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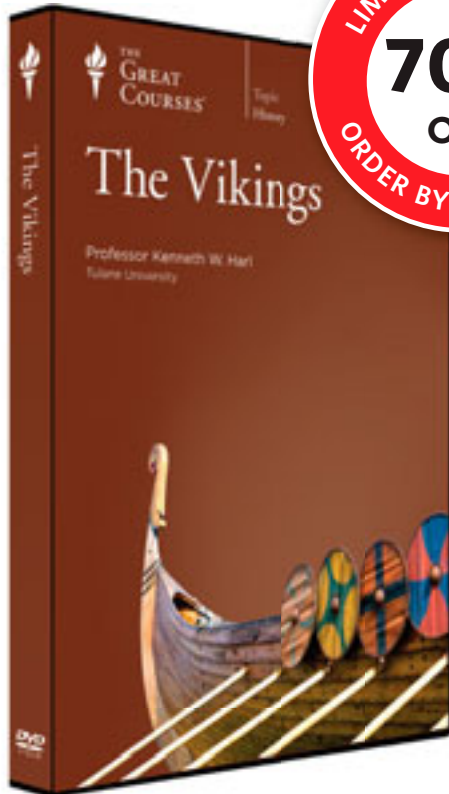


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Contents

January 23, 2012 • Volume 17, Number 18

- 4 The Scrapbook *In Tebow we trust, the Olbermann deficit & more*
- 7 Casual *Philip Terzian, cold man*
- 9 Editorials
Men at War BY WILLIAM KRISTOL
Obama v. Constitution BY TERRY EASTLAND



7

Articles

- 11 AWW Shucks BY ANDREW FERGUSON
The siren song of Washington, D.C.
- 14 Much Ado About New Hampshire BY P.J. O'ROURKE
What reporters say and do when there's nothing to be said or done
- 15 The Bain of His Campaign BY TOD LINDBERG
Could inflict considerable pain
- 17 The Circular Firing Squad BY FRED BARNES
A GOP specialty
- 18 A Sweater Vest and a Blue Collar BY JONATHAN V. LAST
Rickonomics
- 20 Terrorism and the First Amendment BY GARY SCHMITT
The right way to limit dangerous speech
- 22 The Worst White House Aide BY MATTHEW CONTINETTI
Valerie Jarrett's perfect record . . . for giving bad advice
- 24 The GOP's Philadelphia Story BY KEVIN FERRIS
Look which party finally won a municipal race
- 26 Obama Burdens the Banks BY SAM BATKINS & IKE BRANNON
The costliest regulation you've never heard of



22

Feature

- 28 Past Their Sell-By Date BY MATT LABASH
A dwindling group of Occupiers take on the New Hampshire primary

Books & Arts

- 34 Poet and Pioneer BY SARA LODGE
The Keats brothers' saga
- 36 One World BY JAMES W. CEASER
Are we ready for rule by 'the party of global governance'?
- 38 Spinoza's God BY LAWRENCE KLEPP
A cosmos in the mind of the harmonious philosopher
- 39 Dog Nights BY ANDREW NAGORSKI
The Gulag nightmare in an animal's eye
- 41 Man Onstage BY KYLE SMITH
The importance (?) of being Stephen Fry
- 43 Cruise Control BY JOHN PODHORETZ
When the going gets tough, it's deep-dish time
- 44 Parody *Please list your reasons for return (to Chicago)*



28

COVER BY GARY LOCKE

In Tebow We Trust

Few athletes in recent years have made football as compelling to watch as Tim Tebow. The guy throws wounded-duck passes for three quarters, and still finds a way to win with overtime heroics, even though his player stats suggest that a victory is impossible.

Of course, proclaiming his Christian faith on and off the field has made Tebow controversial to say the least. Sandra Fish, who teaches journalism at the University of Colorado, asks this supposedly provocative question at the *Washington Post* website: “Tim Tebow: Would we love him if he were Muslim?”

Fish proceeds to draw a baffling parallel. “The lauding of Tebow’s Christianity has me recollecting another Denver athlete who once flaunted his faith, on the basketball court in the mid-1990s, and paid a price for it.” Fish then goes on to tell the tale of former Denver Nuggets point guard Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf, who, following his conversion to Islam, called the American flag “a symbol of oppression and tyranny” and received a one-game suspension for refusing to stand for the national anthem. Abdul-Rauf’s actions didn’t win him any new fans. He was traded to Sacramento and left the league two years later.

“But if a Muslim player thanked

Allah after every game, ended every interview with ‘praise Allah,’ would we afford him the same respect we give Tebow? Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf knows the answer.”

You got that, sports fans? You’re religious bigots or something. Never mind that two of the greatest and most revered NBA players in history—Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Hakeem Olajuwon—were both Muslim. Muhammad Ali made some pretty sharp anti-American critiques, and yet George W. Bush gave him the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Funnily enough, in November, sports columnist Jen Engel asked the same question as Fish and arrived at an entirely different answer:

Imagine for a second, the Denver Broncos quarterback is a devout follower of Islam, sincere and principled in his beliefs and thus bowed toward Mecca to celebrate touchdowns. Now imagine if Detroit Lions players Stephen Tulloch and Tony Scheffler mockingly bowed toward Mecca, too, after tackling him for a loss or scoring a touchdown, just like what happened in October.

I know what would happen. All hell would break loose.

Engel goes on to flesh out the likely scenario of a furious backlash from her fellow sports columnists, the NFL commissioner being forced to apolo-

gize, etc. Suffice to say, Engel has it right and Fish has it wrong.

In the meantime, we would invite Fish and Tebow’s detractors to talk to Bailey Knaub. Knaub is a teenage girl from Loveland, Colorado, who has Wegener’s granulomatosis, a disease that leads to prolific tumors. Her 70th surgery was the removal of her left lung. Knaub is a big fan of the Broncos QB, so Bailey’s cousin surreptitiously wrote a letter to Tebow’s foundation.

Tebow was understandably moved, and brought Bailey to the first round of the playoffs, where she watched Tebow throw for 316 yards and deliver a stunning victory on an 80-yard pass in, yes, overtime, against the best passing defense in the league. After the biggest win of his professional career, he told the press: “But the real win, at least I would say today, is being able to comfort a girl who has gone through 73 surgeries before the game and get a chance to go hang out with her now.”

The most frustrating thing for Tebow’s critics is that nothing about his life or career suggests his Christian charity isn’t coming from a place of sincerity or humility, as opposed to being a retrograde expression of narrow-minded tribalism. But the truth is that you don’t have to share Tebow’s faith to be inspired by his victories—on and off the field. ♦

Top Banana

Readers may be surprised to learn that THE SCRAPBOOK occasionally listens to National Public Radio while commuting in and out of the nation’s capital. Readers may be less surprised to learn that THE SCRAPBOOK is occasionally annoyed by NPR while commuting in and out of the nation’s capital.

Case in point: Harry Belafonte seems to have recently published a

memoir—titled, inevitably, *My Song*—and there was a period last fall when it seemed as if every time THE SCRAPBOOK tuned in to our friends at public radio, a fawning interview was being conducted with the singer/activist. To be sure, the 84-year-old Belafonte’s voice is now distinctly raspy, and his answers tended to sound like a monologue by the aged Don Corleone; but for awhile there you couldn’t switch from one NPR station to another without hearing it.

The consensus of the interviewers seemed to be that they were talking to the consummate artist of the 20th century, a man whose career spanned more than half a century of supreme achievement, and whose persistent celebrity—whose mere presence on the planet Earth—has been a gift to humankind since time out of mind.

Alas, THE SCRAPBOOK remembers things a little differently. Harry Belafonte sang two chart-topping novelty songs in the mid-1950s—“Matilda”

and “The Banana Boat Song”—and for a few years thereafter churned out albums and made the occasional TV and film appearance, as good-looking singers will often do. But that’s about it. Harry Belafonte was one of dozens of popular male warblers of the era; and can anyone, offhand, name one of his movies?

THE SCRAPBOOK didn’t think so. What THE SCRAPBOOK thinks is that Belafonte’s celebrity, such as it is, has been sustained and nurtured over the years by his persistent, and perverse, devotion to left-wing causes. Yes, that’s him standing between Sidney Poitier and Charlton Heston at the 1963 civil rights march on Washington, and there he is picketing outside the South African embassy in the 1980s. But when THE SCRAPBOOK says “left-wing,” it uses the term advisedly. There are plenty of “activists” in show-biz ranks, but Belafonte stands out for his bitter denunciations of the land of his birth, his devotion to the Soviet Union, his admiration for the Castro regime, and his affection for the atomic spies Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. Hand in hand in Caracas with the Venezuelan dictator Hugo Chávez, he once declared:

No matter what the greatest tyrant in the world, the greatest terrorist in the world—George W. Bush—says, we’re here to tell you: Not hundreds, not thousands, but millions of the American people support your revolution!

So it should come as little surprise to learn that Belafonte has denounced two secretaries of state, Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice, in deliberately personal terms as “slaves who lived in the house,” and this past week, criticized none other than Barack Obama himself for lacking a “moral compass,” thereby facing “a splendid opportunity to do more than most presidents would have ever been able to do, and [letting] that opportunity slip away from him.”

It need hardly be mentioned that Powell, Rice, and Obama are, like Belafonte, African Americans, for whom he seems to reserve his most offensive epithets (“house slaves”). Of course, THE SCRAPBOOK has its differences with Obama—with Rice and Powell, for



that matter—but suspects that there is another reason why Harry Belafonte chooses to insult in such terms: Even the 1950s King of Calypso must realize that these are people of genuine achievement, and that he is not quite the public monument that NPR is pleased to flatter. ♦

Ombudsman, Heal Thyself

Heaven help the journalistic establishment, but it seems to be having a problem with “facts.” We don’t just mean that they’re bad at reporting them, but journalism’s prestige institutions have been reduced to wondering aloud about what exactly facts are and what role they play in how

these institutions perform their jobs.

Arthur Brisbane, the *New York Times*’s public editor, aka ombudsman, earnestly asked last week: “I’m looking for reader input on whether and when *New York Times* news reporters should challenge ‘facts’ that are asserted by newsmakers they write about.” Brisbane notes that some *Times* readers are frustrated that the paper doesn’t call out more people for stretching the truth.

The only remarkable thing about that question is that it’s even being asked. Of course newspapers should report the truth, especially when it contradicts someone’s self-interested agenda.

But if Brisbane and *Times* readers are scratching their heads over what to do here, that’s because they have no

idea where their opinions end and the truth begins. Brisbane further clarifies what he's talking about by citing a Paul Krugman column in which the liberal economist objects to Mitt Romney's suggestion that President Obama has been "apologizing for America." The public editor then postulates one possible response for news reporters to give to Romney:

Perhaps the next time Mr. Romney says the president has a habit of apologizing for his country, the reporter should insert a paragraph saying, more or less: "The president has never used the word 'apologize' in a speech about U.S. policy or history. Any assertion that he has apologized for U.S. actions rests on a misleading interpretation of the president's words."

But it would be inane to criticize Romney like this in a news story, because he's not actually putting the word "apologize" in the president's mouth. Does Brisbane seriously not know the difference between a factual assertion and a characterization? It appears he doesn't. A reporter might be expected to challenge the former, but the issue of refereeing characterizations in the name of fairness is a much more complicated one that goes to the heart of a paper's credibility. More often than not, it's not within the purview of news reporters.

The sane response for Brisbane would be to ask why some readers are so incensed by the accurate quotation of Mitt Romney's rhetoric on the front page they can't be bothered to turn to the editorial page, where columnists such as Krugman are employed precisely to give voice to their objections.

But if the *New York Times* has to ask whether it should report the facts and then answers its own question in such a way as to convincingly demonstrate it has no concept of what being objective even means, it truly is doomed. ♦

The Olbermann Deficit

THE SCRAPBOOK has fond memories of Keith Olbermann, the volatile cable talking head. In a career

distinguished as much by its instability as its substance—in a handful of years he has been variously employed by CNN, Fox, ESPN, MSNBC, and Current TV—we came to enjoy his impassioned, Senator Claghorn-style denunciations of Republicans and, in particular, President George W. Bush. Not because we agreed with anything he had to say—Olbermann is a mindless liberal partisan and, in the words of one former boss, a self-evident "nut"—but because the saying of it was so entertaining. Kind of like watching somebody else's deep-voiced toddler having a meltdown. Olbermann's unique combination of left-wing piety, uncontrollable rage, comic pomposity, and manic glosso-lalia could be found nowhere else in the televised universe.

Unfortunately, THE SCRAPBOOK has been Olbermann-deprived for several months now. Last year he had an inevitable falling-out with the "Lean Forward" folks at MSNBC, and settled in at Current TV, a media project of former Vice President Al Gore and one of his rich friends, Joel Hyatt. Never heard of Current TV? Neither had we, and despite THE SCRAPBOOK's residence in the nation's political capital, we haven't been able to find it on any of the local cable services, either.

That is, THE SCRAPBOOK—and 312.8 million other Americans since, according to the *New York Times*, Olbermann's present audience is estimated to be about 200,000 viewers, down from a reported million at MSNBC. But we still love him, and here's why. The *Times* informs us that Olbermann and Current TV are furious with one another (he and Gore reportedly don't speak), and it is probably just a matter of time before Olbermann explodes, yet again, and stalks away from his employer of six months, which is paying him \$50 million over the course of a five-year contract. By THE SCRAPBOOK's rough calculation, that's approximately \$50 per viewer, on an annual basis, being drained from the wallets of Al Gore and Joel Hyatt, and wasted on Olbermann.

Thanks, Keith! ♦

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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.



In the Bleak Midwinter

People are entitled to complain about bias in the media, but I'm largely indifferent to the problem. This is not because "liberal bias" doesn't exist—I've been a journalist for 40 years and lifelong witness—but because it is so pervasive, and so impervious to challenge, that it is hardly worth mentioning. One might just as usefully complain about the weather.

Or, as I prefer, about weathermen/women. I am speaking here of the meteorologists on the local news, the smiling, pivoting, late-evening forecasters who point at places on transparent maps, and keep us in a high-pressure state of anxiety about low-pressure systems coming in from the Great Lakes. I mean, I enjoy the geography lessons—Mobile is on the Gulf, Long Island is the storm-system gateway to New England—but I frankly resent their warm-weather bias. Moreover, it is just as widespread, and nearly as infuriating to me, as the other kind of bias.

It takes several forms. Weathermen automatically assume that their viewers welcome spring-like weather, or unseasonably high temperatures, or spend much of the year impatiently awaiting beach weekends. Eternal sunshine is an occasion for thanksgiving, cold and clouds for mourning. Snow is a horrific imposition.

I am a suburban commuter, and so I have appropriately mixed feelings about snow. But beyond that I am almost wholly alienated from the weathermen's worldview. I am disappointed, not delighted, when record-breaking warm temperatures are recorded in January. I have no interest in acknowledging hot weather by motoring, lemming-like, to the Atlantic coastline, there to bake in the sun and drink Orange Julius. I

am much more excited by the prospect of breaking my Chesterfield coat out of mothballs than my Bermuda shorts. I would rather don a tweed suit than a bathing suit.

I am, in short, an enthusiast of cold weather—a wintry personage, in literary terms. This does not necessarily mean that I long to reside (Massachusetts, Michigan, the Great Plains, etc.)



where winter is the default season—even I welcome the first hummingbird of spring—but it does mean my internal calendar is upside down: I come alive in December and would rather hibernate in July.

