.S. manufacturers for the same reason they make iPods and iPads more cheaply than we can: low-cost labor and more access to raw materials. U.S. manufacturers can never hope to compete with these factors, or we'd still be making TVs.

The shame of it is that the Obama administration could point to more promising initiatives in energy if it had the wit, especially the ARPA-E (Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy, modeled after the Pentagon's legendary Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency) unit of the Department of Energy. ARPA-E is intended to conduct research into ways of overcoming the formidable technical barriers necessary to make alternative energy sources from batteries to biofuels scalable at a reasonable price. Like DARPA, ARPA-E is exempt from the usual civil service bureaucracy (and things like Davis-Bacon rules) to allow it to be nimble in ways that are exceedingly rare in the federal government. ARPA-E was set up by legislation passed in 2007, but wasn't funded until 2009. ARPA-E's total budget was only \$400 million in its first year—less than the Solyndra loan. But the thing to note

is that research efforts like ARPA-E aren't about creating jobs, green or otherwise, which is why the agency has been of little interest to the White House. It is meant to expand our base of technical knowledge, leading to new and better options in the future.

But since that future is open-ended and unpredictable, it won't arrive before the next election cycle, and it doesn't offer rewards for political supporters. American energy policy ought to be about generating the amount of energy we need and the kinds of energy we want, rather than being treated as a jobs program. By thinking themselves able to force the market, Obama and his liberal cheerleaders are achieving neither objective. Taxpayers are likely to be out nearly the entire \$535 million of the loan, but private investors may lose close to \$700 million—money that might have created real jobs had they resisted the green-jobs siren song emanating from Washington.

The Solyndra bankruptcy, alas, is not an outlier but a harbinger. This is the kind of economic calamity we will see more of unless the Obama administration sheds its ideological blinders—or until it leaves office. Meanwhile, capital will continue to be misallocated through perverse incentives and outright political favoritism, and large amounts of patiently acquired wealth will be wiped out. ♦



Waterfront Estate Approximately 9 acre, 8,000 square feet, 5 bedroom/baths. Separate guest house ready to finish. 6 car garage. Pier, gazebo, 1,00 feet of shore near historic St. Marys City \$1,195,000.00



Waterfront Peninsula is a historic home including 4 bedrooms, 2 1/2 baths, master suite on the first level. Also several fireplaces, guest house, 4 car garage, 17 acres. Over 2,000 feet of shore. Deep water and private dock. \$975,000



Custom Home All brick, including 4 bedroom and baths, 2-story, great room, foyer, first floor bedroom with bath. Over 5,000 square feet. Like new, 2 acres, 5 car garage, private pier with a ramp on point of land. \$879,000

Approximately 1 Hour Commute to DC, Public Transportation



Custom Home In Solomon's Island area. All brick, including 4 bedrooms and baths, 2-story, great room, foyer, first floor bedroom with bath. Over 5,000 square feet. Like new, 2 acres, 5 car garage, private pier with a ramp on point of land. \$879,000



Delightful and Charming The home includes 40 X 40 great room, stone fireplace/flooring. Master suite on the first floor, 2 other suites on 2nd floor with loft all leading to a balcony with great views. 2 car garage, pier with approximately 2 acres. \$745,000



Contemporary Magnificent with approximately 5,000 square feet. Easy flow for entertaining. You have a view of the water from all rooms and a 4-car garage with apartment. Five wooded acres, easy access to private pier with running water and electric. \$795,000

Elda Branham
301-863-0211 • Toll Free 1-800-332-ELDA
www.eldabranham.com • eldabranham@remax.net



RE/MAX 100
For immediate response call my cell phone 301-502-2161
CALVERT - CHARLES - ST. MARY'S COUNTY

The People, No

Egypt's populist problem

BY JAMES KIRCHICK

Cairo

On September 9, a mob of Egyptian protesters stormed the Israeli embassy here, necessitating the emergency evacuation of the ambassador, most of his staff, and their families. The attack represents a significant downturn in relations between Egypt and the Jewish state, a relationship that was bound to get more complicated when President Hosni Mubarak—steadfast American ally and mainstay of a three-decade cold peace with Israel—stepped down on February 11 in response to massive protests and pressure from the military.

The military rulers who succeeded Mubarak would not pick up the phone calls of frantic Israeli officials until President Barack Obama—at the urgent request of Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu—intervened. This matters because it is the army—recipient of more than \$1 billion in annual American aid, overseer of the country, upholder of the Camp David accords—whose interests, at least according to conventional wisdom, require it to prevent conflict with Israel.

I received a foretaste of the attacks in late August, when I attended a protest at the Israeli embassy. The demonstration was ostensibly a reaction to Israel's counterterror raid in the Sinai Peninsula several days earlier, which had unintentionally left several Egyptian border guards dead. Two things struck me about the demonstration. The first was that the vast majority of the protesters were not Islamic extremists, but precisely the sort of young, middle-class, Twittering revolutionaries who had taken to Tahrir Square earlier in the year demanding liberal reforms. The "new" Egypt they want is one which seeks confrontation with Israel. The second thing that struck me was that there was no military presence outside the embassy. It was only a matter of time, I thought, before the embassy was besieged, as happened just two weeks later.

Even if there is broad agreement in Egypt that the Camp David treaty should be amended, Egypt's liberals and Islamists have competing visions for the future of

their country, which will determine the upcoming parliamentary and presidential elections. But much of the groundwork for the post-Mubarak order has already been set, and the emerging picture is not reassuring to those wishing to see a secular, democratic, liberal Egypt at peace with its neighbors and itself. On a whole host of issues—from containing Iran to the advancement of liberal values in the Arab world, as well as peace with Israel—the situation in Egypt today is a far cry from the high expectations so many had invested in it after the revolution.

Essam el-Erian is the most charismatic man I've met in Egypt. A senior leader of the Muslim Brotherhood who was imprisoned eight times by the Mubarak regime, Erian is the vice president of the Freedom and Justice party, the nominally independent faction running in the parliamentary elections as a Brotherhood front. Typically characterized as a "reformist," Erian seems to fit the bill, telling me that "all Egyptians are invited now in building the country" and dispelling any notion I might have that Egypt will ever become a "clerical regime."

There are signs pointing to a massive Brotherhood electoral victory. In the 2005 parliamentary elections, when they were under significant repression, the Brotherhood's candidates won a respectable 20 percent of the seats. Now that the organization is free to campaign, estimates that many liberals offer of a 20 to 25 percent Brotherhood share of the vote seem optimistically small.

Reformist or otherwise, Erian and the group for which he speaks have a disquieting vision of the future, and his views on regional politics pose a defiant challenge to the American-led order. "The Iranian regime says all the time it wants nuclear knowledge for peaceful issues. And I trust this," he tells me. When I say that other Arab governments have long warned about an Iranian nuclear weapons program, and that those concerns were seen most clearly in diplomatic cables released via WikiLeaks last year, he suggests that these were not authentic documents but forgeries orchestrated by "the West to isolate Iran." As for Hamas, the State Department-listed terrorist organization is, according to Erian, "a resistance group fighting for freedom and liberation of their lands from occupation."

Some in America and Europe argue that the seed for

James Kirchick is writer at large with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, based in Prague.

the Arab Spring was planted with the Iraq war, which created the space for the first free elections in the Arab world. Erian agrees that Iraq played a role in Egypt's revolution, but he sees it differently. "The failure of importing democracy in Iraq after the invasion and the millions killed by Americans and the torture of people in Abu Ghraib was a very big and strong message to the Arab world to revolt," he told me, turning the premise of my question on its head. The ongoing revolts, while ostensibly directed at Arab leaders, he says, have really been pointed towards "the overwhelming strategy of America in the region." When I ask him what that strategy is, he lists three tenets. "Support [for] dictatorships. Having oil at low prices. Supporting Israel."