The nice thing about the Middle Atlantic region, where I have spent most of my life, is that it is a kind of meteorological *via media*: The winters are cold but not severely so, the summers are hot but not unbearably so. There is a definable fall and spring. True, Washington, D.C., where I work, reverts to its swamp origins in mid-summer, and is a cesspool of humidity. But the Washington summer conforms more or less to the solstice—where in Savannah, say, or Biloxi, it's sultry in May. (And it is an urban myth that in the pre-air-conditioning era diplomats at the British embassy got tropical pay.)

Most people gladden at the sight

of the first daffodil poking its head through the soil; to me, it is an augury of heat, sweat, lawn care, and copperheads. By contrast, I am pleased when the leaves begin to fall and the days grow short. There is something curiously exhilarating about going home in darkness, dark clouds racing across a leaden sky, the wind-chill factor beginning to be calculated.

By early December, when the fallen leaves have been raked away, and the flowers and bushes retreat, I feel a kind of obsessive-compulsive ecstasy: The ground is hard, buildings look austere, and yesterday's overgrown landscape is comfortably neat. I am standing at the threshold of three, maybe four, unbroken months of bleakness. The days are windy, frigid, and icy; at night, the air feels as cold as iron. Even Nature, in its fashion, shows admirable reserve: The chipmunks are hidden away but squirrels abound, and goldfinches are suddenly and fashionably dusky.

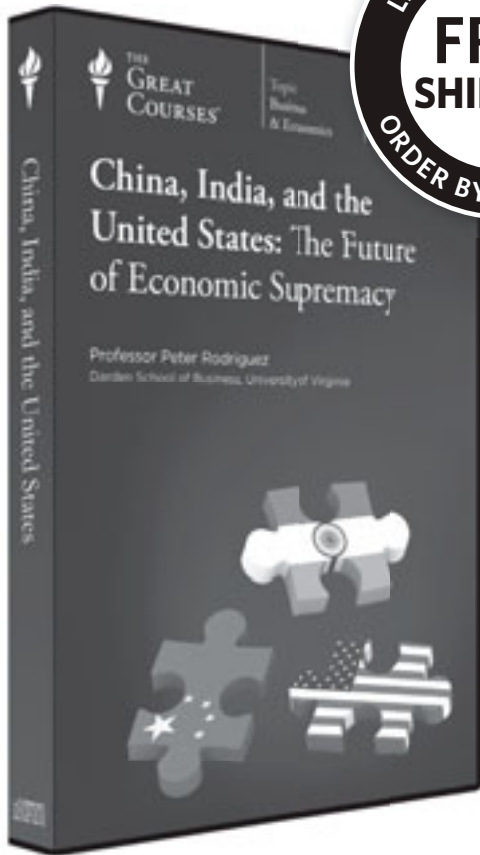
I used to argue, in my childhood, that winter cold is less impractical than summer heat. You can huddle, build a fire, seek out the sun at noon. If you're cold, you can always add layers of clothing; if you're hot, there's a social limit to what you can remove. But now I would go further. Walking around the block in August is an enervating experience, rewarded with perspiration. Walking around the block in February is a conscious pleasure, the frozen face offset by the snugly bundled carcass. A warm bath in freezing weather, beside an open window, is bliss.

Is all of this a genuine sensation, or the physical manifestation of perversity? As one who always roots for the bad guy in movies, and prefers Schoenberg to Mozart, I do not think my affection for winter misplaced. Or maybe it's something deeper than that: the chill of the consciousness of death. In any case, alive and cold, I'm happy.

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Men at War

We'll stipulate that of course the Marines who urinated on the bodies of dead Taliban in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, last year should be appropriately disciplined, assuming things are as they appear in the video.

But it's also worth noting that pissing has a distinguished place in American military history. Most famously, General George S. Patton relieved himself in the Rhine on March 24, 1945—and made sure he was photographed doing so. Patton later recalled: "I drove to the Rhine River and went across on the pontoon bridge. I stopped in the middle to take a piss and then picked up some dirt on the far side in emulation of William the Conqueror." (At the time, actually, Patton was less concerned with emulating William the Conqueror and more worried about finishing off the enemy. Later that day he sent a communiqué to General Dwight D. Eisenhower, in command of Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force: "Dear SHAEF, I have just pissed into the Rhine River. For God's sake, send some gasoline.")

It wasn't just American generals who seemed preoccupied with pissing back in 1945. Three weeks earlier, Winston Churchill had visited the front lines near Jülich. Churchill had long dreamed of urinating on Hitler's much-vaunted Siegfried Line to show his contempt for Hitler and Nazism. Unlike Patton, Churchill forbade photographs of the occasion. But General Alan Brooke, chief of the Imperial General Staff, who was with Churchill that day, later wrote: "I shall never forget the childish grin of intense satisfaction that spread all over his face as he looked down at the critical moment."

So perhaps, as Rep. Allen West, once a battalion

commander in Iraq, put it last week, all the sanctimonious Obama administration bigwigs "need to chill." Did Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta really need to speak up at all? Couldn't comment have been left to some junior public affairs officer at Camp Lejeune? And once he decided to weigh in, did Panetta need to condemn the Marines' action as not just deplorable but "utterly deplorable"? Perhaps he felt a need to match Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who expressed not just dismay but "total dismay."

Maybe, our current civilian leaders should spend a little less time posturing and a little more time supporting the troops who've been sent abroad to fight at the direction of their administration. They are, after all, carrying out a mission the civilian leadership has judged crucial to our national security. We know from the administration's recent "strategic guidance" that President Obama now believes "the tide of war is receding" and that "we are turning a page." That would be nice. But the "tide of war" resulted last year in fierce fighting, with seven dead and many more wounded from the 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marines, in Helmand. Soldiers and Marines continue today to fight and die at the direction of the commander in chief. Until the page is fully turned (if it ever is), he and his administration have a responsibility to err

on the side of supporting our troops, rather than competing to chastise them sanctimoniously—even when a few of them have done something foolish.

Indeed, the foolishness of these few young Marines is as nothing compared with the foolishness of Obama administration officials.

—William Kristol



Gen. George S. Patton, March 24, 1945

Obama v. Constitution

Let us now praise the Supreme Court. We know that Newt Gingrich thinks the judiciary needs rebuking, and we agree with him to a point. But sometimes—actually, often under Chief Justice John Roberts—the Court gets it right. And it did so last week unanimously in *Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical Lutheran Church and School v. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission*.

With the chief justice writing the opinion, the Court, for the first time, recognized the existence of a “ministerial exception,” rooted in the First Amendment’s religion clauses, that bars the application of federal employment discrimination laws to the relationship between a religious organization and its ministers. The Court found that Cheryl Perich, the individual whose employer—a Lutheran church in Michigan—the EEOC had sued, claiming she had been terminated in violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act, was indeed a minister covered by the exception. The case thus could not go forward and was dismissed.

The Obama Justice Department took the opposite position, contending that there is no such exception for ministers and that Perich, a teacher in the church’s K-8 school, wouldn’t be covered by it anyway. But Obama’s lawyers were unable to persuade any of the five justices appointed by Republican presidents—or any of the presumably more persuadable four justices named by Democratic presidents. Not Justice Ginsburg, not Justice Breyer, and not Justice Sotomayor or Justice Kagan, both appointed by Obama. The vote was 9-0.

How extreme was the Obama administration’s position?

In rejecting the ministerial exception, the government was unwilling to follow the federal appeals courts, which have uniformly recognized the exception and its First Amendment roots. And in arguing that any ministerial exception “should be limited to those employees who perform exclusively religious functions,” the government took a much narrower view than have the appeals courts, which have agreed that the exception goes beyond formally ordained ministers, while differing on where the boundaries extend.

Here the Obama administration revealed how little it knows about church schools such as Hosanna-Tabor. As the chief justice wrote in response to the “exclusively religious functions” view of coverage, “We cannot accept that view. Indeed, we are unsure whether any such employees exist,” observing that even the heads of congregations often have a mix of secular and religious duties.

As for Perich, the Court was right to see that she was a “minister” under any sensible analysis of the facts. She taught secular subjects, but she also taught religion and led her students in prayer. And she did so at a school operated by a church that had formally commissioned her with the title of “minister” after she had completed six years of religious training. The church clearly expected leadership from her in advancing its message and carrying out its mission.

Significantly, the government also effectively read the religion clauses out of the Constitution, contending that religious organizations could mount defenses against employment discrimination claims by invoking the right of freedom of association—just as any labor union or social club may do. To this, the chief justice responded that “the text of the First Amendment itself . . . gives special solicitude to the rights of religious organizations. [We] cannot accept the remarkable view that the Religion Clauses have nothing to say about a religious organization’s freedom to select its own ministers.”

During oral argument, Justice Kagan, Obama’s first solicitor general, obviously was troubled by the government’s “remarkable view.” “I, too, find that amazing,” she said to the acting solicitor general, that “neither the Free Exercise Clause nor the Establishment Clause has anything to say about a church’s relationship with its own employees.”

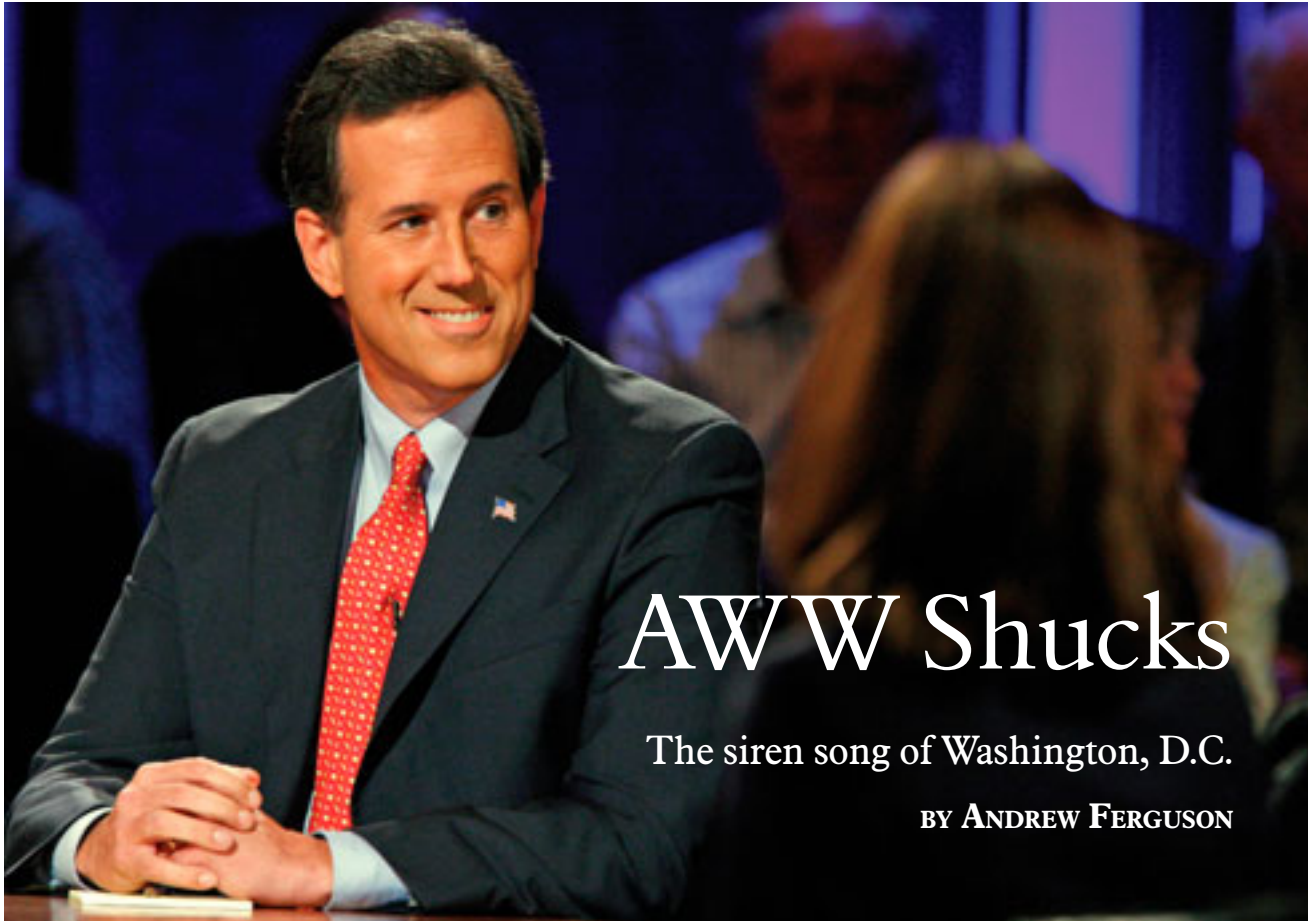
In the Obama administration’s view of how the world should work in a case like Perich’s, there being no First Amendment protection for religious organizations, employment discrimination claims would be tried and the courts would “balance” the various interests, those of the complaining employee and those of the employer church. Note well: The courts would decide.

The chief justice was compelled to respond:

The interest of society in the enforcement of employment discrimination statutes is undoubtedly important. But so too is the interest of religious groups in choosing who will preach their beliefs, teach their faith, and carry out their mission. When a minister who has been fired sues her church alleging that her termination was discriminatory, the First Amendment has struck the balance for us. The church must be free to choose those who will guide it on its way.

So the Obama administration’s stance in *Hosanna-Tabor* was rebuffed by the Supreme Court, which got right the meaning of the religion clauses. As the chief justice explained, “The Establishment Clause prevents the Government from appointing ministers, and the Free Exercise Clause prevents it from interfering with the freedom of religious groups to select their own.” It can’t be any plainer than that: The clauses protect religion from government. It’s good that we have a Court all nine of whose members are willing to say that. It’s too bad we have an administration that doesn’t understand such a basic principle of our Constitution.

—Terry Eastland



AWW Shucks

The siren song of Washington, D.C.

BY ANDREW FERGUSON

After he almost won the Iowa caucuses earlier this month, Rick Santorum was instantly dubbed a “Washington outsider,” even an “antiestablishment candidate.” It was a convenient tag that made it easier for reporters to keep all these strange Republicans straight: Newt Gingrich, Washington insider; Michele Bachmann, mad housewife; Mitt Romney, establishment prom king; Jon Huntsman, moderate hair guy; Rick Santorum, antiestablishment Washington outsider. Like that.

But Santorum’s titles were rescinded as quickly as they were bestowed, for the press discovered certain details that undercut any claim he might have to be a Washington outsider, such as the fact that he lives in suburban Washington and has for more than 20 years. Rick Santorum has spent his entire career either

working in government—his first job out of school was as an assistant to a Pennsylvania state senator—or, when he wasn’t working in government, working to get another job in government, as he is doing now. And when, in 2007, he found himself once again without a government job, having been booted out of the Senate by a large majority of Pennsylvania voters, he took a bunch of government-like jobs right here in his beloved hometown of Washington.

This is where the press smelled an insider.

“After Santorum Left Senate,” headlined the *New York Times*, “Familiar Hands Reached Out.”

“After Senate,” echoed the *Washington Post* two days later, “Santorum turns Washington experience into lucrative career as consultant, pundit.”

Both stories reported roughly the same set of facts. Though a man of modest means when he left the Senate, Santorum managed to make

more than \$1.3 million during the 18 months covered in his most recent financial disclosure form, from January 2010 to August 2011. We can assume that 2008 and 2009 were similarly lucrative. He did this in the magpie manner of the well-connected and semi-famous Washingtonian: He got a TV deal with Fox, joined a corporate board, became a “fellow” at a think tank, sometimes hosted a radio talk show, and collected retainers from a couple of companies run by political friends. It’s nice work if you can get it.