The Brotherhood, long held up by Mubarak as the bogeyman that would rule the country should he be deposed, seems at first

to have been taken by surprise by the uprising that toppled the former Egyptian president. Yet that has hardly stopped the organization from asserting itself, to the consternation of the liberals who believe, correctly, that they were the ones who brought down Mubarak.

In late July, tens of thousands of Islamists held a demonstration in Tahrir Square calling for an Islamic state. It was the biggest protest by far since the initial ones in late January and early February. In addition to the Brotherhood, the other major faction in the square that day were Salafists, more overtly extreme Islamists who reject the Brotherhood's preferred strategy of a patient and nonviolent approach to establishing a Muslim state. Salafists are not organized under one banner, though at least one official Salafist party, El Nour ("Light"), will be competing in the elections. They will cooperate with the Brotherhood in parliament, adding to the Islamists' collective electoral strength.

"The traditional thinking in the Muslim Brotherhood is close to being a more conservative state, not like the Iranian model but not also a model like Turkey, something in between," Abou Elela Mady, a former Brotherhood member who is now leader of the relatively moderate Islamist El Wasat ("Center") party, told me.

Mady left the Brotherhood 17 years ago because he dis-

agreed with its "mixing" the "preaching job and political job." This critique has become more pronounced in the wake of the Brotherhood's formal entry into politics, with the most vocal, internal critics found amongst its youth wing. They speak of a group that polices its ranks in a highly authoritarian manner, which doesn't bode well for how it might govern the country. Mohamed el-Kassas is another critic. A thirtysomething businessman who joined the Brotherhood as a college student, he was expelled from the organization earlier this year after he advocated that members be allowed to join political parties other than the Brotherhood's front group. Kassas is now trying to form his own party, which would keep religion and politics separate. Like many, he praises Turkey as an example of the sort of Muslim democracy Egypt might become. "I believe in a civil state, secular democracy, modernization.

But at the end," he says, "you have to remember that we respect religion."



Protesters attack a wall surrounding the Israeli embassy in Cairo.

While the Brotherhood's quest for power has disappointed some of its members, it's unlikely to play any significant role in weakening the organization as a force in Egyptian politics. After all, political power is what it has

always sought. It's doubtful that the number of members who have left the organization in frustration over its hegemonic intentions is significant. And whatever numbers the Brotherhood has lost as a result of its aggressive politicking, it has more than made up for them through the establishment of the National Democratic Alliance for Egypt, an electoral coalition of over 30 parties, including one of the most prominent liberal parties in the country, El Ghad.

That El Ghad ("Tomorrow") has entered into an alliance with the Brotherhood will probably discomfit some of the Western observers who have long admired its leader, Ayman Nour, a former member of the Egyptian parliament who challenged Mubarak for the presidency in 2005 and whose subsequent imprisonment made him a cause célèbre. But Nour has always been a skilled political operator, and sees his electoral fortunes as being boosted by riding the coattails of the Brotherhood.

I met with Nour in his elegant, wood-paneled office, which sits above the popular Groppi café and patisserie in downtown Cairo. A large man with jet-black hair and an infectious smile, he sits behind a big wooden desk. It is late in the evening, and political office hours are being extended because of the daylong Ramadan fast. A line of people are waiting to see him in the lobby of his office; the whole affair has the whiff of the ward-heeling, local party boss.

When I ask Nour what is the biggest problem facing Egypt, he laughs. “What problem isn’t facing Egypt?” Like most of the secular political leaders in the country, he’s light on the details of economic policy, and his rhetoric heads in a populist direction. He believes in “free markets” but also that the “government should take the side of poor people.” One way to boost the economy, he says, would be to increase tourism from Iran. Egypt has not had relations with the Islamic Republic since 1979 when its revolutionary government cut ties to protest Cairo’s recognition of Israel. While wariness towards Iran’s Shiite clerical regime is widespread in Egypt, the end of the Mubarak era has already seen a shift in Egyptian foreign policy. Perhaps most significantly, Cairo brokered a reconciliation deal between the rival Palestinian factions, emboldening the Iranian-backed Hamas. In March, the Egyptian foreign minister met in Cairo with Iran’s chargé d’affaires, pledging to open a “new page” with the Islamic Republic.

Nour tells me that Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has twice invited him to visit Iran since the revolution, but that he has declined both invitations, “not only because I’m busy now but because I believe there are steps in relations.” Nour is well aware of the good reputation he has in the West and would not want to risk being portrayed as an Iranian stooge. Nonetheless, he is a sharp critic of American Middle East policy. From his perspective, Washington, however well-intentioned, has perpetually made the wrong decisions by backing autocratic governments in the Arab world. “If the Americans from the very beginning took the path of justice, they wouldn’t need to pay all this money in Iraq, because they didn’t choose the principles,” he says.

A press conference in August announcing the formation of the “Egyptian Bloc,” an alliance of 15 secular parties, ranging from liberal to socialist to union groups, underscored a fundamental problem with the secularists and liberals—they are too dispersed. On the surface, the explosion of political parties since the liberalization of the country’s electoral law has been a positive step; but it has also exposed the fissures and narcissism of Egypt’s liberals. Many secularists wave off this concern. “It is impossible to have a smaller number [of parties] after a revolution,” Ehab El Kharrat of the Social Democrats assures me. “The Spanish had 140 parties after the fall of Franco.”

That may be the case, but while there are a wide variety of options through which non-Islamist Egyptians can dilute their electoral power, Islamists will mostly be voting for one party: Freedom and Justice.

It has been said that Egypt is a “military with a country.” Through vast land holdings and ownership stakes in private industries, the army is believed to control, formally and informally, some 40 percent of the economy, extending everywhere from agricultural production to kitchen appliances. The military’s primary concern right now is to preserve its station in Egypt. In order to do so, it must remain committed to upholding a widely disliked peace treaty, which renders its widespread popularity something of a paradox.

The respect that most Egyptians hold for the military is predicated upon the heroic narrative constructed around it, namely, the myth of the 1973 defeat of Israel. However, since taking power earlier this year, the army has arrested and tried over 12,000 people in military tribunals, more than the number of civilians put before military courts throughout the whole 30-year period of Mubarak’s rule. Still, Field Marshal Mohamed Tantawi, the country’s de facto ruler as chairman of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), has a 45 percent favorability rating among Egyptians—higher than the 38 percent registered for the April 6 Youth Movement (which led the anti-Mubarak protests) or the 37 percent for the Muslim Brotherhood.

Rumors regarding a behind-the-scenes deal between the Brotherhood and the military abound in Cairo, premised mostly on the fact that both supported a March constitutional referendum that called for an accelerated election schedule. Such a prospect is not inconceivable. The idea is that the military will cede domestic politics to the Brotherhood, which will in turn allow the generals to maintain control over foreign affairs and their vast economic assets.

The reality is that the military has already softened in its approach to the Islamists whom it once portrayed as threatening Egyptian stability. Since February, the army has gradually released over 100 Islamist prisoners. Many of these men are members of the Salafist organization al-Gamaa al-Islamiyya (“the Islamic Group”), believed to have played an ancillary role in former Egyptian president Anwar Sadat’s 1981 assassination, and responsible for over 1,000 terrorist attacks in the 1990s, including an attempt on Mubarak’s life. Some 25,000 of its members were imprisoned during the Mubarak era. While the release of Islamists from prison may appear to represent some sort of *modus vivendi* between the military and religious extremists, it is merely a continuation of a policy

adopted during the late Mubarak years, when thousands of Islamist prisoners were sprung from jail provided they renounce violence.