I found myself strangely touched by the stories of Santorum’s recent wealth, for they certified that he wasn’t a “Washington insider” in any pejorative sense, at least by my libertarian lights. He’s just another Washingtonian of a particular type: the anti-Washington Washingtonian—an AWW, a contented resident of the nation’s capital who has based his career on his loudly declared disdain for the nation’s capital, particularly the

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AP / SCOTT ELLIS / BLOOMBERG

federal Leviathan residing there. The AWW campaigns against Washington, catalogues its harmful effects, extols alternatives, and contrasts it with the “real America,” which he vows to liberate forever from its depredations—while never admitting that Washington is the very thing that makes his life worth living.

Am I exaggerating? We should allow for love of family, friends, household pets, and professional sports; for religious faith, too, in a few cases like Santorum’s. Still, we AWWs lead a life of moral dissonance and intense though half-buried psychological conflict.

Life in most of Washington, D.C., and its suburbs is an idyll. Crime is low and unemployment negligible. Average income is very high, to be spent in sprawling malls that glitter with expensive goods and restaurants that offer sophisticated and pretentious fare. There are no fewer than three theater companies devoted to Shakespeare, and most of the museums charge no admission. Public transportation is excellent and heavily subsidized. Winters are mild. In summer the streets are dappled and cooled by the leaves of oak, ash, tulip. You haven’t lived until you’ve seen the azaleas in spring. The public schools, being stuffed with the children of well-to-do high achievers, are rated the best in the country, and the private schools are innumerable and various. It’s a cushy life. You’d love it, really.

And it should go without saying, and it usually does, that all of this ease and pleasantness is traceable to the vast amounts of money redistributed in transaction costs to people who advise, bully, study, condemn, write about, or work directly for the federal government, which in turn gets its money from productive Americans who live elsewhere, without regular access to the gardens and museums of Washington, D.C. The federal government is oversized, wasteful, intrusive, high-handed, careless, confused, and unfair, and everyone in Washington gets to reap the benefits.

Including, of course, the people who want to drastically reduce the

government’s size, indeed impoverish it, on the grounds of strongly held principle. Yet AWWs know too, somewhere in their roiling souls, that if they achieved their object the quality of life that they and their families enjoy would suffer beyond measure. With a limited, unbloated, cut-capped-and-balanced federal government, they might even be forced to move elsewhere.

But elsewhere is what they escaped to come here. Elsewhere, few people think about electoral politics unless they’re forced to, and even fewer bother themselves with public policy—the daily meat of the AWW. Here, by contrast, the AWW finds an entire subculture of like-minded friends and

AWWs know, somewhere in their roiling souls, that if they achieved their object, the quality of life that they and their families enjoy would suffer beyond measure. With a limited, unbloated, cut-capped-and-balanced federal government, they might even be forced to move elsewhere.

associates, all of them well-educated and most of them presentable.

Nowhere else on earth is there so high a concentration of self-conscious, ideologically committed conservatives and libertarians. Here, the AWW is among his own. Elsewhere, he’s a freak. Here the conversation flows like honey: “Did you see Ag’s new adjustments to the out-year recalibration formula for nonrecourse loans on consumable grain processing? It’s a total mindf—!” Elsewhere, in a place populated by real Americans—well, what on earth would he find to talk to all those people about?

So we all conspire to make work for one another, in an endless daisy chain of ineffable employment. Look again at that list of jobs that the *Times* found so newsworthy in Santorum’s disclosure statement. He describes the services

he rendered to his employers like so:

“Advise company as member of board of directors”;

“policy analysis”;

“news contributor”;

“newspaper columnist”;

“talk show host”;

“consulting services”;

“energy policy consulting services”;

“legislative policy consulting services”;

“consulting in connection with insurance processing policy.”

Not an honest day’s dollar among them, yet somehow, through the mysterious workings of Washington alchemy, it’s all priced at \$1.3 million. A friendly interpretation would be that Santorum has found his calling as a “knowledge worker” in the Globalized Information Age, selling his brainpower rather than the simple brawn necessary to do one of those manufacturing jobs he hopes, as president, to revive. A less friendly interpretation . . . would be less friendly, and would involve the phrase “hocus-pocus.” Whichever: A professional profile like Santorum’s could only exist in the gold-lined belly of Leviathan.

There’s an irony to Santorum’s status as an AWW. He became a Washingtonian by unseating an incumbent in 1990. The centerpiece of the campaign was a TV spot showing a pleasant suburban house. A voice said “there’s something strange about this house.” It was where the incumbent lived, yet it wasn’t in his home district. It was in “the wealthiest area of Virginia”! The incumbent had gone native!

It’s the same area of Virginia where Santorum has lived since his victory in 1990. Inevitably, in 2006, his opponent leveled the same charge when Santorum couldn’t clearly explain who lived in his legal residence, a house in Pennsylvania (answer: sometimes a niece and her husband, sometimes nobody). But he couldn’t rebut the charge that the Washington suburbs were now his home, for all practical purposes.

Is this evidence of hypocrisy? I don’t know. What I do know is, it was a tacit, and touching, acknowledgment that after 20 years as an AWW, he was no longer suited to life in the real America. ♦

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Much Ado About New Hampshire

What reporters say and do when there's nothing to be said or done. **BY P.J. O'ROURKE**

Manchester, N.H.

On the gray, dank morning of the New Hampshire primary, I am experiencing a moment of deep existential despair about the nature of the American electoral process, profound doubts about the merits of democracy, and a painful, apathetic depression regarding the human political enterprise as we have known it for 3,000 years. Either that or I have a hangover.

It's possible I have a hangover. Old-fashioned journalism may be on the wane in this age of rank blog-gery, shrill tweets, and video streaming slush, but you wouldn't know that by the number of old-fashioned journalists packed into JD's Tavern at the Manchester Radisson last night practicing the traditional professionalism of their time-honored craft with help from Emily behind the bar. Make that a double, Emily.

The press corps, as it does every four years, has descended upon New Hampshire in such quantity that we vastly outnumber the flinty, taciturn Yankee natives upon whom we depend for pithy interview responses. According to the American Federation of Hacks bylaws for covering New Hampshire primaries, we are required to poke our notebook, tape recorder, microphone, or camera lens into the face of a flinty, taciturn Yankee native and ask him, for instance, "Why has Mitt Romney held a consistent lead in a state where, as any of us journalists will tell you, voters are most strongly attracted to the calm moderation

of Jon Huntsman, the intellectual independence of Newt Gingrich, the small government ethos of Ron Paul, the social conservatism of Rick Santorum, and the rugged individualism of Rick Perry? Can you explain this seeming contradiction?"

To which the flinty, taciturn Yankee native will respond, "Ah-yup." Followed by total silence.

Trouble is, there are only seven flinty, taciturn Yankee natives left in the state and two are in the VA hospital. All the other residents of New Hampshire—me, for example—are maddeningly similar to the people in the rest of the United States. This leaves members of the press corps with no one from whom to get pithy interview responses except each other, which we were doing with the help of Emily behind the bar.

This is what we've learned so far about the presidential primary race in New Hampshire: It seems that the varsity players all got food poisoning in the GOP cafeteria. Now the Republicans have the equipment manager, the water boy, the drum major, and the cheerleader out on the field for the championship game against their bitter rival from the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue. And the cheerleader went back to the locker room in a huff.

New Hampshire polling data are unreliable because, when you call the Granite State's registered Republicans and independents in the middle of dinner and ask them who they're going to vote for, they have a mouth full of mashed potatoes and you can't understand what they say. So nobody could make any predictions about the New Hampshire primary that everybody

knew Romney was going to win. But who'd come in second and third would be really important. Except it wouldn't be, since even though nobody knows who the 2012 Republican candidate will be, it's Romney.

You could tell this by watching the performance of the candidates in their debates, which we members of the press carefully observed right up until the moment we fell asleep—fortunately waking in time to get over to JD's Tavern at the Radisson.

Newt Gingrich is clearly the smartest man in the room. But the 2008 financial crisis showed us what happens when the smartest men in the room run things. Newt might turn the federal deficit into a collateralized debt obligation, get a subprime mortgage on the White House, and package U.S. foreign policy as a credit swap derivative. Newt has a lot of ideas. In fact, Newt has so many ideas that his head exploded. And that was in the '90s.

Speaking of exploding heads and being in your 90s, we're all waiting for Ron Paul's skull to crack open and reveal the cyborg robotic circuitry that has been controlling his body for most of the past century. That's when we'll hear the announcement to Earthlings that Israel is actually a Klingon battle cruiser parked on the Mediterranean littoral. (If you include Gaza and the West Bank, you can tell by the shape.) And even if Ron Paul isn't from outer space, his libertarianism is extreme enough to make members of New Hampshire's Free State Project think about moving to Canada. Ron Paul is so libertarian that, if he's elected, you won't just *get* to do what you want, you'll *have* to do what you want—a pack of cigarettes and a half gallon of butter pecan ice cream for lunch.

Which brings us to the non-smoker's Marlboro Man, Rick Perry. First, people were worried whether America was ready for another cock-sure, way-too-pleased-with-himself Texan as president. Then people were worried that Rick Perry might actually *be* George W. Bush with Botox, speech therapy, and a wig. But the speech

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therapy didn't work. And Perry has been pretty much left standing around saying he created a million jobs. "Gracias, Señor," say the million job-holders.

The other Rick wasn't getting much attention in New Hampshire either, other than when college kids were yelling at him for being pro-life unless you're a guy who wants to lead that life in a dress. Santorum is good on the social issues—in an election year that doesn't have any. Abortion may be a grievous moral wrong and the reproductive privacy rights embodied in *Griswold v. Connecticut* may be as important as George Stephanopoulos insists they are. But, at the moment, who cares? What with men down in the dumps about not having a job, moping around the house all day playing Wii in their underwear, and women all weepy and sad about how the Hope and Change thing didn't work out, nobody has gotten lucky since 2009.

Meanwhile Jon Huntsman would seem to be an ideal candidate. But he ran into a marketing problem. The Huntsman campaign asked, "Would you like a multimillionaire Mormon with experience in government, moderate political views to attract independent voters, a good head of salt-and-pepper hair to give him gravitas, and a swell-looking family?" Nope, already got one of those. That left Huntsman in the role of Mitt Romney's stunt double. (Okay, in this scene the Mitt character is supposed to speak Mandarin . . .)

And so we have Romney, or, as we call him in JD's Tavern, "Bob Dole without the sparkle." Mitt Romney—wealthy mature representative of the baby boom heeding the call to public service, or rich old white guy whose ego's gotten too big for the private sector? At least he likes to fire people. Me too. Alas, I'm self-employed, leaving me with only myself to hand the pink slip to. Not that this doesn't seem like a tempting option at times.

One more for the road, Emily. Got to drive back to my hometown, take a bullet for the team, and put my X on the ballot for Big Mittens. ♦

The Bain of His Campaign

Could inflict considerable pain.

BY TOD LINDBERG



Mitt Romney with William J. Bain Jr. in 1990

Question: Why would GOP candidates vying to establish themselves as the "conservative alternative" to Mitt Romney attack the one-time financier for his robust practice of free-market economics, layoffs included, during his years at Bain Capital? Answer: Well, because he is vulnerable on that point.

Let us put aside high principle and deep conviction long enough to observe that running for president usually entails an ambitious disposition. Although people occasionally run for some other reason—increased notoriety, book sales, the way-station to the vice presidential nomination—the most common motivation is raw

desire for the nation's highest office. And on the GOP side, Mitt Romney is the biggest obstacle in every other candidate's way in a year in which GOP chances look very good.

If you can take Romney down, you take him down; you can make it up to the capitalists later.

What was noteworthy about Tim Pawlenty's brief excursion into the GOP field was his inability to pull the trigger against Romney: One day last June, Pawlenty called Romney's Massachusetts health care reform legislation "Obamneycare," elevating himself above the rest of the field by slapping a target directly on the frontrunner; the day after at a GOP debate, Pawlenty couldn't quite bring himself to get in Romney's face with the charge. He backed down. He just didn't want to be president that much.

Tod Lindberg, a research fellow at the Hoover Institution and editor of Policy Review, is a contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

Although he might be kicking himself for dropping out so early, given that most everyone else in the race eventually shot up in the polls before falling under enhanced scrutiny, he shouldn't: He didn't have it in him.

Romney does. He has been doing nothing but run for president for six years now, and he wants it. He and his supporters clearly understood the peril Newt Gingrich presented as the Georgian got his moment at the top of the polls when it might count, on the eve of the actual voting. They responded to this mortal threat by killing it, with a barrage of attack ads in Iowa. Does anybody think Romney would decline, on principle, to use a Bain Capital equivalent against a growing threat to his own presidential ambition?

Fortunately for Romney, and maybe even for the future of capitalism, there is an invisible hand working in the attacks on him over Bain Capital. I leave aside the merits of the attacks as such: If one is going to defend capitalism seriously, one must acknowledge that its effects are at times egregious. The strong moral case for the free market does not ignore the egregious effects; rather, it says they are worth putting up with.

When Romney said, entirely unnecessarily but with conviction, "I like being able to fire people who provide services for me," he thought he was making a point about the discipline produced by market accountability. Anybody who's spent time at the local DMV, where you can't fire people who perform services for you, will appreciate the contrast. And indeed, let him who demands empathy from Mitt Romney first walk a mile in the tasseled loafers of a man who has laid off thousands.

But jeepers. The finance types who populate such books as *Liar's Poker* and *Bonfire of the Vanities* are just not especially attractive human beings, or anyway are attractive only insofar as one likes hanging with the bad boys. Romney has been, by all accounts, a good boy, which makes him exceptional. But he has clearly not entirely transcended his old milieu, where

they say "I'll bet you \$10,000" not in the hope you will back off, but in the hope you call the bet and they can take your money (and \$10,000 is chump change, by the way).

Romney's is the management perspective, through and through. I once had the experience of planning and administering a layoff of about a third of the 90-some people working for me. It was horrible. But you know what? It was a lot worse for the people losing their jobs.

The *Wall Street Journal's* iconoclastic "Best of the Web" columnist James Taranto, though joining conservatives deploring the cynicism of Newt Gin-

It's an openly avowed plan of the Obama reelection campaign to hit Romney hard over layoffs and outsourcing during his years at Bain. It's going to be emotionally charged if not gut-wrenching stuff.

grich and Rick Perry in embracing what sounded like a Democratic, anti-market line of attack on Romney, was among the first to understand that this attack is actually doing Romney a favor. Now is, in fact, a very opportune time for Romney to learn how to deal with such criticism.

It's an openly avowed plan of the Obama reelection campaign to hit Romney hard over layoffs and outsourcing during his years at Bain. Real people who worked at failing companies acquired and downsized by Bain will tell their personal stories of financial and emotional devastation. It's going to be emotionally charged if not gut-wrenching stuff.

Romney needs to be able to answer the charges. He needs an answer that he knows inside and out and can produce on demand whether he is fresh or tired. He needs an answer that doesn't make him sound either defensive, or complacent and arrogant. He needs an answer that radiates his comfort with it as it acknowledges the legitimacy

of the question itself. And to judge by his first forays over the past week in response to the first airing of these charges, he hasn't got one yet.

The counterattack from the right on Gingrich and Perry—which came mostly from Romney boosters but also from some prominent Romney skeptics, notably Rush Limbaugh—was essentially an effort to change the subject. It was surely heartfelt, either in the straight up "pro-capitalist is pro-Bain" sense or in the attenuated form that attacking Romney on these terms would give aid and comfort to Democrats. And indeed, Democrats will no doubt use Gingrich and Perry soundbites in the fall if Romney is the nominee. One wonders, though, how damaging such clips will be. In the 1980 primary season, George H. W. Bush famously accused Ronald Reagan of "voodoo economics," and not only did this not hurt Reagan, Bush ended up his vice presidential nominee on a ticket that won in a landslide.