Nageh Ibrahim was a founding member of al-Gamaa al-Islamiyya, and was sentenced to jail in 1984 for his role in the Sadat assassination. A dermatologist by training, he has written over two dozen books about religion. While in prison, he was one of the leading figures to argue that the group should adopt nonviolence as a strategy. The gambit worked, and in 2003, the Egyptian government released 900 of its members from jail. In 2006, after serving more than two decades in prison, Ibrahim walked free.

Today, Ibrahim lives in the ancient city of Alexandria, about a five-hour drive north of Cairo on the Mediterranean. I met with him in the living room of his high-rise apartment, where he reiterated his organization's denunciation of violence.

"Killing civilians is *haram* (illegal)," he says. "Killing children *haram*, killing women *haram*, killing civilians *haram*," he adds for emphasis. He cites the seventh-century Medina Charter, the constitution drafted by Muhammad that granted rights to non-Muslims, as an example of Islam's tolerant foundations. He even goes so far as to say that religious minorities would have more freedom in a proper Islamic state than they do in secular ones. "Secularism gives one law that everyone should obey," he says, whereas "Islam is more flexible" in making allowances for various religious practices that liberal societies might proscribe. There should be "no compulsion in religion," he says, and no woman should be forced to wear the *hijab*. But he doesn't think Christians (who represent about 10 percent of the population) should be allowed to become president of Egypt. When I press him on this, he responds politely, "In France, have you ever heard of a Muslim ruling, or in Britain a Muslim ruling? Even in the United States, no Catholic ruled except Kennedy, and he was killed."

Putting aside his peculiar interpretation of the Kennedy assassination, Ibrahim offered, to my surprise, some of the most reasonable words about Egypt's relationship with Israel. "Some left-wingers and socialists and Nasserites say all the problems we have now are because of Camp David," he said. "This is totally wrong. For example, Israel signed Camp David and that caused progress in the industry and science fields. Our collapsing is not because of Camp David. It's because of dictatorship, which was before and after Camp David." As this is an Islamist talking, it's unclear whether he's sincere or has tailored his position to what he thinks an American journalist wants to hear. But it was certainly more reasonable than what the secular youth trying to destroy the wall outside the Israeli embassy were shouting.

It is to be expected that in a post-revolutionary atmosphere political factions will make appeals to "the people," a phrase I hear from the mouths of Islamists and liberals alike.

One of the more heartening aspects of the debate in Egypt is that political leaders, at least in theory, are trying to speak to the nation as a whole, not to narrow constituencies. The secular parties go out of their way to express their respect for Islam, and stress that they have no intention of removing it from the public and cultural life of Egypt. The Muslim Brotherhood's ostensible moderation suggests they recognize that many Egyptians are wary of their project and are therefore engaging in the sort of compromise that political parties in all mature democracies must undertake.

But there's a negative side to this constant rhetoric of "the people," which is that deference to popular will can lead to mob rule. Some participants in the storming of the Israeli embassy, according to a recent Voice of America story, contended that the "security forces in front of the embassy should not have intervened to protect it, because it is the people's will to tear down the wall." That is, for a government truly to be "governing in the name of the people," it must do whatever "the people" requires of it. This is so if it means answering to the demands of a violent mob and contravening international law stipulating that it is the Egyptian government's duty to protect the sovereign Israeli territory that is the Israeli embassy in Cairo.

Few Egyptians seem seriously to advocate war against the Jewish state. For its part, the Freedom and Justice party condemned the attacks on the embassy, stressing that Egyptians "must learn to differentiate between condemning Israeli actions and destroying property and attacking security forces." But what if a nonviolent majority of the Egyptian people wants their government to end its diplomatic relations with Israel? There are other steps, far short of war, that Egypt can take to frustrate bilateral relations. In response to popular sentiment, Egypt could gradually reduce its security cooperation with Israel, leading the way to increased weapons smuggling to Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Closer relations with Iran, right when Washington is trying to isolate Tehran, would seriously damage American interests across the region.

Egyptians feel that theirs is a great nation whose full potential as a regional power has been repeatedly squandered by venal leaders. It is too soon to say what role post-Mubarak Egypt will play in the Middle East, but the events outside its neighbor's embassy do not augur well. As any honest appraisal of the region will confirm, far worse outcomes have been borne of revolution. ♦



Robert Strauss and Anwar Sadat (1979)

Paging Mr. Inside

How Bob Strauss operated without drawing blood. BY ROBERT W. MERRY

When John Connally became governor of Texas in 1963 he quickly sought to get his own man on the state Banking Board. He chose Robert Strauss, then a prominent Dallas lawyer and civic leader (and, not coincidentally, a close Connally ally). But Strauss didn't want the job and demurred in his characteristic "aw shucks" manner, followed by a "why me?" protestation. He said he wasn't qualified because he was completely unschooled in banking matters. When Connally insisted, his friend dutifully accepted the appointment.

Then he distinguished himself on

Robert W. Merry, former CEO of Congressional Quarterly, is the author, most recently, of A Country of Vast Designs: James K. Polk, the Mexican War and the Conquest of the American Continent.

The Whole Damn Deal
Robert Strauss and the Art of Politics
 by Kathryn J. McGarr
 Public Affairs, 480 pp., \$29.99

the board while deftly protecting the governor's interests. Following his departure, he also parlayed his newly developed expertise—and his now-strong connections with former board colleagues, who doled out bank charters—into a highly successful private venture. He helped found a Texas bank, served as its board chairman, then cashed out nicely when it was sold a decade later for nearly \$13 million.

This obscure anecdote encapsulates the Bob Strauss who later became famous as one of the most adept Washington operators of his generation. Seldom did he let any learning experience go to waste. Brilliantly effective in multifarious civic capacities, he also

managed to keep a close eye on opportunities to serve his own interests. Along the way he demonstrated an uncanny ability to hold political sway over contingents large and small through a combination of human insight and a rare charm fueled by a steady stream of self-effacing humor and disarming candor.

Those traits served him well in Texas and propelled him to stardom in Washington, where he served as treasurer of the Democratic National Committee, then DNC chairman, U.S. special trade representative, special envoy in the Middle East, and ambassador to the Soviet Union. In between these stints he led one of the capital's most prestigious and innovative law firms, the same firm he had created as a two-man enterprise back in Dallas in 1945.

Now we have a biography as charming as its subject. Kathryn J. McGarr is a blood relative of Strauss—the granddaughter of his brother—and she ren-

TIME & LIFE PICTURES / GETTY IMAGES

ders her portrait with manifest affection for her Uncle Bob. Yet, acknowledging that readers might “rightly doubt” her objectivity, she avers that she has tried to be “overly skeptical” in her assessments. Indeed, she deals head-on with his “enormous ego,” his rotations between government jobs and law firm activities designed to influence the government, and his occasionally blithe attitude toward the arcana of campaign finance law—including a possible federal indictment that seemingly was thwarted only by the statute of limitations.

McGarr even notes rumors of a possible affair between her great uncle and Pamela Harriman (which Harriman biographers have dismissed). Strauss himself responded to the whispers by suggesting wryly that, given a choice between having a secret affair with Harriman or merely having untrue rumors of an affair spread throughout Washington, he would unhesitatingly choose the latter as a greater contributor to his image.

Though spiced liberally with such amusing asides, McGarr’s biography is fundamentally an exploration of Washington’s power interrelationships and political culture from a bygone day, not long ago but seemingly far away. Strauss, writes McGarr, represents an “era of civilized politics when Republicans and Democrats worked together to get things done, when they could do so without fear of retribution by their constituents, and when politicians had close friendships with the press.” Strauss thrived in that environment and personified some of its best elements.

He was born in 1918 in Lockhart, Texas, and grew up in nearby Stamford, population about 3,000, where the elder Strauss ran a dry goods store. The Strauss family was one of only two Jewish families in town, and they experienced little difficulty in assimilating into the largely Baptist population. Young Bob regularly attended events of the Baptist Young People’s Union, though it was determined that as a non-Baptist he could not serve as president. In later years, Strauss insisted he would have been elected overwhelmingly if allowed to run.

Small and no athlete, he also was a

lousy student. But Strauss’s compelling personality and quick wit lifted him into the upper reaches of popularity. Later, at the University of Texas, he joined one of the Jewish fraternities, served as its president, and represented it on the Inter-Fraternity Council, where he became secretary-treasurer. He got to know just about everyone of consequence on campus and, as chairman of ticket sales for a big fraternity dance, demonstrated the fundraising skills for which he later would become famous.

After service in the FBI during World War II, Strauss decided to create his own Dallas law practice, largely because his mediocre law school grades precluded entry into the city’s prestigious firms. He and a law school acquaintance named Dick Gump started with small clients and concentrated on house-sale contracts (\$10), wills (\$10), and divorces (\$50). They bought \$2,000 worth of law books with \$200 down and \$25 in monthly payments. As Strauss later recalled, they had a secretary who earned \$60 a month and was drunk most of the time.

But Strauss had an instinct for talent, and soon he recruited some highly effective lawyers who brought in big-time clients. As he said years later, demonstrating his acute self-awareness, “I never was the world’s greatest lawyer. I could always make a noise like a lawyer at anything I handled. I was a quick study . . . not very deep.” He served as the firm’s “people person.”

He also served as its “outside man,” representing the firm in a host of civic activities: president of Goodwill Industries in Dallas, as well as the Arthritis and Rheumatism Foundation and the Visiting Nurses Association, director of the Community Chest and Red Cross, president of the prestigious Dallas Club, director of numerous local corporations. Inevitably, these activities and the associations they fostered led to politics, an area of endeavor he found much to his liking.

By 1968 he had become his state’s Democratic committeeman and also served as Texas finance chairman for Hubert Humphrey’s presidential campaign. Now he was positioned to play a

significant role in national Democratic politics. Dick West of the *Dallas Morning News* called him “one of the most powerful party leaders in America,” and Robert Novak wrote that “more than any other single Democrat, Strauss was responsible for Humphrey’s carrying Texas last November.” Strauss was learning the art of media relations, whereby the distribution of inside information yields plenty of good ink.

The Democratic party was in bad shape after the 1968 campaign, nearly \$9 million in debt. A groundswell emerged for naming Strauss party treasurer, and even some liberals joined the call despite Strauss’s centrist image. He got the job and what he called a “\$9 million hangover.” On the day he started work, a party official called to say that he had \$11,000 in the bank and a \$31,000 payroll due on Monday. But Strauss brought to the challenge his well-known passion for accomplishment wrapped in his characteristic bonhomie. One assistant recalled, “I never saw the man in a bad mood.”

He was known to call total strangers with this message: “Listen, you’ve got so much money you can’t even cover it up. . . . Give us some.” A DNC staffer explained to the *New York Times*, “He does it in such a way that the guy on the other end is laughing his head off.” A party official added, “When Strauss goes to work on you, you know you’re being hustled, and you know he knows you know it. But he’s such a funny character, you both end up enjoying it.” At one particularly successful fundraising dinner, Strauss brought down the house by declaring, “We look rich enough to be Republicans tonight.”

Party finances improved, but the party itself descended into a maelstrom of dysfunction and rancor, due largely to liberal reformers bent on redefining it. It couldn’t even manage a convention efficiently, as manifest in the 1972 Miami Beach fiasco, when floor chaos delayed George McGovern’s acceptance speech until after most Americans had gone to bed. On his flight home Strauss vowed to his wife that he was going to “get control of the Democratic Party, throw these bastards out and put this party back together and elect a president.”

Putting himself forward for chairman, he emerged as the frontrunner. Still, he encountered opposition from liberal reformers. Journalist Nicholas von Hoffman called him “the Babbitt-brained Texas agent of John Connally and the oil interests,” but the majority ultimately concluded that Strauss, while a conservative, was the man to reunite the party.

That conciliation effort proved harrowing. He was elected primarily through the strong support of organized labor, particularly the AFL-CIO and its political director, Al Barkan. Barkan wanted to smite the reformers with 51 percent victories whenever possible. But while Strauss appreciated labor’s support and generally sympathized with its outlook, his goal was the 80 percent consensus. That meant labor had to give—which meant, in turn, that Strauss found himself in endless efforts of cajolery.

The immediate challenge was in putting together a slate of executive committee members, to be named by Strauss and approved by the overall DNC. Barkan wanted the slate to be far more heavily tilted toward conservatives than Strauss considered prudent. Instructive was the chairman’s response to a young staffer’s complaints about the late Alan Baron, a party busybody and ardent reformer whose persistent politicking riled many conservatives. If you want to position yourself in the middle, replied Strauss, you have to have both a left and a right.

“Son,” he added, “if Alan Baron didn’t exist, we’d have to invent him.”

Ultimately, Strauss presented his slate with these words: “I remain committed to the proposition that our conservatives are not bigots, our business community is not evil, that our young are not irresponsible, that our minorities are not selfish, our liberals are not foolish, and that our Democratic Party is not leaderless or without purpose.” Strauss’s slate passed unanimously, marking him as the quintessential win-win politician, a man who could find the ground upon which nearly all factions could stand.

Strauss delivered to the 1976 national convention a new party ready to wage a strong presidential campaign. No one missed the symbolism that the conven-

tion unfolded like clockwork; there were no speeches in the middle of the night. When Georgia’s Jimmy Carter got the presidential nomination, Strauss promptly told him, “I am not the head of this party anymore. You are.”

Indeed, Strauss ingratiated himself with Carter so thoroughly that the new president considered him indispensable. And Strauss’s unrelenting humor even rubbed off a bit on the usually sober-sided Georgian, who took to asking Strauss when calling him at six in the morning: “Are you drunk or sober?” The special trade job was a natural for Strauss, who charged into the multinational trade negotiations under the so-called Tokyo Round, involving tariff and other trade issues with a host of nations. Over two and a half years he negotiated and then successfully lobbied Congress for approval of the Trade Agreements Act of 1979 and brought to the challenge, as McGarr puts it, “bluster, arm-twisting, sweet-talking, and the business and political tactics that he had been honing all his life.” Strauss later served Carter in a host of ways, acquiring a reputation as the president’s Mr. Fix-It. His final assignment was as chairman of Carter’s unsuccessful reelection campaign.

It was George H. W. Bush who called

on Strauss to serve as ambassador to the Soviet Union. This was an unconventional selection for a post normally held by career diplomats and learned Soviet experts. But most Washington bigwigs hailed the choice as inspired in the era of perestroika. (In the event, Strauss arrived in Moscow in the midst of a coup attempt against Mikhail Gorbachev.) As events unfolded, usually with Strauss playing an adroit diplomatic role, he became the last American ambassador to the Soviet Union and the first to the new Russian Federation.

Kathryn McGarr brings sprightly writing and strong narrative drive to her tale, which represents a valuable contribution to the ledger of Washington life in the waning decades of the 20th century. As for Strauss, he now approaches his 93rd birthday. His wife of almost 65 years, Helen, who traveled with him extensively throughout the country and the world, and provided sound advice on people and politics, died in 2006. Throughout his quarter-century on the Washington scene, Strauss clearly was a man of his time and milieu: more powerful than many, more effective than most, and more amusing and heartwarming than just about anybody. He operated in a time that is long gone now, but well worth remembering. ♦



Natural Harmony

The complex prettiness of Japanese art.