Suppose Gingrich and the rest hadn't brought up Bain. Romney and those around him would still know the attack was coming, but they wouldn't have had the visceral experience of feeling its sting and having to respond—in fact, failing to respond well. They would have had to learn about their weakness and try to correct it under the much higher-pressure circumstances of the general election campaign. And all those news stories now appearing—"At Bain, Romney believed in 'creative destruction'" (*Washington Post*, January 12)—would still be in the can, waiting for release in support of an Obama onslaught.

Unfortunately, Romney's position vis-à-vis the GOP nomination is probably strong enough now for him to address this issue by ignoring it. If he does, he will have missed an opportunity to work on something he needs to get right long before November.

His dislike for Gingrich now is probably as thorough as vice versa. Which is too bad, because Romney really ought to thank Gingrich for raising Bain now—maybe buy him a pair of cufflinks from Tiffany's. ♦

The Circular Firing Squad

A GOP specialty.

BY FRED BARNES

The Republican death wish is back. It's the habit of Republicans to do something crazy or stupid that diminishes their election prospects. Think of Watergate in the 1970s. In the 2006 midterm elections, the disclosure of Florida congressman Mark Foley's flirtation with Capitol pages turned a defeat into a landslide loss. A few unelectable candidates denied Republicans a shot at winning the Senate in 2010.

Here we go again. Newt Gingrich and Rick Perry, with their attacks on Mitt Romney's record at Bain Capital, have gone far toward poisoning the well for Republicans this year—and not only in the contest against President Obama. The endless TV debates have trivialized the race for the Republican nomination. And maladroit moves by congressional Republicans have let Obama pose as a born-again tax cutter.

The result is that Republicans are less well off in 2012 than they would otherwise be. Maybe they'll recover. Perhaps Obama's subpar performance in the White House is so palpable that nothing could override it as the dominant factor in the politics of 2012.

But for now, Republicans have reason to worry. Thanks to Gingrich and company, Democrats have been handed a gift that's likely to keep on giving all year. Their attacks on Romney as a ruthless, uncaring businessman play into Obama's reelection theme that the rich are the source of America's economic trouble. Perry calls Romney

a "vulture capitalist," a tag certain to stick in the minds of voters.

Because of his campaign strategy, Romney has all but encouraged opponents to go after his career at Bain Capital from 1984 to 1999. As Republi-



can consultant Jeffrey Bell has pointed out, presidential candidates need a big idea. Ronald Reagan had two or three. Romney's idea for restoring good times to America isn't a policy or program or innovation. It's himself. His performance at Bain demonstrates he has the know-how and experience to create economic growth and jobs. That's his calling card.

As a private equity firm, Bain buys struggling companies, overhauls them, and sells them at a hefty profit. Only sometimes, the Bain treatment fails, a company is liquidated, and jobs are lost. These cases are the basis of left-wing attacks on Bain and private equity firms in general and, more broadly, on free market capitalism.

Gingrich, Perry, and to a lesser

extent Jon Huntsman have adopted the left-wing critique and accused Romney of purposely looting and bankrupting companies and making millions in the process. Romney has long expected Obama to launch such an attack, but not his fellow Republicans.

The consequences could be extremely damaging for Republicans. Consultant Frank Luntz fears the charge will not only harm Romney's chances of winning the presidency, assuming he's the GOP nominee, but also corrode the Republican brand and weaken Republicans in Senate and House races.

That may be the worst case scenario, but it's plausible. The Bain issue was exploited successfully, though unfairly, against Romney once before—in 1994 when he tried to capture Teddy Kennedy's Senate seat. Kennedy ran ads featuring workers laid off from a company Bain had shuttered. The ads worked. True, that was in the liberal oasis of Massachusetts, and they might not do as well for Obama in swing states this fall.

As for all the nationally televised debates, they aren't a huge problem. But they've soaked up time that candidates could have better used to build strong rationales for their election. A few debates would be fine, one each, say, in Iowa, New Hampshire, South Carolina, and Florida. But over two dozen? That's made them a distraction. And while Obama has gotten off scot-free, the candidates have often looked like squabbling children.

If anyone is to blame, it's the candidates for dutifully showing up. Neither the sponsors nor the media questioners are at fault. They're doing their job. The debates have gotten impressive ratings, and the questioners have enlivened the two-hour sessions by spurring conflict, which usually puts the candidates in an unfavorable light. This is how moderator David Gregory began the questioning in an NBC debate last week: "Speaker Gingrich, why shouldn't Governor Romney be the nominee of this party?"

GARY LOGKE

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What about his record concerns you most or makes him disqualified to be the nominee?"

Meanwhile, one might have thought it would be impossible, or at least less than credible, for Obama to pretend to be a tax cutter. Yet he's managed that with assistance from the media. When congressional Republicans were at odds on whether to extend the payroll tax holiday for 2 months or 12 months, the White House acted as if Republicans opposed the tax cut altogether. The press was happy to promote this false idea.

Earlier, Republicans learned the hard way that nothing good comes from negotiating on taxes and spending with Obama or Democrats. Talks last summer were manipulated by the president so he'd be remembered for proposing a "grand bargain" to tame the deficit and House Speaker John Boehner for walking out.

The supercommittee talks were no better. In his September speech to Congress, Obama cast Republicans as obstructionists and thus foils in his reelection campaign. Given this, Democrats weren't about to agree with Republicans on \$1.2 trillion in deficit reduction. Any accommodation with Republicans would undermine Obama. Republicans were left to deal with the alternative of a mandatory \$600 billion cut in defense spending.

Obama's strategy now "appears to consist of creating populist confrontations with Congress and then complaining that Washington is broken because Republicans won't let the president have his way," writes Yuval Levin of the Ethics and Public Policy Center. That won't help Obama, though, since it suggests that, even with the Senate in Democratic hands, he can't get things done.

But it doesn't have to help so long as it hurts Republicans. Obama's strategy is like the old joke about two hikers confronted by an angry bear. "We'd better run for it," one says. "Don't you know you can't outrun a bear?" the other says. "I don't have to outrun the bear," the first hiker says. "I only have to outrun you." ♦

A Sweater Vest and a Blue Collar

Rickonomics.

BY JONATHAN V. LAST

Manchester, N.H.

As Rick Santorum moved from Iowa to New Hampshire, his particular brand of populism came into sharper focus. Having secured a base of social conservatives in Iowa, he was looking to add blue-collar voters to his coalition.

To woo them, Santorum made the elimination of all taxes on manufacturing the centerpiece of his New Hampshire campaign. He placed it at the fulcrum of a narrative about America making the transition to a knowledge-based economy while still providing economic mobility for the non-college-educated.

At an event in Salem just before the primary, for example, he talked about the class divide:

What we've seen in this country, unfortunately, is a knowledge-based economy—which is certainly where our country is and is going—but it's a knowledge-based economy that is just rewarding and giving opportunities to some over others. And in this case it's white-collar workers and the college-educated versus the rest of society. Among the college-educated, even now, the unemployment rate is about 4.3 or 4.4 percent. Whereas among non-college-educated, it's in the double-digits. . . . You see that differentiation but you don't hear anybody in this political environment talking about it. I'm the only candidate out there on either side other than the president. And when *he* talks about it, he talks about it in terms of "the 99 and the 1." He talks about it so as to divide America.

Santorum is most definitely not

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preaching divisiveness. His argument is that knowledge-based, white-collar jobs generate tremendous wealth, while government policies—taxes, regulations, OSHA, the NLRB, EPA strictures, foolish energy policies, and a hostile legal climate—have disproportionately damaged the manufacturing sector. And it is this crucial sector that transforms knowledge-based innovations into actual goods—and then channels wealth throughout the rest of society.

"Manufacturing is a highly value-added process," he explains. "And it has a huge multiplier effect within the community from a wealth standpoint. If you look at the average job in America today, it pays about \$56,000 a year. The average manufacturing job pays \$77,000. So there is a difference. There is that ability to rise if we can revitalize the manufacturing sector of the economy."

Santorum readily admits that America won't be competitive in all sectors of manufacturing. "We're not competing with Vietnam or Myanmar or Thailand for the low-wage, high-labor-content jobs," Santorum says. "Those jobs, there may be niches where we can compete there, but by and large that's not the area we're going to get back. . . . [W]here we can be competitive on a broader scale are skilled jobs that pay more money, that have a lot more automation involved in the process. And so it takes skills to run the computerized equipment that's necessary to make these products. . . . That's the area that can expand."

The second half of Santorum's blue-collar pitch is a rallying cry for traditional, small-town values—which he ties to his economic arguments. "If

we don't have strong families, you can't really have a strong economy over the long-term," he says. "Why? Because poverty rates go way up when marriages break down. Whether it's through divorce or out-of-wedlock births. You have much higher rates of poverty and economic stress."

Santorum is fond of telling audiences about a 2009 Brookings study by Ron Haskins and Isabel Sawhill which found that you need do only three things to avoid poverty in America: Graduate from high school, get a full-time job, and get married before you have a baby. Americans who check off those three boxes have only a 2 percent chance of falling into poverty. (The work of Haskins and Sawhill is closely related to a proposition advanced by William Galston some years before. Galston showed that there was only an 8 percent chance of poverty if you graduate from high school, get married before you have a baby, and do not have a baby before age 20. Galston often quipped that in America, if you

can just hit those marks, then the rest of life essentially takes care of itself.)

Practically speaking, in getting people to check off the items on that list it helps to have guiding moral precepts. And while he didn't trumpet social conservatism here in New Hampshire, he was willing to talk

He talks about morality out loud: 'Faith instills virtue, and virtue allows for freedom. The less virtuous we are as a society, the more laws.'

about morality out loud. "Faith has played an integral role in that in America," he said. "To pull that away and say 'faith, religion, really has to be put out into a private affair' removes a vitally important aspect of American society that allows us to be free. Because faith instills virtue, and virtue allows for freedom. The less virtuous

we are as a society, the more laws."

With secularization, he argues, comes regulation—which can only lead to corporatization. "What's happened in Western Europe," he says, "is the corporatization of the economy. Why? Because Big likes Big. Big Government likes Big Business likes Big Labor."

In New Hampshire, the exit polls suggested that Santorum's blue-collar appeal failed to take hold. His numbers among middle-income voters, non-college-educated voters, and voters in small towns—the people at the center of his pitch—were indistinguishable from his total. The only groups with whom Santorum showed real strength were voters who identified themselves as strong conservatives or said that social issues were important—the voters he'd already connected with in Iowa.

If Santorum is going to break out of this box and become a serious alternative to Romney, he has a lot of work to do. ♦



Terrorism and the First Amendment

The right way to limit dangerous speech.

BY GARY SCHMITT

The left has not been happy with the Obama administration's handling of the war on terror for some time now. In addition to leaving Guantánamo open, the administration has maintained Bush-era practices such as open-ended detention for terrorist suspects, reaffirming the "state secrets" privilege, and expanding exponentially the use of drone strikes (including against American citizens). Then just before Christmas, in Boston, the administration successfully prosecuted Tarek Mehanna, a pharmacy college graduate, on various terrorism-related charges—a case the local ACLU has described as being "used by the government to really narrow First Amendment activity in dangerous new ways."

Certainly, the government had plenty of reasons to worry about Mehanna. He talked about the morality of engaging in violent jihadist acts with friends, searched for ways to receive terrorist training, traveled to Yemen in a failed effort to find that training, schemed about ways to travel to Iraq to kill U.S. soldiers fighting there, and discussed with friends the possibility of a terrorist attack on an American shopping mall.

In addition, Mehanna translated into English various jihadist materials and had them distributed as part of a design, according to the government, to "radicalize" and "inspire" others. As he told a friend,

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he considered Osama bin Laden his intellectual "father" and, in turn, saw his advocacy efforts as making himself part of al Qaeda's "media wing."

On the face of it, the government's case against the Massachu-



Tarek Mehanna

setts Muslim for lying to government investigators and conspiring to kill American soldiers abroad was sufficiently strong to ensure a conviction. The more problematic element of the case, however—and what makes it of interest from the point of view of constitutional law—was whether his advocacy activities constituted punishable "material support" to a terrorist organization (weapons, money, training, or expert assistance, for example) or whether they were speech protected by the First Amendment.

The government's case in this regard had its weaknesses. First, there is a question whether the "material support" statute should be read to encompass advocacy. Clearly, Mehanna's efforts were supportive

of al Qaeda, but on its face the law appears to apply only to speech that constitutes training or imparts a specific skill or expert advice. Indeed, the statute explicitly states that its provisions should not be "construed or applied so as to abridge the exercise of rights guaranteed under the First Amendment."

The second issue is the requirement, affirmed by the Supreme Court in *Holder v. Humanitarian Law Project* (2010), that the material support statute "reaches only material support coordinated with or under the direction of a designated foreign terrorist organization. Independent advocacy that might be viewed as promoting the group's legitimacy is not covered." Here, again, the prosecution appeared to be stretching the facts in the case. The evidence was thin that Mehanna was acting at the direction of a designated terrorist organization, and the government was reduced to arguing (in part) that this requirement was satisfied by the fact that he was responding to a general call by al Qaeda to spread its message and conspiring with others to do so. As Boston College law professor George Brown has noted, the federal government was "pushing the statute . . . to prosecute potential terrorists further in this case than in any other."

Moreover, it is difficult to see how the government's case against Mehanna can be squared with *Brandenburg v. Ohio* (1969), which for more than four decades has been the standing rule when it comes to limiting speech. There, the Supreme Court held that speech cannot be criminalized unless it is meant to incite "imminent lawless action" and is likely to do so. In reaching this finding, the justices overturned an Ohio statute that prohibited speech advocating violence, including "methods of terrorism."

From the ACLU's point of view, the fact that Mehanna's advocacy efforts "may be offensive or disagreeable, or that they may 'create like-minded youth'"—a phrase used by the government—"is of no consequence" when set against the First Amendment.

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But, of course, it is of considerable consequence to the government and the population it is sworn to protect if such advocacy increases home-grown terror. This is why other liberal democracies like France and the United Kingdom have laws on their books criminalizing the advocacy and glorification of terrorism.

Paradoxically, the majority in *Brandenburg* extols free speech, but at the cost of implicitly underestimating the power of speech itself. As al Qaeda and its jihadist allies know all too well, speech educates and can provide an intellectual milieu that, over time and unconnected to any particular acts or specific direction from an organization, elicits the kind of terrorist behavior that the government is legitimately in the business of preventing.

Rather than have the government stretch the meaning of statutes and evidence, Congress and the president should enact a statute that straightforwardly makes it illegal to publish or circulate materials that support, praise, or advocate terrorism as long as we are still formally at war with al Qaeda and its allies. Such a law would not require a return to a more sweeping limit on speech built on past broad notions of sedition. Rather, returning to the “clear and present danger” standard put forward by Justice Holmes in *Schenck v. United States* (1919) would be sufficient, as long as “present danger” is not understood to mean the far more restrictive “imminent danger.” Sensibly drawn, the measure would provide sufficient leeway for citizens to engage in legitimate journalism and criticism, however harsh, of government policies.