BY EVE TUSHNET

The idea that Japanese culture has a unique sensitivity to the seasons has been warped by repetition. It’s easy for Westerners to see a title such as the one for this show and imagine a room of hotel-wall pictures, delicate and meticulous—and utterly nonthreatening. The Met’s ads reinforce the cliché: Oh look,

Eve Tushnet is a writer in Washington.

A Sensitivity to the Seasons
Summer and Autumn in Japanese Art
Metropolitan Museum of Art

a branch of morning glories! How *pretty!*

But when you get up close, in person, those purple blossoms are more like an attack of morning glories. Suzuki Kiitsu’s 19th-century screen dominates one big wall of the exhibit.

Huge royal-blue flowers seem to glow from within, on a gilt background whose negative space is as powerful as the fleshy flowers themselves. These are morning glories that look like they could eat small animals.

And while some of the show's other artworks are graceful and quiet, even pretty, the curators have put together a show which looks at many of the shifting moods of nature, and human interactions with the natural world, to which we belong only uneasily.

"A Sensitivity to the Seasons" covers several centuries, and does not proceed in chronological order. It opens in the late 19th century, with Shibata Zeshin's decorated black lacquered boxes, which bear images of summer and autumn fruits. These luminescent, highly stylized fruits seem to float in space: spare, stark, modern images which wouldn't be out of place at an especially design-conscious casino. There's no attempt at realism.

The practical character of many of these items—dinner sets, summer or autumn robes—combines with their elaborate decoration to provoke questions about art-making. A robe patterned with grapes twining on a fence is reminiscent of the Magritte painting in which a painting of a window stands in front of the window itself. But why do we feel as though depicting nature is at least as important as experiencing it? The experience doesn't quite feel real until it has been depicted, and so we're invited to contemplate screens in which a small scholar wanders along mountain paths, contemplating. A man in a robe depicting the harvest moon sits in a field under the harvest moon. Although human life and culture are seamlessly integrated into nature in many of these portrayals—a gourd has become a wineskin, millet rises in swaying, cultivated ranks, a bird perches on lantern strings—the show accurately presents humans' art-provoking alienation from nature.

The show captures nature's gentle moods: Shibata Zeshin's "Autumn Grasses in Moonlight" shows a dark scene, momentarily still, with oversized insects (to evoke their sounds) against a giant full moon. Another full moon, this time on a box for writing paper, is raked by gilt clouds; gilt grasses shiver below, delicate, unprotected, and chased by the wind. But there are also moments of small violence, hinting at the nature that is "red in tooth and claw." "Rooster in a Storm" shows



'Persimmon Tree' by Sakai Hōitsu (1816)

its bedraggled protagonist bowing his head and bracing against the weather. "Birds Pursued by an Eagle" is a kinetic painting in which an eagle swoops down on a swan while other, smaller birds whirl and scatter away from the central drama of predator and prey. And in almost all of these artworks, the use of intense color and dramatic negative space conveys a sense of the size and power of nature, a sense that the natural world is a world of sharp contrasts, not always hospitable.

Many of the pieces are simply breathtaking, like the "Summer Kimono with Carp, Water Lilies, And Morning Glories" on which the blossoms float and drift through a heaven-blue, light-streaked expanse, alongside subtly colored shimmering koi. Sakai Hōitsu's "Persimmon Tree," in streaky gray with

rich red fruit, shows the tree like a skeleton under a horizonless blank sky. It's melancholic and compelling, with precisely curling leaves, like a giant praying mantis clutching the fruit.

And the moods of the humans participating in (and creating) these scenes change as well. There are flights of pure fantasy, like the charming "Pieces from a Robe (Kosode) with Islands" from the 18th century. Pink grasses and houses populate islands floating on a sky-blue and turquoise sea, all cupcake colors and glittery gold. There are those tiny scholars, dwarfed by the great mountains lost in mist. There are the melty, fleshy shapes of Fukuda Kodōjin's 20th-century "Landscape," whose tiered, swirling, surrealist shapes disorientingly reject realistic perspective.

There are the humorous panels of Kitagawa Utamarō's "Enjoying the Cool Evening Breeze On and Under the Bridge," whose comic-book conceit is that the people in each of the six panels are watching people in one of the other panels. The artist pokes gentle fun at the expense of these nosy, familiar characters. There's even a scroll with acrobats riding bears! Something for everyone.

The Met presents this show as an introduction to one swath of Japanese aesthetics. Its captions emphasize the pervasive Chinese influence, and the interweaving of visual art and poetry. Captions note the association of certain images with moods: Quail apparently evoke isolation, for example, even when they appear in basically agricultural, and therefore implicitly social, scenes. Although it's not easy to enter into contemplation in a major New York museum—amid hallway chatter, clicking cameras, and the guard's low sing-song warning, "Noooooo video!"—this exhibit's smallish, slightly darkened rooms work hard to provide something approximating solitude.

Near the exit we get still more morning glories. These are from the 18th century, by Tawaraya Sōri, and the negative

space here is even more imposing than in the Suzuki. The flowers unfurl from their tendrils at the outer edges of the big, pale screen, like astronauts venturing from the safety of their shuttle. The colors are not as battering as Suzuki's—

more muted and dusky—but the overall impact is still intensely dramatic. Japanese art, like nature itself, can be quite pretty. But as this show proves, even a flower on a trellis can inspire awe if you look at it the right way. ♦

BCA

Seriously Flawed

When a cultural critic doesn't quite comprehend Culture. BY ALEC MOUHIABIAN

Judging from old people I know, the question of seriousness used to be far more important than it is today. Those of us in the perpetual age of pre-old are more likely to divide our friends and relations into categories of “racist” or “black,” “sexist” or “good-looking,” fun or boring, (politically) dumb or okay, than to think of them as either serious or unserious. I suspect the urge to make something lasting of life meets the same number of us it always has—but not as early, and so not with the same effect. You can observe its presence now in the 50-year-old man who decides it's finally time to move in with the woman he's been sleeping with off and on for a few decades, get married, settle down, and have an abortion.

Here, Lee Siegel addresses the role of seriousness in what he calls our Age of Silly. The Age of Silly features the Internet. The Age of Silly doesn't read novels. In the Age of Silly, Susan Sontag and John Updike are dead. The right hates the left and the left hates the right, not realizing “their different worldviews are often shaped by similar impulses.”

If you can only muster an eye roll at all this horrific news, then you are a typical member of the Age of Silly, where the role of seriousness (according to Siegel) is not so much diminished as it

is complicated and confused. In fact, he writes, we are so desperate to be serious,

We uneasily settle for its impersonation. Which makes us long for seriousness with greater intensity, at the same time that we mistrust its sincerity all the more when we think we might have found it.

Are You Serious?

How to Be True and Get Real in the Age of Silly
by Lee Siegel
Harper, 224 pp., \$24.99

In this atmosphere of fatigued knowingness and outrage, it is impossible for anyone to be taken seriously without first appearing to be anti-serious—like Jon Stewart.

So what does it mean to be serious? Attention, purpose, and continuity are the three pillars of Siegel's definition. Personally, this means love and responsibility and respect. It means doing your job because it's your job. The first part of this volume offers examples of serious living (or lack thereof) from everyday life: Clear enough and sometimes touching, Siegel's little stories rarely stray beyond the obvious. They stop short of those truly grey areas of character where seriousness subtly comes into question.

What about, say, the ambitious, hardworking person who knows a few too many foreign languages for no good reason? Henry James suggested that people who easily pick up foreign languages are unreliable. Is there an over/under on how many tongues can fit in the mouth of a serious man? Marriage is serious, but what of remarriage? Does

it signal a courageous quest for eternal commitment, or somehow undermine it? Perhaps remarriage is more like Islam, with the seventh or eighth the equivalent of embracing Scientology.