No doubt such a law would be challenged by civil libertarians, but if nothing else it would give the Supreme Court a chance to treat *Brandenburg* for the anomaly it is—a decision like so many in the Warren Court-era that is more libertarian than necessary under the Constitution and burdens the government unnecessarily in carrying out its duty to protect the lives and property of citizens. ♦

The Worst White House Aide

Valerie Jarrett’s perfect record . . . for giving bad advice. BY MATTHEW CONTINETTI

If for nothing else, Jodi Kantor’s *The Obamas* will be remembered for an anecdote from 2010. After he spent hours disputing an allegation in the French media that Michelle Obama thought life in the White House was “hell,” press secretary Robert Gibbs encountered senior adviser Valerie Jarrett. She told him the first lady was unhappy with his work. Gibbs exploded in a rage, informing Jarrett that she didn’t “know what the f— you’re talking about” and that if Mrs. Obama was displeased, well, “f— her too.” Subsequent relations between the senior adviser and press secretary were strained. Gibbs told Kantor he stopped taking Jarrett seriously “as an adviser to the president of the United States.”

It’s about time. Many have wondered—and the *Washington Post* asked last year—“What, exactly, does Valerie Jarrett do?” No one has a clear answer. Whatever she does, the U.S. taxpayer pays her \$172,200 a year to do it. A confidante of the Obamas for more than two decades, variously described as the president’s “closest adviser” and a member of the “innermost ring” of influence, Jarrett clearly has the first couple’s ears. She seems to function as a sort of third party to the Obama marriage, guarding the president and his wife from bad news and outside influence while meeting with Lady Gaga. Her lack of any national political experience whatsoever—she had never been to Iowa before Obama competed there three years ago—has not prevented her from shaping the

White House’s political strategy and influencing economic and foreign policies. One might liken her to Don Corleone’s *consigliere* Tom Hagen, bedecked in a designer shawl, except Hagen gave better advice.

What Valerie Jarrett does best is represent the Obama administration in microcosm. She embodies its insularity, its cronyism, its cluelessness. Born in Iran to a prominent African-American family from Chicago, she took degrees at Stanford and Michigan Law. She worked briefly as a corporate lawyer but hated every moment. So she decided to “give back,” which is Chicago code for cashing in. She campaigned for Harold Washington, Chicago’s first black mayor, and worked for him in the corporation counsel’s office. Washington died in 1987, but Jarrett remained in government, working for his successor, Mayor Richard M. “Richie” Daley, son of legendary boss Richard J. Daley. It was all upward from there.

Before long Jarrett stood at the intersection of private interest and public power. She became Daley’s deputy chief of staff and was later appointed to various boards and quasigovernmental agencies that award lucrative contracts—the Chicago Transit Board, the Commission for Planning and Development for the City of Chicago, the University of Chicago Medical Center, and so on. Her social standing, combined with her positions in government and her well-compensated seats on the boards of many companies, magnified Jarrett’s power. She knew everybody. Everybody wanted to know her.

In 1991, another disillusioned attorney, Michelle Robinson, applied

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for a job in Mayor Daley's office. Jarrett interviewed her. The two women were instant friends. Before accepting the position, however, Robinson made an unusual request: Would Jarrett mind having dinner with her and her fiancé, Barack Obama? Jarrett accepted, and she has never been far from the couple since.

President Obama, who grew up partly in Indonesia, seems to be drawn to Americans who have spent considerable time abroad, who feel askew in their native land. Jarrett told author David Remnick that the reason she bonded with Barack Obama was that "he and I shared a view of where the United States fit in the world, which is often different from the view people have who have not traveled outside the United States as young children." Remnick goes on to write that Jarrett viewed America "as one country among many, rather than as the center of all wisdom and experience." Sounds like the president, all right.

Jarrett was an early supporter of Obama's political career. From her post at the nexus of Chicago business and politics, she was helpful in introducing the ambitious state senator to rich and well-connected figures. The association was not without embarrassment, however. Jarrett was an occasional collaborator with the developer Antoin Rezko, whose 2006 arrest for public corruption became a shallow pothole in Obama's road to the White House. And Jarrett herself provided some bad headlines: In addition to her public burdens, she ran Habitat Co., which received taxpayer subsidies to manage low-income housing projects seemingly into the ground. The feds seized one complex in 2006; another, Grove Parc Plaza, was exposed as a decrepit slum by the *Boston Globe* in 2008.



Robert Gibbs, Valerie Jarrett, and President Obama at West Point, December 2009

The Chicago method was on full display after Obama defeated John McCain, when functionaries from across the state of Illinois lobbied for the president-elect's now vacant Senate seat. Evidence released at the trial of former Illinois governor Rod Blagojevich reveals that Jarrett, who has never been elected to anything, wanted to replace her protégé in the Senate. This was something incoming chief of staff Rahm Emanuel was only too happy to make happen, since he had no desire for Jarrett to join the Obamas at the White House. But the president-elect overruled both advisers. He wanted Jarrett by his side. Later she became mistrustful of Emanuel when she learned that he had tried to sideline her.

The feeling was mutual. One of Obama's more flowery hagiographers, journalist Richard Wolffe, divides the administration into "revivalists," who want the president

to be true to the spirit of hope and change, and "survivalists," who believe compromise is necessary in a divided country. Jarrett is the leader of the revivalists, and her fingerprints are on every blunder and boo-boo the White House has ever made. She bragged to a conference of leftwing bloggers that she had hired noted environmentalist and 9/11 Truther Van Jones, later forced to resign. She campaigned extensively for Obama to travel to Copenhagen and make the case for holding the 2016 summer games in Chicago before the International Olympic Committee. Obama took the trip; the IOC chose Rio. During this time Jarrett met with George Kaiser, the Obama bundler and investor whose solar-panel manufacturer Solyndra was up for a huge loan guarantee. Jarrett, according to government documents, was warned about Solyndra's shaky finances on the eve of the president's visit to the

company's facility in Fremont, California. Obama went anyway.

One could be forgiven for thinking that the president tends to side with the revivalists because they feed his ego. Jarrett's descriptions of Obama are adoring. "I knew the unique combination of leadership qualities that Barack has would push him to greatness," she told Richard Wolffe. "They always have. Barack has this kind of a—what's the way to describe it?—restless spirit." Obama, she told Remnick, has "been bored to death his whole life. He's just too talented to do what ordinary people do. He would never be satisfied with what other people do." Fed a constant diet of words like these, is it any wonder Obama decided to press on with his health care overhaul after Scott Brown won in Massachusetts, refused any meaningful compromise with Republicans during last summer's debt ceiling fight, and insisted on giving one "major" address after another even though they have done nothing to advance his agenda or salvage his underwater approval rating?

The House is lost, Obama's reelection looks dicey, but Jarrett is flying high. In one sense she is the most successful Obama courtier of them all: She has outlasted her rivals. Gibbs is gone. Internal clashes led to Emanuel's sudden discovery that he had always wanted to be mayor of Chicago. Emanuel's replacement, fellow Chicagoan Bill Daley (brother of Richie), was muscled out last week; word is he fought with Jarrett too. Her persistence is matched only by her tone-deafness. Wolffe describes the president's first visit to Chicago after his inauguration. From the window of his helicopter Obama could see that his arrival had caused a major traffic jam. "We shouldn't have come here in rush hour," he reflected. This was too much for Jarrett. "You know what, Mr. President?" she said. "You may not be enjoying your new life, but I am."

Better enjoy it while it lasts—which won't be for long if Obama continues to listen to his inept political fixer. ♦

The GOP's Philadelphia Story

Look which party finally won a municipal race.

BY KEVIN FERRIS

Philadelphia has a lesson for national Republicans this year: Even a feuding, sometimes dysfunctional party can pull together a broad-based coalition behind a candidate and win.

Case in point is Al Schmidt, Philadelphia's new Republican city commissioner.

Schmidt, a 40-year-old former federal auditor, had to fight his own party to capture one of three seats on the commission, which oversees elections and voter registration. Yet his

Republicans ran Philadelphia from the Civil War to the early 1950s. The Union League may still stand, but the party itself is in ruins. There hasn't been a Republican mayor since 1952.

call for honest and efficient government resonated with libertarians and progressives, Tea Party Republicans and Greens.

"He was willing to sit down and talk about third parties and equal access," said Hugh Giordano, a union organizer and Green party member who was frustrated at the way previous city commissioners treated his party. "That's credibility."

Endorsements for Schmidt ranged

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from former governor Edward G. Rendell, a Democrat, to U.S. Senator Pat Toomey, a Republican; from Americans for Democratic Action to the Eagle Forum. Schmidt's message was hard to resist.

"This was a municipal race focused on corruption and efficiency and effectiveness and transparency," he says. "Who disagrees with that? Other than the people who are invested in the system not working?"

In Philadelphia, there are plenty such people, and they understand the problems that Schmidt's victory presents. Here's how a fellow reformer, Democrat Brett Mandel, summed it up in *Philadelphia Magazine* shortly after the election:

"Al is a threat to the status quo."

Schmidt himself sees a shifting landscape, but argues that it's not about him.

"Something big is going on. It's just hard to identify what that is," he says. "Is that something the death throes of a party wildly grasping for scraps, or is it something productive, where you have more qualified people interested in running?"

The answer is a little of both.

Republicans ran Philadelphia from the Civil War to the early 1950s. The Union League may still stand, but the party itself is in ruins. The decline began with the rise of Democratic reformers Richardson Dilworth and Joseph Clark in the 1940s. Like Schmidt, they preached the gospel of good government and the need for a viable two-party system. They worked their way up—sometimes winning, sometimes losing—in races for city treasurer, controller, and district attorney,

before Clark became mayor in 1952.

There hasn't been a Republican mayor since. Only two Republicans have been district attorney in that time, and one of them, Arlen Specter, was actually a registered Democrat when he first ran on the GOP ticket. The party holds 2 of about 30 state house and senate seats from the city. The de facto leader of the party, general counsel Michael Meehan, who inherited his post from his father and grandfather, anointed a lifelong Democrat as his sacrificial mayoral candidate last year.

True, it's tough to recruit candidates when Democrats have a six-to-one edge in voter registration. But New York and Los Angeles have the same problem, and they've elected GOP mayors in recent years.

Is Schmidt's election a sign of the GOP's own Dilworth and Clark moment? The state party thinks so.

"This is the beginning of a resurgence," says state GOP chair Rob Gleason. "It's microscopic and under the radar, but I think people will look back at the election of 2011 as a turning point for the Republican party in Philadelphia."

If there is a resurgence, Gleason will deserve part of the credit. Gleason watched as Barack Obama used his 475,000-vote edge from Philadelphia to steamroll the rest of the commonwealth. It's a perennial problem. Keystone State Republicans not only have to win their districts, they also have to amass enough votes to help offset Philly's huge Democratic wave.

After 2008, Gleason decided it was time to do more than urge the city GOP to try harder. He raised money to put his own people on the ground, including Schmidt. They registered voters and recruited

committee people, the folks who make up the ground game on Election Days. When the new push began, almost two-thirds of 3,000 GOP committee posts were vacant. Some had been empty for years.

Finally inspired, the city Republican bosses geared up for battle—against Gleason. Too many new committee people could threaten the boss's hold on power.

"I spent Election Day driving from polling place to polling place, preparing to concede because every Democratic committeeman outside Center City and Chestnut Hill had a ballot with Duda on it," Schmidt says. "I don't know what factor we were outnumbered by, but it was a lot."

Two months later, and now sworn into office, Schmidt is encouraged but realistic. "It's not like the city is going



An Al Schmidt campaign poster

Thus, in 2010, Philadelphians were treated to the spectacle of the city GOP establishment fighting efforts to expand the Republican party, even going out of its way to kick young African Americans off ballots.

The party was embarrassed further when many of the signatures on its challenges to the new committee people appeared to be forged. (It's Philadelphia, so, yes, one signature was that of a woman who had been dead almost a year.) Meehan withdrew the challenges, blaming unnamed ward leaders. Hoping for more details, the district attorney's office has been investigating.

It was no surprise, then, that the party refused to back Schmidt for city commissioner the next year. The real shocker came in November, when Schmidt beat GOP incumbent Joe Duda, whose campaign epitomized the way the city's GOP leadership and Democrats often work together to fight reformers.

to turn into a Republican majority city," he says. "There's no race that's going to be easy for Republicans."

Schmidt hopes, however, that new leadership and a more united party can focus not just on the presidential election, but also on races for the state legislature, on recruitment of competent candidates, and on the long-neglected basics of party building.

"I don't think the solution is a grand-slam home run," he says, reminding supporters that the mayor's race isn't the only game in town. "I think the solution is to hit a single. That will help get a lot of people beyond the defeatism that's there right now."

Republicans have to be prepared for the long haul, Schmidt says. He points to Dilworth and Clark—the last century's threat to the status quo—as a reminder of both the challenges and the potential the GOP faces.

"They lost and lost and lost and lost—until they won." ♦

Obama Burdens the Banks

The costliest regulation you've never heard of.

BY SAM BATKINS & IKE BRANNON

There are a number of pricey regulations that have received attention of late: net neutrality, new ozone standards, countless regulations stemming from the passage of the Dodd-Frank bill. These rules typically garner a mention in the *Wall Street Journal*, a formal Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA) review, and, in some cases, a lengthy Regulatory Impact Analysis.

However, the costliest proposed regulation to come down the pike in some time has nearly escaped detection. Early last year the Treasury Department published its "Guidance on Reporting Interest Paid to Nonresident Aliens," which would require banks to report to the Internal Revenue Service the interest paid to foreign depositors with a U.S. bank account. While the Treasury and the regulatory apparatus insist that the cost and inconvenience of adhering to this regulation is next to nothing, the rule may cost the U.S. banking system hundreds of billions of dollars in lost deposits, in turn costing our economy billions of dollars, while providing no discernible benefit to banks, depositors, taxpayers, or the U.S. economy.

The notion that banks should report the interest paid on accounts held by nonresident aliens is not a new one: The Bush administration proposed this rule in 2002 for residents of 15 European nations in order to help our allies deter tax fraud, and with the hope that they might do the same for us. Foreigners have never paid U.S. taxes on interest earned in

U.S. banks and would continue being exempt under the proposed rule; the sole requirement would be that banks report the interest paid to these account-holders to the IRS.

The Treasury estimates that the costs to comply with the regulation would be minimal, with banks needing no more than 15 minutes to comply, summing to a grand total (when multiplied by the roughly 8,000 banks and other depository institutions affected) of 2,000 hours of employee time, or somewhere just south of \$100,000 per annum. The *de minimis* projected cost means that the regulation is not subject to the detailed cost-benefit analysis required for regulations costing more than \$100 million.

If a few hours of filling out paperwork were the only cost incurred, then the lack of attention would be appropriate. But a much bigger problem—for banks and the economy—than the compliance costs is the threat of a massive capital flight. The United States is a very popular place for foreigners to park their savings, for a variety of reasons.

For starters, we offer a stable government that can be trusted to keep its hands off deposits—something that appeals greatly to residents of Venezuela, Argentina, Ecuador, and any number of other unstable countries. Second, the United States still offers at least a semifunctional financial market: Bank deposits are federally insured, inflation rates have been low and stable for decades, and there's a reasonable expectation (though far from a guarantee) of avoiding a financial crisis on these shores.

As a result, a staggeringly large amount of savings from abroad is

currently held in U.S. banks. While the Treasury asserts that "deposits held by nonresident alien individuals are a very small percentage of the [total] deposits held by U.S. financial institutions," that very small percentage amounts to more than \$3.7 trillion, according to a 2011 Bureau of Economic Analysis report, hardly a pittance.

The massive amount of foreign savings here is a boon to the U.S. economy. Banks lend against these deposits, mainly to companies here in the United States. Jay Cochran, an economist at George Mason University, studied the impact that the more limited 2002 reporting requirements would have had on the banking system, estimating that it would have resulted in nearly \$100 billion in deposits leaving the U.S. banking system. A reporting regulation that covers all foreign accounts would likely result in two to three times more capital flight.

The impact would be harmful not just for the banks but for the broader economy. The decline in profits in the banking sector alone from a roughly quarter-trillion-dollar capital flight would be in the range of \$5-10 billion—which makes a mockery of the notion that the costs of the regulation are under \$100,000.

The losses would be felt especially in Miami and Los Angeles, where deposits from Latin America are concentrated. The Florida Office of Financial Regulation surveyed 16 banks chartered in that state and found that an average of 41 percent of their deposits were from nonresident aliens, with one bank reporting the number at 92 percent. Our fractional-reserve banking system means that one dollar of deposits supports multiples of that in loans; a withdrawal of \$200-300 billion in deposits would diminish lending in the ballpark of \$1.5 to \$2 trillion.

Economists across the political spectrum have agitated for a change to our antiquated international tax system, which keeps an estimated \$1.5 trillion in corporate profits parked in banks overseas rather than invested in the United States, arguing that such a change would provide a potent stimulus to the financial sector and the larger

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economy. Requiring the reporting of nonresident interest income to the IRS would undo most of the anticipated benefits of any such change to international tax laws.

Not surprisingly, mandatory reporting of nonresident alien interest has a disproportionate impact on banks in states with large immigrant populations, and the Florida and Texas congressional delegations are apoplectic over the administration's proposal. Senator Marco Rubio of Florida—joined by his Democratic counterpart, Bill Nelson, and 18 other senators—introduced legislation (S. 1506) that would rescind the regulation. In the House of Representatives, every member of the Florida delegation, including Democratic National Committee chair Debbie Wasserman Schultz, opposes the administration proposal.

The lack of discernible benefits has left the administration with few supporters of this regulation. The left-wing Citizens for Tax Justice provides the most full-throated response, claiming in congressional testimony that the

regulation would help to root out tax evaders and “[bring] much-needed revenue into the Treasury.” It cites no data or research to that effect, however.

Since the administration shows no signs of pulling back on this regulation, it leaves its opponents looking to the courts and Congress for relief. Neither is promising. Successful challenges to regulation outside a courtroom are rare, and Congress has successfully employed the Congressional Review Act, Congress's only tool to rescind regulations, just once since its inception.

But the administration has proven susceptible to political pressure aimed at halting onerous regulations. The Department of Labor's proposed regulation to redefine (and expand) fiduciary standards created a financial industry uproar about compliance costs and a host of unintended (and unacknowledged) consequences. This resulted in the administration withdrawing the rule for further study so as to lessen its potential employment impacts.

The Department of Education's “gainful employment” rule targeting for-profit colleges also experienced significant political and outside pressure that resulted in a drastic scaling back of the rule's impact, saving thousands of jobs.

And the administration very publicly rebuked EPA's attempt to lower the threshold for ozone standards, with outside protests prompting the only formal “Return Letter” from OIRA administrator Cass Sunstein.

On its face the reporting requirement for nonresident alien interest seems trivial, at least according to the administration. In fact, it would create a significant drag on the economy at a time when we can least afford it. Lending will shrink, bank industry profits will fall by billions, and a number of banks may fail as a result.

Perhaps political prudence will convince an administration now in reelection mode what sound policy analysis should have made clear to it previously: The proposed regulation is simply indefensible. ♦

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Past Their Sell-By Date

*A dwindling group of Occupiers
take on the New Hampshire primary*

BY MATT LABASH

Manchester, N.H.

The New Hampshire primary, more than most stops on the campaign trail, is no place for human dignity. It sits at the crossroads of abasement and overhype. It is populated by rubberneckers, drunks, moral pygmies, and publicity tapeworms—and that’s before you ever leave media HQ at the Radisson Hotel on Elm Street.

But to make a reporter truly question his career choice, one need only cross the street to Veterans Memorial Park. While the election circus is in town this week, the park is inhabited by Occupy The New Hampshire Primary, a subsidiary of Occupy Wall Street™—the anticorporatist, anti-one-percenter, anti-everything movement that since last September has proved that the Tea Party ranks a distant second when it comes to screaming in the streets while wearing fruity costumes.

It is here that I encounter Vermin Supreme, shouting through an electric megaphone about getting the money out of politics while wearing a rubber wading boot on his head. You’ve probably heard of Vermin already. He’s been featured everywhere from CNN to the *Washington Post*. With flowing gray hair and beard, he looks like Tolkien’s Gandalf, except instead of wearing wizard’s robes, he dons a loud tiger-striped jacket and seven or eight ties simultaneously, reasoning that “the more ties you wear, the higher rank you are.”

Between being an odd-jobber—doing everything from painting houses to dressing as Babar the Elephant for the Baltimore Museum of Art—Vermin is a career gadfly activist. Like so many other opportunistic grievance-groupers, he’s hitched his wagon to Occupy, realizing the publicity they generate is a force multiplier, which helps his fledgling

campaign for president. He’s on the ballot in New Hampshire, challenging Barack Obama on the Democratic side. Vermin’s issues—which are deliberately beside the point, like most of the issues of mainstream candidates running this cycle—include mandatory tooth-brushing (“Strong Teeth for a Strong America”) and a pony for every citizen. It’s a promise that’s only slightly less sustainable than the ones his competition made in 2008.

I ask Vermin the significance of the boot on his head. “It stands for all that is good with America,” he says. “I don’t get it, I respond. “Oh man! You and the media with your tough, follow-up questions,” he grimaces. “You got me, fella. What this boot is really about is attracting media interest. It’s like a f—ing hooker’s red light, okay? Who’s the guy with the boot? You come over and start talking to me. There you go, it works!”

We chat for a while about his hopes and dreams. “My own personal goal was always to beat Lyndon LaRouche,” Vermin confides. He relates some of his campaign highlights, such as the time he glitter-bombed Randall Terry at the Lesser Known Candidates Presidential Forum, claiming that Jesus had instructed him to turn Terry gay. “It was a one-off,” says Vermin. “It is not my tactic. If I were to become a serial glitter-bomber, it would seriously impact my ability to get close enough to candidates to ask them a stupid question.”

In fact, he’s just back from a Rick Santorum event. It was a nice break for him, since Santorum was late, so Vermin availed himself of the empty podium and warmed up the crowd. “It was beautiful,” says Vermin. “It was very fine. It was at a smaller restaurant [where Santorum] was totally outnumbered by protesters and the media, of course. Because the media are probably responsible for half the given people at any event anyway. It’s just a big show-and-tell, you know? The media and the politicians—it’s a feedback loop.”

I ask Vermin if he’d like to join me for Occupy’s “Bird-Dogging Political Candidates” clinic at a nearby church.

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Vermin Supreme, career gadfly activist, in Manchester, N.H.

He declines. “I’ve got my bird-dogging system down,” he says, waving his megaphone. I walk away, but before I can cross the street, Vermin yells through the megaphone for me to come back. He wants me to meet some admirers who just approached—Ron Paul supporters in buttons and tricorne hats who ecstatically tell Vermin that they just saw him on C-SPAN.

Since I last spent quality time with the Occupy movement in October, at their Zuccotti Park Ground Zero, their hundreds of nationwide encampments (now mostly disbanded by local authorities) have generated barrels of ink. If it’s true that any publicity is good publicity, then Occupy is golden, having garnered headlines for Occupiers’ defecating on cop cars, splattering blood and urine on food carts after vendors stopped their free service, masturbating in public, perpetrating sexual assaults, storming hospitals and ports, spitting on Coast Guard members, singing “F—the USA,” and drawing the support of China and the Communist party. My very favorite Drudge headline: “SHOCK VIDEO: Occupy Toronto: ‘This Man Was in my Tent Sniffing my Girlfriend’s Feet.’”

Needless to say, Occupy has become America’s

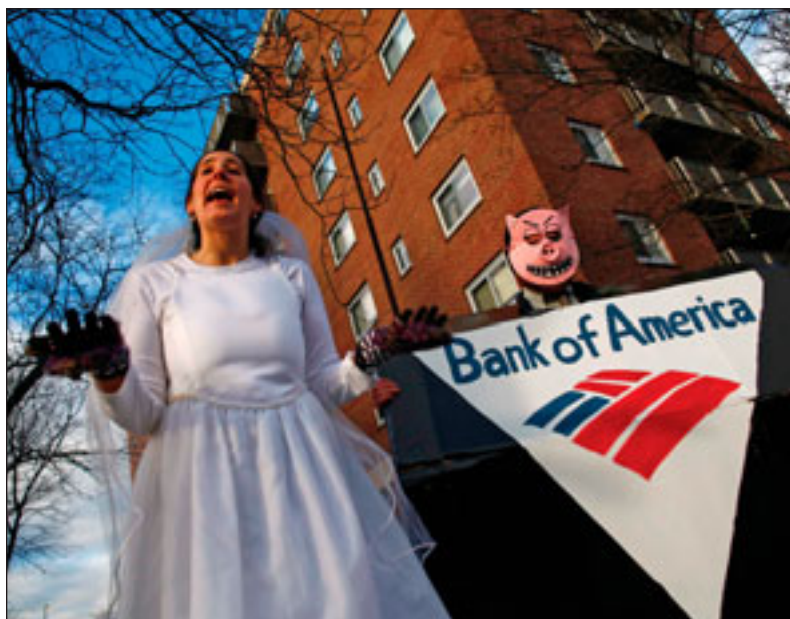
Sweetheart. Or not exactly—but they have become part of the architecture, as their steady patter about class warfare, the evils of capitalism, and upending a good many of our corrupt financial and political institutions seems to be catching on in uneasy, recession-addled America. A December Pew poll showed that while Americans disapproved of the protesters’ tactics by 49 percent to 29 percent, 48 percent agreed with Occupiers’ concerns (however those are defined), while only 30 percent disagreed. A just-released Pew poll shows that a full two-thirds of the public now believe that there are “very strong” or “strong” conflicts between rich and poor—an increase of 19 percentage points since 2009.

To the Occupiers’ delight, even fat-cat Republicans seem willing to push the hot-button these days, even if it’s just for cynical political gain. Rick Perry, who has raised enough money to float Texas if it decides to secede, as he once advocated it doing, is now calling Mitt Romney a “vulture capitalist.” Newt Gingrich, just two months ago, dismissively told Occupiers that they needed to “get a job” and “take a bath.” But while on his chat-show lecture rounds on the evils of Romney’s rapacious tenure as a corporate turnaround artist, Gingrich is starting to sound like a

kaffiyeh-wearing Occupier himself, even as he depends on a pro-Newt super-PAC spending millions to sing the point home. It beats the hell out of Vermin's megaphone.

Still, as I enter the park, I can't help but feel a loss of Occupier momentum on the ground. It's not like those heady days back at Zuccotti when I marched with the anarchists and yelled at the pigs, when I sat in on conga at the crowded drum circles, when I stood in line for a half an hour waiting to take a squirt at the People's McDonald's across the street.

Here, a good four-fifths of the Occupiers' park is utterly unoccupied. The General Assemblies are poorly attended,



In New Hampshire, the Occupiers seem to have lost their momentum.

and when one Occupier is asked to help break down tents, he claims he's suffering a hip pointer. When asked to draft volunteers instead, he refuses, saying that's "excessively hierarchical." The "Puppets and Power" theater is lame. The "Dance Party of Awesomeness / Emma Goldman Tribute" plays dated rap music from the early '90s. Nobody seems to know what time the flash mob starts.

Last October in Manhattan, I kept company with menacing intimidators like Sid the Nazi, who was covered in Third Reich and naked pagan goddess tattoos. Here in Manchester, there are the requisite Sherpa hats and scraggly facial hair (even on a few of the women). But the protesters are so unthreatening that I'm actually approached at the park by a gaggle of curiosity-seeking Romney supporters, one of them still wearing a Sundance Festival lammie on his ski jacket, who said they happened by because they "like the music—good rhythm section." Sundance Man tries to give me a knuckle-bump of solidarity. I make a quick escape,

looking for a self-respecting anarchist. I approach the one guy I see with a mask around his neck, asking if he is one. "No, but I have an affinity for some of their principles," he says. When I ask why I can't seem to find any anarchists when the place was crawling with them in New York, he says, "We're a pretty small town, comparatively speaking." His nose-ringed buddy shakes his head in assent. "Location, location," he laments.

Most of the action takes place away from the park. To this end, I wet my beak by attending the Occupiers' "Bird-Dogging Political Candidates" seminar at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Manchester. Like most Unitarian spaces, it is a welcoming one—lots of soft colors, multi-cultural depictions of Jesus, and cutesy signs such as "Unattended children will be given lots of espresso and a puppy."

We form a circle in the sanctuary. Our facilitator, who wears a sweater with a very complicated pattern, has us role play. He tells us to try to shake the candidate's hand, then to hold on for dear life so that he can't get away. Meanwhile, we are to ask short, nonabusive questions that are sharpened like spears, designed to achieve maximum media penetration. I listen to my classmates' practice questions. Many seem to favor the white-paper route, with lots of statistics and footnotes. Just stick and move, people, I want to tell them. So I zone out, instead reading the fascinating church literature. It asks if I'm looking for a religious home. I'm good. But I'm intrigued by their claims that Unitarians afford a church that "encourages open dialogue on questions of faith, one in which

it is okay to change your mind." I figure I should hand this pamphlet off to my new knuckle-bumping Romney friends at the park. If Mitt is ever excommunicated from LDS, he'll fit in here just fine.

The next day, we hearty Occupiers are off to bird-dog Rick Santorum during a scheduled door-to-door neighborhood walk-through. From the park, we all split off, and I offer to drive three Occupiers in my SUV. Kevin O'Connell, who is from Boston and who wears a Bruins jersey, carries an empty placard, feeling pressure to fill it out before we're on our way. We decide to brainstorm in the car. "Moratorium on Santorum," says Jim Taddeo, a political science student who rides shotgun. "That sounded better in my head," he says.

"Catholics forgive—not pick fights with Iran," Kevin offers haltingly. "Let's keep working on it," I say, not wishing to untangle Kevin's syntax. I ask my car-mates

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to locate themselves politically. “I’ve gone old-school Marxist,” says Jim, “though I reject materialism as a metaphysics.” Victor Ochoa from Asheville, who is wearing a brand-new snazzy Patagonia jacket with the tag still on it in case he wants to return it after Revolution Week, offers, “I believe in progressive utilization theory.” Not wishing to open that can of wind, I put the question to Kevin: “What are you politically?”

“Disgusted,” he says.

We rendezvous with other activists at a Catholic church where Santorum is supposed to kick things off. But after waiting in vain for 30 minutes, we find out that he’s running late and is skipping ahead to his next event. I find out the address of the general store where he’ll appear in Amherst and am instructed by another activist to mic-check it for the crowd (the process whereby one Occupier will shout something, and the rest of the crowd will shout it back). “Mic-check!” I yell, and make my announcement. I pause after every word, waiting for the echo to come back, so everyone catches the info.

“That was my first mic-check,” I tell one Occupier afterwards. “How’d I do?”

“Not bad,” he says. “You might want to speed it up a little.”