Alas, Siegel doesn't really go there. The bulk of his book analyzes politics and culture by looking at the ways various political and cultural celebrities navigate our insecurities about seriousness, for better or worse. Stewart, Updike, Sontag, and Pixar are ultimately serious, in Siegel's view; Keith Olbermann, Bill O'Reilly, and Frank Rich are not. In the curiously mixed camp fall Sarah Palin, Oprah Winfrey, and George Steiner.

Talk of seriousness, as you can tell from these lists, always verges on the snobbish or boring. Especially if Siegel disapproves of the critical style. Irving Kristol ended up as a “cosmopolitan nihilist,” Sarah Palin is “Paris Hilton with sled dogs,” but Susan Sontag was “the only intellectual to have thought explicitly about how to be serious in modern American life.” An overblown style can be redeemed by a knack for the true and witty phrase, which the author of *Are You Serious?* seems time and again to miss.

There is a saying among theater folk that you can fake anything but intelligence, and for all his excess, Siegel is clearly intelligent. He proves this in his treatment of Jon Stewart's and Oprah Winfrey's appeal, and in his skewering of the intellectual contempt for the suburbs. He can see beyond his standard liberal politics, as when he draws a parallel between the Beat movement of the 1950s and today's Tea Party. And while he may refer to “legislators who bribe, buy and sell instead of legislate”—as if “legislate” means anything else—Siegel values sensitivity and empathy above political agreement. Sensitivity, empathy, and conscientiousness are the common denominators throughout his critique. The fate of seriousness, he implies, rests entirely on the survival of those qualities in our culture.

But does it? The last time I checked, sensitivity and empathy alone can't produce a vital novel. They don't seem at all opposed to the moral consecration of envy, or the staging and ticket-distribution of

Alec Mouhibian is a writer in Los Angeles.

vast festivals of self-pity. No examination of modern culture can be of much use without facing up to envy and self-pity and how they got to be so popular. “Before the coming of FDR,” wrote Eric Hoffer, who spent the 1920s on skid row, America “was singularly free of self-pity. None of the people I talked with blamed anyone for their misfortune.”

Like many tuned-in culture critics, Siegel is prone to miss the exit for the billboards. Saluting Chesley Sullen-

berger, the pilot who safely landed his jet in the Hudson River, Siegel properly idealizes the passion for doing one’s job as the ultimate form of seriousness. But nowhere does he pull over to ask just where that passion was lost. Perhaps it had something to do with all the precious meanings and prideful empathies everyone started experimenting with once college became a national rite of passage. The sincere quest to be serious, after all, does not quite amount to the real thing. ♦



Good News Bears

The complicated, contradictory world of evangelicals.

BY A. THOMAS WALKER

The constant tension in any movement is who gets to define it, and how. Enter the debate over evangelicalism, which exists in two forms. Evangelicalism as a doctrinal movement has often been defined according to what is called the “Bebbington quadrilateral”—a strong commitment to the Bible, Christ’s atoning work, evangelism, and activism. Yet another evangelicalism, an Anglo-American phenomenon, peppers the American landscape with its own cultural signifiers. This kitsch evangelicalism, known more for its cultural oddities, consistently edges out the intellectual and doctrinal coherency of evangelicalism in popular culture.

The Anointed picks up on this theme, insisting that evangelicalism has come to be defined more by its reactionary elements—opposition to evolution, aversion to modern psychology, apocalypticism, and support for an unabashedly Christian America. So what drives

evangelicals to reject the overwhelming evidence in support of evolution? Why do evangelicals insist that the Founding Fathers were devout Christians when other evangelical scholarship points to the contrary? Plagued by perpetual disputes as to what properly qualifies one as an “evangelical,” and a looming fissure among its youth, evangelicalism is facing an uncertain future in America. Randall Stephens and Karl Giberson insist that

holding steady on culturally marginalized positions will not help evangelicalism in its quest for cultural relevance or intellectual coherency.

Profiling such figures as the noted creationist Ken Ham, David Barton of WallBuilders, and James Dobson of Focus on the Family, the authors search for the affinities of what draws evangelicals to the opinions of “the Anointed”—discredited spokesmen and authorities who receive celebrity-like adoration and expert-like status among evangelicals. Such opinions foment the cultural derision and scorn heaped on evangelicalism by its

opponents and further intensify the entrenched and embattled mindset of evangelicals. Their quest is to offer a psychological analysis of evangelical authority structures.

Evangelicals opposing evolution, for instance, argue that the loss of a Divine Being results in no authoritative moral norms. Lamenting America’s break from its Christian heritage, evangelicals warn of further moral decay as God is marginalized from the public square. And spurning modern psychology for its “secular bias that menaces spirituality,” evangelicals gin up alternative authorities to conceal their own machinations. With decreased cultural influence, and fearing secularization, many evangelicals retreat into what the authors call a “parallel” culture.

But because evangelicalism encompasses such a large swath of the population and, by default, its own economic subculture remains intact within a larger religion-free market, the authors are right to suggest that evangelicals can reject expert opinion for the “self-sufficiency of their parallel culture.” Leaders are formed through an informal process of constituency building and rallying followers by “playing on common fears, identifying out-groups to demonize, and projecting confidence.” Joined by the direction of a leader with “charismatic trustworthiness,” spokesmen are said to “speak for God” and given preeminent status. A pervasive anti-intellectual spirit congeals these ingredients into an identifiable subculture: The authors attribute these features to an innate and evolutionary penchant for tribalism—the need to belong, identify, and embrace: “People, not surprisingly, more readily follow experts they know or perceive as being like them, even if their expertise is marginal or even suspect.”

The criticism offered here is punctuated by a tone of dismissal and reliance on academic pedigree. Ken Ham is eviscerated as an uncredentialed profligate who peddles fear as he does homeschooling textbooks; David Barton of the “Christian America” thesis is a likable dunce preoccupied with theocracy; and James Dobson is a colloquial, grandfatherly sap offering sage

The Anointed
Evangelical Truth in a Secular Age
by Randall J. Stephens
& Karl W. Giberson
Belknap Press of Harvard,
384 pp., \$29.95

A. Thomas Walker is a policy analyst for the Family Foundation.



Billy Graham Center, Wheaton College, Illinois

advice on how to prevent homosexuality in youth. All of them have “undermined the academic status quo” and deter intellectuals from embracing the Christian faith.

To be sure, the authors are not wrong in many of their assessments. As they state,

A winsome preacher who can quote the Bible and tell heart-warming stories of God’s blessings may possess more authority on global warming for believers than an informed climatologist . . . from Harvard.

And an anti-intellectual current does drive much of populist evangelicalism, as Mark Noll famously lamented in *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*. The castigation evangelicals receive is often far from unwarranted. Yet one can hardly say that evangelicals are the only ones to blame for glossy truisms and simplistic maxims in American culture. The authors ground anti-intellectualism in a larger American enthusiasm for commonsense explanations, plus an aversion to overtly cerebral leaders. The authors are also driven by their search for a version of evangelicalism with greater intellectual awareness and capaciousness, an evangelicalism at home with academic elites that rejects the “democratic impulse” of populist evangelicalism.

Not all evangelicals are rebuked here. Giberson and Stephens have little problem with what the sociologist and Gordon College president Michael Lindsay refers to as “cosmopolitan” evangelicals—the culturally literate, for example, who read the *New York Times* and accommodate evolution to their faith. The authors highlight laudable individuals such as the Anglican scholar N.T. Wright, the geneticist and NIH director Francis Collins, and the aforementioned Notre Dame historian Mark Noll as intellectually minded evangelicals deserving of cultural and academic praise.