Waiting for Santorum outside the general store, a 17-year-old Occupier named Austin is shown by a more seasoned activist how to knife through the crowd, clasp Santorum’s hand, then pop his question, giving the world another electric media moment. Austin is nervous. He’s not done this before. He paces, while running the question over and over with his girlfriend, who does her best to play Santorum if Santorum were a 17-year-old girl with multicolored hair. I tell Austin he doesn’t want to get stiff-armed by Santorum’s security thugs. The cops are already checking us out, so he needs to lose the Occupy sticker, his funky hat (Republicans are hair people, not hat people), and maybe to ditch the earrings. He passes on the last suggestion, which is fine. They’re two black studs—pretty conservative as earrings go.

Santorum arrives, and as his Escalade disgorges him, a crowd presses in. Austin is nowhere to be seen. Being a professional news-gatherer, I am in position to ask my own very important question, which will further the democratic process and help illuminate who is best suited to lead the free world: “Senator Santorum, how many sweater vests do you . . .”

But before I can finish, Austin swoops in like a bird of prey, grips Santorum’s hand and says, “Senator Santorum, I just wanted to ask you if you support 99 percent of the

The State of American Business: Ready to Invest, Compete, and Hire

By Thomas J. Donohue

President and CEO
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Each year at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce we take stock of the state of American business and chart the year ahead. As we begin 2012, the state of business is improving, but it is doing so weakly, slowly, and insufficiently to put enough of our country back to work. We are still down 6 million jobs from the start of the recession. And with more than 23 million Americans unemployed, working part time, or giving up hope, we’ve got to rev the economic engine—our current rate of growth won’t cut it.

But government policies and Washington politics are undermining business and slowing our recovery. While the federal government expands its powers, costs, obligations, and debt at a record clip, businesses are buckling under uncertainty and are paralyzed by an onslaught of new regulations and taxes.

We can accelerate economic growth and create jobs if our leaders in Washington work with one another and with the business community to clear away the impediments that are standing in the way of a stronger economy. To get the ball rolling, the Chamber is advancing an ambitious, commonsense *American Jobs and Growth Agenda*.

The plan calls for a resurgence in American energy and the rebuilding of our crumbling infrastructure. It pushes for a bold expansion of trade, bilateral investment, and U.S.-bound tourism. It proposes long-overdue modernization of our regulatory system and tax code. The plan challenges our leaders to maintain and advance our innovative edge through IP protection and through fostering a competitive workforce. And it requires that we get our fiscal house in order by reining in spending and deficits and reforming entitlements.

These may sound like big ideas, but we have big challenges. So we need bold leadership. We need leaders who are

dedicated to solving America’s challenges. And we need leaders who will act with urgency—election year or not.

The business community also has a responsibility to lead. We’ve got to maintain the spirit of enterprise and risk taking that form the foundation of our economy. And if government starts removing the impediments that are stifling growth and jobs, business should start taking a few more risks and making some new investments.

The state of American business is one of readiness—we’re ready to invest, compete, and hire. But we need Washington leaders to be our partners in this effort. The only way out of the problems we face is to drive economic growth from one end of the country to the other. So let’s go do it.



100 Years Standing Up for American Enterprise
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

people more than 1 percent of the corporations?” Perhaps taken aback by the subtlety and nuance of the question, Santorum briefly pauses, smiles, and says, “I support 100 percent of the people.”

Success!

Congratulations-singing Occupiers ring Austin afterwards.

Not every caper comes off so clean, however. A day later, the Occupiers have descended on a Mexican restaurant where Newt is due for a Latino town hall. I sneak my old pal Victor inside as a member of the press, even if his Patagonia tag, still dangling from his new jacket, elicits suspicious looks. It is strictly back-to-belly. We can't even get near the main room. There must be 500 people in this tight space, 450 of them journalists. Victor ducks low and rudely squeezes through the crowd like a greased ferret. Still stubbornly clinging to my last shred of dignity, I head outside with the other Occupiers. They are jostling for attention in the parking lot, where they've been joined by two PETA activists in pink pig suits (the swine, staying in character, refuse to speak but do refer me to their spokesperson). There is also a man standing in front of a banner depicting a cross-section of women in their skivvies. He is hawk-ing American-manufactured bras, custom-made using 10 unique measurements for the perfect “bra experience.”

I tell him I'm so impressed by his bra spiel that I'm thinking of buying one for myself.

“We guarantee a perfect fit,” he deadpans.

In the parking lot, the Occupiers get rowdy. Mark Provost, one of their leaders, “plays” a drum, two sticks simultaneously, while chanting at the top of his lungs and banging on every syllable in a thrash cadence, “Occ-U-Py-Dem-Oc-Ra-Cy / Occ-U-Py-Plu-Toc-Ra-Cy.”

“He can't play drums for s—t,” says a fellow Occupier.

The restaurant owners don't take kindly to this and ask the cops to remove the protesters to the street. The protesters don't take kindly to the cops' request. One tries to slide a window open so Mark can serenade Newt's town hall with his plutocracy rocker. But a Newt security goon starts punching his hand, breaking the skin, sending Mark into a rage: “We're filing a police report against you! . . . You don't know who the f— you're f—ing with! . . . Now you're done, son!” Occupiers keep firing off chants such as *JP Morgan / Goldman Sachs / People Want Their Country Back!*, while on the far end of the building, presumably where Newt is actually delivering remarks on the other side of the wall, stands Vermin Supreme with his megaphone up to the window, shouting: “Newt! Newt! Newt! Newt! Newt! We have you surrounded! Come out with your hands up and your pants down.”

I point out to Vermin that he's a grown man. Doesn't he ever get tired of being on the outside looking in? “Sometimes I do get in the building,” he says defensively. I meant metaphorically, I tell him. Not really, he says. Sure, it's hard work being permanently agitated, instead of working a real job. He doesn't have health insurance even though he lives in a state that mandates it “because I'm an outlaw.” But if he were inside, he says, “that would imply another kind of social status that I don't know I'd be comfortable with.” So I ask him what he gets out of this—besides a little bit of attention.

“As the kids say, FTWLOLB,” Vermin smiles. “F—the world, lots of laughs, baby.”

On primary eve, I'm in for a different kind of Occupy experience. I've headed up through the White Mountains to the North Country. I arrive in hallowed Dixville Notch, home of the grand old New Hampshire hotel, the Balsams, where at the stroke of midnight on Election Day the nine registered voters left in this tiny hamlet will cast the first votes in the first primary in the nation. While the ballot room and a few others will be open for this purpose, the hotel has recently been sold and shuttered indefinitely for renovations. The rest of the property has gone dark.

So I have to stay at the nearby Notch View Inn, where my innkeeper, Bill Sparklin, who resembles Jeff Bridges in his *Big Lebowski* phase, tells me that his daughter's boyfriend is a member of Occupy L.A. “He's been arrested like three times,” says Bill. “And they keep letting him out. Keep him in there!”

Occupier Corry Hughes, a retired special-ed teacher from nearby Jefferson who has a tie-dyed business card that says “Old Hippies for Peace,” organized an Occupier protest outside the hotel, which has attracted about 20 comrades. She cleared it in advance with the hotel owners and the authorities. But instead of playing thrash chants or berating those on their way inside, the generally middle-aged-to-older crowd stands meekly outside the entrance with their get-the-money-out-of-politics signs, welcoming townspeople they recognize.

Inside, the nine voters of Dixville Notch ready themselves in a cordoned-off VIP section. They mostly are hotel employees who now, like so much of the rest of the country, are looking for work. General manager/voter Jeff McIver tells me what a great place this once was. It's the kind of drafty old resort hotel of yesteryear, with a music director and a band. It's the kind of place without televisions in the rooms. “Because if you have televisions,” says Jeff, “everybody stays in their room, and you don't have that music director and that band.”

Back outside, I tell the Occupiers that this is the most

well-mannered protest I've ever attended. It seems almost odd, as if the protesters have a reverence for the decades-old tradition unfolding inside. "I love this stuff," says Susan Bruce, an underemployed blogger whose husband died a few years back, whose house was then foreclosed on and who has suffered through bouts of homelessness since. "This hotel has been here since the 1800s. It was built before there was electricity. So there's reverence for that, especially if you love history." And she does—her husband was a historian.

"These are the townspeople of Dixville, which is a very small town. We don't want to mess up their voting. This is what they do. It's important to them. Many of them are the 99 percent. We're part of them. There's no need to be disrespectful. How can you be disrespectful here?"

I point out that many of the voters inside are voting Republican, Republicans being the people her people think are destroying the country. That's okay too, she says. "Because that's their choice. I believe in choice of every kind. I know that's not a Republican tenet," she jokes. She takes her politics seriously, lives them even. But she's from a small town where "Republicans are my neighbors. Collectively, Republicans are pretty reprehensible. But individually, not so much."

Midnight strikes, and the votes are cast and counted.

The voters, the media, and even the Occupiers—leaving their signs behind in the cold—all gather outside the ballot room to hear the results not five minutes after the polls close. The first ballot of this presidential primary was cast by Jacques Couture, the hotel's erstwhile locksmith, a French Canadian and naturalized citizen who voted for Obama, perhaps not a good omen for Republicans (Obama racked up three of the nine votes). Mitt Romney tied for first on the Republican side with Jon Huntsman (two votes apiece), surely the last time Huntsman will ever enjoy frontrunner status.

The room digests these little absurdities. The night seems over before it began. We all breathe a sigh of anticlimax. In my ear, I hear a hoarse whisper. It comes from a charming septuagenarian Occupier in a clerical collar named Rev. Gerald Oleson. His business card reads "Preach the Gospel always. When necessary use words." Oleson is missing most of his voice as a result of throat cancer.

But he puts a nice capper on the evening and, indeed, on the whole New Hampshire primary experience: "It's like Senator Eugene McCarthy used to say, 'Being in politics is like being a football coach. You have to be smart enough to understand the game, and dumb enough to think it's important.'" ♦





Louisville in the time of George Keats

Poet and Pioneer

The Keats brothers' saga BY SARA LODGE

John Keats was to Romantic poetry as James Dean was to cinema: young, gifted, and doomed. His charisma lies in the astonishing energy, humor, and inspiration that he packed into a small physical frame and an appallingly brief time frame: He died of tuberculosis aged barely 25. His eyes were always on the skies. He is the poet of the moon, of new planets and bright stars, of clouds, *gold, grey, and dun*, of mist, of snow, and *Blue!*—’Tis the life of heaven. His writing has the intensity and sensuality that belongs to us all in our twenties, when we first feel the power of our capacity to see, think, love, regret. But in Keats that luscious intimacy, that pleasurable ache of joy in beauty is

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The Keats Brothers
The Life of John and George
by Denise Gigante
Harvard, 552 pp., \$35

made unbearably poignant by the lacerating knowledge of impending loss.

Denise Gigante takes a new approach to the familiar and tragic tale of John’s brief life, by pairing his biography with that of his younger brother George Keats. George was, Gigante argues, a different manifestation of the Romantic “Man of Power.” Where John Keats channeled his energies into writing the poems for which he is famous—odes, including “Ode to a Nightingale” and “To Autumn,” sensuous narrative poems such as “The Eve of St. Agnes,” and many brilliant experimental sonnets—George Keats channeled the same pioneering energies into crossing the Atlantic to the wild west of America, investing in

business ventures, and after numerous misfortunes, becoming a wealthy mill owner in Louisville.

It is good to be reminded of how vital the family bonds were that bound the Keats brothers. The Keats family, a little like that in Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women*, consisted of four siblings: one (Tom) would die as a teenager; one (John) would become a writer; the other two, more conventional but no less spirited (George and Fanny), would marry and have children. They depended upon each other because they were orphans. After their parents’ early deaths, they were entrusted to the care of Richard Abbey, a well-meaning but unimaginative guardian.

One of the more amusing aspects of the Keatses’ biography is picturing (and covertly sympathizing with) the exasperated Abbey as he tries to persuade the young Keats brothers to settle down to a trade. He wanted them to be hatters. (You can dimly imagine

Keats writing a “Sonnet to the Bonnet.”) If not hats, then why couldn’t they stay within the sensible confines of medical apprenticeship and accountability? Why must they always be traveling, to the Isle of Wight, Scotland, France, apostrophizing on primroses, getting drunk on claret, and speculating on the New World?

But Abbey might as well have told a porpoise to sit in an armchair and sew. The Keats family—whose father had been killed when his horse threw him, riding home too fast after a party—were highly intelligent and highly strung: The very energies that drove them to plunge forward into uncharted territory, testing their skills and hazarding their reputation, led them to hate confinement and stuffiness. As John Keats would later write in a letter to his true love, Fanny Brawne:

God forbid we should what people call *settle* ... turn into a pond, a stagnant Lethe—a vile crescent, row or buildings. Better be imprudent moveables than prudent fixtures.

Two centuries on, the vivacity of Keats’s voice, the suppleness of his language, have lost none of their capacity to rouse and move. People who became attached to John Keats found themselves going to great lengths for him.

Given the absence of parental support, it is touching how deeply the young brothers relied on each other for encouragement and advice. George always believed unshakably in John’s gifts as a poet. When John’s first book, published in 1817, was a commercial failure, George not only bought the unsold stock and distributed them but wrote a stern letter to the publishers suggesting that they had done a poor job of promoting his brother’s work.

It took time for the reading public to appreciate Keats. Part of the problem was that he was associated with the politically radical circle of the poet and journalist Leigh Hunt, whom conservative critics had dubbed “The King of the Cockneys.” A “Cockney” at this time was not only someone born in central London but a low-bred person who was aiming above his station. The implication was that Keats was vulgar.

His lush lyricism was an apprentice pharmacist’s toss. A series of anonymous articles in *Blackwood’s Magazine* patronizingly suggested that “Johnny Keats” should get back to mixing pills rather than trespassing on the groves reserved for classically educated poets. George, with pleasing loyalty, itched to cudgel the critics on John’s behalf.

John, for his part, cheered George and his young wife Georgiana through his sprightly, conversational letters: some of the best literary letters ever written, many of which contained original verse. When the couple took ship for America, George was only 21, Georgiana 16, and they had been married but a few months. Like many English emigrants, their



John Keats on his deathbed

idea of what they would encounter in the American West was sketchy and rose-tinted. Georgiana was pregnant as she entered the new country and John Keats sent her a poem imagining that her daughter, *little child / O the western wild*, would be the “first American poet.” Perhaps by “first” he simply meant “best.” But he may simply not have been aware that America already had a thriving literary scene. John’s vision of American geography was equally confused. He imagined George in Kentucky, by the Mississippi, hunting monkeys.

Gigante’s book tacks between the two narratives of John’s life and George’s life, which diverge after George’s departure for America in 1818. We follow John as he nurses his younger brother Tom through terminal

illness, as he falls in love with Fanny Brawne, and writes some of the great poems that, published in his collection of 1820, would make his name just as he was succumbing to the disease that would seal his fate. Meanwhile, on the other side of the Atlantic, we follow George’s laborious journey over the Allegheny mountains, down the Ohio River; his visit to new settlements on the “English prairie” of Illinois and his decision not to buy land there but to sink his inheritance into a sawmill and a steamboat. The latter sank but the former, after years of doubtful debt, eventually yielded a profit.

There is some eye-opening material here about the general experience of British emigrants in the early 19th century, which Gigante has gathered from various sources, and which will be of particular interest to those readers whose own families arrived in America on the same trail. Conditions varied widely. George stayed for a time with John James Audubon, whose house was smartly equipped with carpets, furniture, and books, and whose table bore wild turkey, beans, cherries, and honey. But many of the Western settlements were primitive in the extreme: squalid dwellings separated by streets of mud, infested by bedbugs and lice, and with swampy environs that bred malaria, typhus, and dysentery.