The proclivity for holding positions on the social periphery rather than the cultural center plagues younger evangelicals. Profiling one student’s experience toward the end of the book, the authors show that the fault lines dividing younger evangelicals from their parents seem to be as much intellectual as spiritual. As younger evangelicals become aware of secular inroads, a battle of head-versus-heart ensues. And when such dissonance occurs, a crisis of faith for those willing to accept the veracity of secular claims can be resolved, for some, with a “simple liberalizing,” whereby

specific beliefs—biblical literalism, young earth creationism, homosexuality as perversion, eternal torment of the damned in a literal

hell, the sinfulness of abortion—are abandoned and other beliefs—the Bible as literature, concern for the environment, racial and cultural equality for oppressed groups, universality of salvation, an emphasis on social justice, tolerance of diversity—move to the center as animating ethical and theological concerns.

One can register uncertainty on issues such as origins, and the difficulty of navigating biblical genres, but modifications on other issues (as those quoted above) suggest a betrayal of long-held positions in Christian orthodoxy and sexual ethics. The authors assume that evangelicalism is a cultural and doctrinal monolith, which it is not. Young-Earth creationism is far from a settled issue within evangelicalism. Outside certain cloistered elements of evangelicalism, debate on the origins of the universe remains open. The same can be said for psychology.

What their paradigm cannot compute, however, is an individual like Albert Mohler, president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, who couples intellectual acumen and columns in the *Wall Street Journal* with views unacceptable to prevailing academic opinion. Many other public intellectuals who are also Christian dissent from secular opinion as well, and on issues political, cultural, theological, and social. Such evangelicals may hold unpopular positions, but one can hardly characterize differing opinion as uninformed opinion. The assumption here is that intellectual veracity will necessarily entail acceptance of the secular consensus on issues of psychology, science, and so on. The authors seem uncertain about how to handle that breed of evangelical academics with reputable degrees who *still* cling to positions outside the mainstream.

Secularism, for Stephens and Giberson, is not a devaluing of the sacred but the informed opinion of scholarly consensus, and *The Anointed* raises questions about the extent to which secularism and evangelicalism can align with one another when competing truth claims conflict. ♦

Never Enough

A chronicle of Britain's privileged underclass.

BY SONNY BUNCH

The pseudonymous author of this novel, Winston Smith, chose the moniker because of the maddening bureaucracy within which he worked. His blog, “Winston Smith—Working With the Underclass,” won an Orwell Prize for chronicling the labyrinthine, dysfunctional horror show that had become the British welfare state. And the name fit, conjuring up images of *1984* and the crushing toll the various ministries of the nation-state take on those caught up in their cogs.

But after the recent riots that ravaged London, one wonders if another literary mask might be more apt: P.R. Deltoid. It is, to be sure, a far more obscure allusion. Deltoid is the briefly seen public service worker in Anthony Burgess’s *A Clockwork Orange*, described by the antihero Alex as “my Post-Corrective Adviser, an over-worked veck with hundreds on his books.” Deltoid can do nothing but impotently warn Alex to change his ways—warnings that go unheeded, as Alex escalates his mayhem to theft, assault, rape, and eventually murder.

An overworked veck with too many souls on the books neatly describes our humble narrator, Winston. He works in the “Emmanuel Goldstein Project,” a housing project that takes in supplicants between the ages of 16 and 25. Deemed too old to live in foster care, too young to fully care for themselves, and “unable” to live with their biological families, these “young adults” are given a place to live by the state so they

Sonny Bunch is a writer in Washington.

can get “some freedom and responsibility and a little help in making the transition to living as an adult.”

Freedom they get. Responsibility? Not so much. In lengthy, crushing detail, and anecdote after anecdote, Smith relates the failings of those he is charged with helping. They are, largely, drunken, violent louts who abuse the welfare state, demand more

and more be provided them, and fear no repercussions for what they do. And by “no repercussions,” I mean none: not from the managers of the housing project, not from the police, certainly not from their families. These are youths growing up one step removed from a feral state, spending most of their time stoned, little of their time in classrooms or looking for work, and none of their time actually working. The result is an entire generation that has lost its way.

Consider his reaction to one encounter with “Kate,” a ward under his care (and under the state’s protection). When asked about the future, she replies, “I’m going to get a flat when I’m 18 and do whatever I want. . . . They’ve got to give me one because I’ve been in care. It’s the law.” Winston, reflecting on the sad fact that she’s right, fumes:

Somehow this seems wrong. She’s not yet 16 and she is already fluent in her entitlements and what she is owed by society by virtue of her position; I can picture her in a few years with several unruly urchins at her feet, demanding her entitlement to an even bigger flat.

Doubt this pseudonymous account if you like. As with any such work in which the author warns that “the timescales and chronology and the

names and physical descriptions of people and places . . . have been altered and blended together in the interests of confidentiality,” some skepticism is warranted. But his subjects are far from atypical. The *Washington Post* recently told the sad story of a “struggling artist” who was outraged that the British government was cutting her family’s monthly housing subsidy from \$2,800 to a mere \$2,173.

The British spend \$34.4 billion on housing benefits a year, up 50 percent over the last decade. As part of the austerity measures passed by the new Conservative government, that number was to be trimmed by 11 percent. And that, progressives tell us, is why we saw rioting in the street—chavs were pilfering Adidas track suits because the dole was (ever-so-slightly) declining.

Poppycock. In the wake of all this, one passage in *Generation F* leaps out:

I lose count of the number of times I’ve been told that one of our recidivist thieves who has been caught breaking into someone else’s house and taking their stuff is only doing it because he is poor but lives in a materialistic and consumer-driven society, and because he is unable to realise the norms of our materialistic culture or achieve the same levels of wealth as others due to an inherent and systemic inequality. Lots of my colleagues in the social sector actually believe this stuff, too.

There is a notable lack of actual poverty amongst the lower-middle-class louts with whom he deals—“most have TVs, microwaves, toasters, DVD players, video game consoles, and flash mobile phones”—but no deficit of moral failings: “There is an underclass of people . . . [who] see failure as a badge of honour, and the ‘three Rs’ have been replaced by the three Is: ignorance, indolence, and illiteracy.”

And that is the lesson here, the warning for those who would expand the welfare state: When you fill people’s troughs with all they need and all they want, and demand nothing in return, they’ll squeal for more. And sometimes, as the recent unpleasantness in London shows us, they’ll do more than squeal. ♦

Return of the Zombies

Still vital, versatile, and very much undead.

BY DAWN EDEN

Silver Spring, Maryland

If you know nothing more about the Zombies than the fact that they were part of the British Invasion, you can tell that the members were all about 16 when they chose the band's name. A group that intends to be taken seriously over a long and storied career generally does not adopt a moniker evoking flesh-eating undead. Yet, here we are, in 2011, and the Zombies are playing to a sold-out crowd at a 500-seat theater outside Washington, a few days after performing three songs on "Late Night with Jimmy Fallon." As the T-shirts on sale boast, the concert is part of the band's "50th Anniversary Tour."

Is the demand driven by simple Baby Boom nostalgia? For some, perhaps. But the kind of crowd that wants to hear the oldies normally attends jukebox-style package shows. By contrast, the Zombies attract fans not just for their hits but for their flops as well—particularly the songs that comprise *Odessey and Oracle* (1967), the second and last album of their original incarnation.

Odessey and Oracle, which barely dented the charts even after its "Time of the Season" was a belated smash in 1969, was rediscovered decades later to become a cult classic, its popularity paving the way for the Zombies' reunion in the early 2000s. Critics usually mention the album in the same breath as the Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds*, owing to its sparkling, multilayered vocal harmonies and intricate baroque-style arrangements. But whereas *Pet Sounds* carries the morbid

undercurrent of Brian Wilson's damaged psyche—bearing the scars of childhood abuse and substance-fueled self-indulgence—*Odessey and Oracle* is almost blisteringly sane. The Zombies' avoidance of the drug culture that surrounded them enabled them to partake of the ear-candy elements of psychedelic pop—Hammond B3 organ, Mellotron tape-looped strings, staccato "Penny Lane" bass lines, onomatopoeic vocal "ba"s—without getting lost on a magic carpet ride. As a result, they were able to make an album that sounds not just arty but truly artful, even timeless—more John Dowland than John Lennon.

If anyone doubted that the remaining original members, lead singer Colin Blunstone and keyboardist Rod Argent, could still keep up a "Bandstand"-era beat, those doubts were erased with the first number, Ray Charles's "Sticks and Stones" (from their debut album *Begin Here*). The test of any Zombies performance is the state of Blunstone's voice: Can he still hit all the right blue notes? On "Sticks and Stones," as well as on another soul cover from their early days (Solomon Burke's "Can't Nobody Love You," for example), what was most striking was not only the still-impressive technical quality of Blunstone's singing but his ability as a performer to put a song across.

One of Blunstone's major influences was Nina Simone, and he continues to evoke her razor's-edge balance of vulnerability and resilience. Yet, at the same time, he doesn't just stop at getting the right sound: Without mugging or showboating, he uses vocal dynamics and tastefully subtle physical moves to draw in the audience so that they are not experienc-

ing a mere song but a *story*. In many ways, Blunstone's subdued style is a holdover from the age of smoky jazz nightclubs: You can see why it didn't pull the Zombies over the brink of superstardom in an age when bands like The Who were destroying guitars and eardrums. Yet its refreshing air of mystery gives the Zombies' already-strong songs new layers of depth with every hearing.

Rod Argent, for his part, showed on songs such as "Breathe Out, Breathe In," the title track of the band's latest album, why he is regularly ranked among rock's greatest keyboard players—and one of the few capable of recording a classical piano album, as he did in 1998. The audience was also reminded that he enjoyed hits after the Zombies' breakup with his seventies band Argent (whose bass player, Jim Rodford, is now in the Zombies) as the group performed the arena-rock classic "Hold Your Head Up." Like all the evening's songs, the tune was played without irony: The musicians simply delighted in revisiting it, and their joy was contagious. But the audience reserved its greatest enthusiasm for the *Odessey and Oracle* tracks, so much so that a fifth tune from the album was added to the four the Zombies had planned. (Oddly, given his masterly control on quieter numbers such as "A Rose for Emily," Blunstone had a bit of trouble with the vocal jumps on the bouncy "Care of Cell 44." But the audience wasn't complaining, especially as Argent, Rodford, and guitarist Tom Toomey buoyed him with gorgeous, contrapuntal vocal polyphony.)

Called back at the end of the set for an encore, the Zombies pounded their way through the buoyant Argent classic "God Gave Rock and Roll to You" (better known in its cover version by KISS) before closing on a quiet note with the first song they ever recorded: the George and Ira Gershwin classic "Summertime." For those final two-and-a-half minutes, as Blunstone cooed calmly over the band's Brubeck-style backing, it was neither 1964 nor 2011. It was simply Zombie heaven. ♦

Dawn Eden is the author of The Thrill of the Chaste.

L.A. Surreal

A film noir pays homage to the 1980s.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

Drive is an extremely odd new film starring a nearly silent Ryan Gosling, who only a few months ago melted a hole in the screen as a glamorous big-talking rich kid in *Crazy, Stupid, Love*. Here he is a working-class mechanic/stuntman/getaway driver with a mysterious past who is transfixed by the innocent goodness of a waitress and her young son. When he tries to help the waitress out, he gets in over his head with the mob.

That's a very conventional plotline, but the movie itself is anything but. Actually, *Drive* is really quite bananas. And kind of delightful if you don't mind seeing people stuck in the eye with a fork and someone else's head literally kicked in, that is. Which you probably do.

The movie makes no sense. In the world according to *Drive*, there are only two mobsters in L.A., and they're both Jews nearing 60. Every criminal act in Los Angeles can be traced back to them. Inconsistencies abound. Gosling drives getaway cars and participates in movie stunts, both of which surely pay well. But he spends most of his time as a car mechanic and lives in a dump of an apartment building—which happens to come with a garage so big it belongs under a mall.

People are murdered in elevators, in parking lots, all over the place, and nobody says boo or blinks an eye. Cars crash into each other and no cop ever shows up to write anyone a ticket. The whole thing is ludicrous, but from the very beginning it's clear that director Nicolas Winding

Refn (yes, Refn) doesn't expect us to believe in or care all that much about the action we're witnessing.

Plot shmot, Refn says—not to mention character shmaracter, and consistency shmonsistency. *Drive* is a mood movie, not a story movie, and unless you're a Jewish crook with an AARP card (Ron Perlman and Albert

Drive

Directed by Nicolas Winding Refn



Ryan Gosling, Carey Mulligan

Brooks are both really juicy in their roles), you're not given much of a personality here. Gosling broods and seems to find it difficult to speak elementary English, he's so interior. The British actress Carey Mulligan is reduced to trying to glow beatifically in her waitress costume.

Refn is far more interested in the shadows that roll over Gosling's body and face as his car slices through the Los Angeles night. Which is the real star of *Drive* anyway. Movie directors are obsessed with night in Los Angeles and have been for decades—I think because they usually live up in the Hills like many rich Angelenos and therefore are always looking down (some of

them stoned) at the undeniably surreal patterns created by thousands of yellow sodium street lights, the illuminated office buildings of West Hollywood, and the traffic helicopters all over the place.

You can't really blame them—there is something unearthly about Los Angeles after the sun sets. Michael Mann has made two “L.A. at night” movies, *Heat* and *Collateral*. Robert Altman, a notorious stoner, also made two—one in the 1970s called *The Long Goodbye* and one in the 1990s called *Short Cuts*. The last movie made by Hal Ashby, the great 1970s director who apparently was never actually unstoned, was *8 Million Ways to Die*—a genuine piece of junk art about an alcoholic detective investigating the murder of a hooker that was released in 1986. *Drive* consciously evokes it—as it does similar movies released around the same time like *Into the Night*, *To Live and Die in L.A.*, *Against All Odds*, *Tequila Sunrise*, and *52 Pick-Up*. Like them, it has a soundtrack dominated by synth pop, silent central characters, spectacularly vivid villains, a few naked girls, and cars that do crazy things on Sunset Boulevard. Indeed, Refn wants *Drive* to appear as though it was made in the 1980s (despite the presence in the opening scene of the Staples Center). We see a shot of a television showing a bulletin that looks like an “Eyewitness News” from 1985. Someone says in the course of the movie that the Chevy Impala is the most popular

car on the road, which hasn't been true for 30 years.

This may help explain why *Drive* isn't making much money. Who wants to see a feature-length and lovingly detailed tribute to a mini-genre—'80s L.A. noir—that flopped with audiences the first time? Well, to tell you the truth, I do. I adored those movies when they came out, because they were propulsive and fun—and I was in my mid-20s, and even when I found a movie indefensible I could still enjoy it. That's usually not true any longer, and *Drive* is indefensible, but I could hear my 25-year-old self whispering in my ear, “Don't be a spoilsport.” So I'm not. ♦

John Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, is THE WEEKLY STANDARD's movie critic.

“President Obama’s hand accidentally blocked the face of the President of Mongolia when Obama waved while a photo was being taken at the United Nations.” —MSN.com, September 20, 2011

PARODY

AS I STARE AT THE BACK OF YOUR HAND—A VERY SMOOTH HAND, I MUST CONFESS—I AM OVERCOME WITH RAGE. NOW I MUST TELL MY FAMILY THERE WILL BE NO NEW PHOTO OF FATHER TO MAKE THEM PROUD. BECAUSE FATHER HAS LITERALLY LOST FACE.