Financial and legal infrastructure was no more reliably established than that of road and sanitation. Twice, George lost his shirt in a general crash (once in 1819, once again in 1837), partly caused by a loose credit system where parties endorsed one another for large sums without sufficient security and liquidity in the market to support the chain of investments should one collapse. *Plus ça change.*

Although there is a great deal of information here relating to George’s American travels that will be new to those familiar with biographies which focus on John Keats alone, the structure of *The Keats Brothers* is choppy and ultimately dissatisfying. Channel-surfing between John’s life and George’s, it is impossible fully to engage with John’s writing career and

the composition of his major works—which are, after all, the reason we are interested in the brothers in the first place. Occasionally, Gigante produces a telling insight on Keats’s poetry or philosophy; but too often we learn, in passing, that *Endymion* has been published and negatively reviewed, or that John has been working on a masterpiece that, unless the reader is already familiar with it, will remain a closed book to him. Since there is so much American scene-setting, it takes ages, in narrative terms, for George to get to Louisville and have his first child. And by then, we’ve already learned facts about his later family life that rob us of the suspense.

A better edit would have mitigated these problems, and a loose attention to detail in the writing that gives an impression of a book long in gestation but hastily dressed. Gigante seemingly began the work in collaboration with Lawrence Crutcher, George Keats’s great-great-grandson, but the two parted company—with Gigante holding the greater part of their joint findings. Both hastened into print, under different titles, and Gigante’s rushed departure shows.

By the end, I knew more about John’s relationship with his brother and about early-19th-century America. Yet I wasn’t altogether convinced that the parallel between John’s life and George’s is illuminating for Romanticism—or, as the jacket claims, that we have George’s emigration to thank, as such, for Keats’s *annus mirabilis* of 1819 in which much of his best poetry was produced.

The sad truth is that, after George left for America, the brothers’ lives literally headed in opposite directions. Their relationship became less intimate, especially after George’s visit to England in 1820, when both needed cash: George to reinvest in his broken business, John to go to Italy for the good of his health. There were wrangles over family money. George had a wife and child and a business to run; John wanted to marry and to write and sensed that he wouldn’t now live to do either. They were not fully estranged, but their thoughts were on different pages.

It would have been illuminating to explore the difference in political opinion between the brothers. Although it was George Keats who joined the great experiment in democracy that was America, and had a “can-do” attitude of entrepreneurialism that Gigante describes as “think[ing] like an American,” he believed in limiting the franchise to qualified voters under a constitutional monarch, kept slaves, and retained such loyalty to his roots that his grave was inscribed: “In Memory of George Keats: a Native of England.” John Keats, who was openly critical of monarchy, may have been the more ardent republican: But he also had a dislike of trade and business that kept his “living hand”

on the fine side of the counter. Gigante does not probe these paradoxes.

This is a book, then, that does not wholly fulfill its academic premise, but will nonetheless intrigue the general reader with an interest in Keats and in the westward American trail for emigrants in this era. There is plenty of color in the detail of “arks” guided down the rapids by wily oarsmen, of bear grease sandwiches and squirrel hunting “frolics.” America was a country still inventing its own rules. John Keats, who hated the “musty laws” of poetic meter and theorized that you made your own soul through suffering and transformation in the world, may never have got to America, but he shared its blue-sky spirit of possibility. ♦



One World

Are we ready for rule by ‘the party of global governance’? BY JAMES W. CEASER

Whatever else the grandiose project of “building Europe” may have accomplished—and at this point the entire edifice seems to be teetering—it has proven an enormous boon to social scientists and legal scholars. Scores of research centers, study groups, and commissions have been created both in Europe and America to explore the myriad issues relating to “European integration.” With generous funding from numerous universities, foundations, business corporations, and from the European Union itself (under the names of one or another of

its countless agencies), researchers have done very well for themselves while making Europe among history’s most studied subjects.

For Americanists like myself, this extravagance has been not only an object of envy—no long weekend jaunts to Budapest for us—but also a matter of perplexity. No one denies Europe’s importance: It is wealthy, cultured, and until recently was

the center of power in the world, as well as the source of many of its woes. But how these advanced states, which are no longer inclined to or capable of conducting war against each other, should coordinate their governing structures would seem to be a question of local interest, not a focal point of concern for the world beyond. Even the plan, now in limbo, to append

Sovereignty or Submission
Will Americans Rule Themselves or Be Ruled by Others?
by John Fonte
Encounter, 449 pp., \$25.95

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Turkey to Europe, which probably struck many here as being at odds with both geographical reality and common sense, was a matter for the parties themselves to determine.

Except for one thing. To advanced thinkers—those who ponder questions of political philosophy, the future of governance, and the fate of international affairs—the construction of Europe has never really been just about Europe. It has been the keystone of a plan to reconfigure how political life in the world should be organized and how humanity should confront its common problems. Europe was meant to serve as the model for a new world order, one in which nation-states would cede their old, narrow claims to rule themselves and gradually transfer power to supranational governing authorities.

Building Europe thus proceeded in parallel with an international project designed to create structures of global governance, as illustrated by United Nations protocols and conventions for human rights and for the elimination of racism and discrimination (CERD), and the establishment of the International Criminal Court (ICC). Enter John Fonte, Hudson Institute senior fellow, whose excellent new book seeks to explain the nature of this project, describe its development over the past couple of decades, and detail some of its effects on international relations. This analysis serves only as a prelude, however, to Fonte's larger purpose, which is to render a judgment on this project. Though it has made much progress over the past 20 years, Fonte makes clear that it has not yet won the day. Nations, especially the United States, still have a choice: Americans can live free, or submit.

Fonte has written what the French call a *plaidoyer*—an analytic work that culminates in advocacy of a point of view and course of action. Against what he sees as the growing threat posed by the multiplying incremental steps to pool or share sovereignty, Fonte defends the integrity of the democratic nation-state, which he sees as the most appropriate unit for structuring political life in our age.

As a thinker with a practical bent, Fonte speaks much of the time from the perspective of an American citizen, pointing out how some of the new global institutions have interfered with the pursuit of American policy, as when ICC prosecutors sought to investigate American soldiers for war crimes in Afghanistan, or undermined our friends, as when an NGO Forum held concurrently with the U.N. World Conference against Racism in Durban in 2001 condemned Israel as a “racist apartheid state” guilty of genocide.

But Fonte also views the issue from a theoretical perspective, presenting the reflections on global governance by Dante, Kant, Alexandre Kojève, and Leo Strauss. His theoretical judgment confirms his practical assessment. World governance, under whatever guise, is incompatible with human liberty: “independent self-government in the sovereign liberal democratic nation-state is preferable to all forms of global governance.”

A new phenomenon needs a name, and Fonte is ready with the label “the party of global governance.” Those supporting this party at any given moment, as one would expect, include many who have signed on without believing in its principles in order to promote a temporary interest, as in the case of the nations at Durban that were motivated by anti-Americanism or hatred of Israel. To understand the real driving force of the party, Fonte separates the opportunists from the genuine adherents. The party's nexus of theoretical ideas have had their home in the West. Its greatest strength is in Europe, where it has shaped the EU, but it also has an important following in America, especially in universities, think tanks, and parts of the foreign policy commentariat. It enjoys some support, as well, in certain third world outposts, which are sustained by various NGOs and Western foundations.

What is it, Fonte asks, that “global governancers” (not a term likely to stick) really want? No great political project is ever just about form or structure—in this case, supranational

authority—but about a notion, however vaguely defined, of what is the good or just. Part of the good for global governancers, in line with almost all supporters of world government over the ages, is to produce a more peaceful world by creating a restraining force above competing nations. For this reason, the global governancers are hostile to all forces that favor the particularism of a nation (like the Chinese) or that favor an idea of universalism that by definition excludes many (like followers of Islam).

It is obvious—and leading globalist thinkers are not so naïve as to believe otherwise—that the greater part of the world today falls into these camps. But, to use language that global governancers would never dare utter in public, many of the adherents of these particularisms and religions are backwards. They can be brought along to a more advanced state by tutoring them, humoring them, and by a new strategy for the once openly imperialist West, of making concessions: apologies for past exploitation, acknowledgment of group rights for minorities in Western countries, and acceptance of speech codes to avoid offending certain non-Western groups. By patiently waiting things out while simultaneously creating new international institutions, global governancers hope to slowly reshape the non-Western world.

The greatest challenge to this party therefore turns out to come not from the backward parts of the world but from opponents within its advanced regions. Those in the West who cling stubbornly to their nations, their heritages, and their ideas of universalism constitute the greatest threat to the globalist project. For this reason, it makes sense for global governancers to single out for special criticism the states that continue to support the idea of the nation: the United States, with its widespread view of “exceptionalism,” and Israel, with its defense of the cause of a particular people—and the thinkers, mostly conservative, who continue to defend national sovereignty. For this reason also, it is logical for global governancers to engage in a campaign to replace civic education,

which is designed to help build citizens, with programs of global studies, which are intended to cultivate a cosmopolitan disposition.

Forging a structure of peace is only part of what the global governance party claims to espouse. Its adherents also seek a better world that promotes the cause of humanity, and they justify themselves by citing the standard litany of sanitized progressive values: tolerance, justice, rights, and democracy. Taking this statement of intentions at face value, Fonte nevertheless asks what is lost. He is at his best in doggedly holding onto the pant leg of global governancers by insisting that they give an honest accounting of what they mean by democracy. Fonte invokes against them the charge of creating a “democratic deficit” which, at a time when we have all learned to live with deficits, is probably far too polite a term.

In reality, global governance means the loss of the possibility of humans to govern themselves in a meaningful way. This possibility, as defenders of the republican idea have from the outset maintained, can only be exercised inside a community of some limits, limits that in ancient times were traced by the city-state and in our age less vigorously by the nation-state. Democracy for the party of global governance thus turns out to be not a name for self-rule but for a set of prescribed outcomes. Promoting democracy so understood becomes far too important to leave to most people. It is a task to be reserved for trained experts, adept at the art of gently massaging the meaning of words and governing behind a veil of acronyms and legalisms.

In the face of this plan for a gentle despotism of humaneness, it concedes too much to say that its main problem lies in its mistaken means to a good end. It is the end itself that is flawed. The progressive conception of humanity lacks an appreciation of both human greatness and humility. The party of global governance is not one I would ever join, even if it could win a majority. Nor, I suspect, would John Fonte. ♦

BCA

Spinoza's God

A cosmos in the mind of the harmonious philosopher.

BY LAWRENCE KLEPP

Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) has long appealed to skeptics and secularists. In the 18th century, “Spinozism” was a synonym for atheism. Shelley channeled him in his own arguments for atheism, George Eliot translated him, Hegel and Marx admired him, and he was one of Nietzsche's favorite philosophers. Yet in his major philosophical works, he can hardly stop talking about God, whose existence never seems to be in doubt—prompting the German poet Novalis, one of the many Romantic poets enchanted with him, to call him “that God-intoxicated man.”

Einstein's answer to a New York rabbi clears things up a bit. The rabbi cabled him in 1929 to ask him if he believed in God. Einstein replied, “I believe in Spinoza's God, who reveals himself in the orderly harmony of what exists, not in a God who concerns himself with the fates and actions of human beings.”

It's clear what Spinoza's God is not. He isn't the God of the Bible, the personal God of Spinoza's own Jewish tradition, or of Christianity, the one whose job description includes closely monitoring human affairs and miraculously intervening in them. What he is isn't so clear.

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Spinoza used the provocative formulation *Deus sive natura*—“God, or nature”—but he actually regarded nature as just the visible, comprehensible aspect of God's infinite, incomprehensible being.

One consequence is that everything that happens in nature, and everything that nature's lawful order dishes out to us personally, is necessary—the way the conclusion of a logical or mathematical demonstration is necessary.

Everything is determined, not by God's will—He doesn't have one—but by our being, with everything else, an

integral part of God's being. Nothing happens by chance. And there are no miracles. Asking God for one, asking that He suspend natural law for our benefit, is asking God to trip up God. But once we recognize this inexorable order as God's only providence, we arrive at a serene acceptance of the world, combined with a virtuous immunity to its petty distractions

and snares, thus partaking of the true freedom which belongs to God.

Pantheistic mysticism? Cold deterministic rationalism? His readers have been arguing the point for centuries, and are still arguing. Spinoza first made his views generally known in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, published anonymously in Latin in 1670 but quickly attributed to him. While he was at it he

A Book Forged in Hell
Spinoza's Scandalous Treatise and the Birth of the Secular Age
by Steven Nadler
Princeton, 304 pp., \$29.95



also demolished the Bible's claim to be the word of God, seizing on its inconsistencies and anachronisms, reduced religion to the simple moral imperative to love our neighbor (the rest being merely organized superstition), and called for a maximum freedom of thought and an end to all ecclesiastical authority over society. The book was a bit too much for tolerant but still Calvinist Holland, where it was denounced as blasphemous and dangerous.

Steven Nadler's lucid book about Spinoza's shocking book takes its title from a contemporary pamphlet that described it as "a book forged in hell." Nadler's own book was forged in Madison, where he is a professor of philosophy at the University of Wisconsin. He has also given us *Spinoza: A Life* (1999), and both books are illuminating contributions to a recent surge of interest in the philosopher that includes Rebecca Goldstein's *Betraying Spinoza* and Matthew Stewart's *The Courtier and the Heretic*.

Nadler does an excellent job of summarizing Spinoza's sometimes convoluted arguments in the *Tractatus* and making clear how original they were, stressing his departures from influences like Maimonides, Descartes, and his older contemporary Hobbes, whose tough-minded *raison d'état* realism he adopted in the political part of the book before steering toward unheard-of democratic conclusions. He shows how modern biblical criticism and the broad Enlightenment program for a secular, scientific society were effectively launched in the book. And he gives us the historical context of Dutch Golden Age politics and culture, which usually allowed the tolerant cosmopolitanism of its merchant class to prevail over clerical indignation. Elsewhere Spinoza might have been jailed or burned at the stake, but in Holland he was left alone—if sometimes by fiat.

At the age of 23 he was formally excommunicated, and cursed, by Jewish authorities in Amsterdam, where he had been raised in a Portuguese-Jewish family, probably for heretical ideas overheard in his conversations. His fellow Jews were thereafter forbidden to speak to him or even go near him. Remaining unaffiliated in religion,

unmarried, living simply, supporting himself by grinding lenses, he gathered a circle of relatively freethinking scholars and friends, including Quakers and Mennonites.

The *Tractatus*, Nadler points out, is a more readable and urgent book than his posthumously published magnum opus, the *Ethics*, with its rigorously Euclidean, axiomatic format, but the books have a common aim: "liberation from bondage, whether psychological, political, or religious."

Exactly. There is, after all, that famous chapter head in the *Ethics*, "Of human bondage, or the strength of the emotions." In the *Tractatus* Spinoza compares the arbitrary divine power exercised in the Bible to "the rule of some royal potentate." He wants to liberate us from a heavenly despot whom we abjectly petition for miraculous favors or reprieves, from clerics who claim to be his agents and intermediaries, and from the powerful and capricious emotions, especially hope and fear, that those clerics exploit. Unlike the ancient Stoics whom he somewhat resembles, Spinoza thought emotions are best taken care of when they are fully understood, not when they are fully extinguished. Freedom means minimizing our emotional subjection to things outside ourselves.

Of course, you may still wonder if his

deterministic nature, which has no room for free will, just exchanges one form of bondage for another. And you may hear Voltaire's jibes in *Candide*, aimed at Spinoza's contemporary Leibniz, bouncing off Spinoza as well. If everything comes from God just being God, then all would seem to be for the best in the best of all possible worlds, and our calamities are, so to speak, simply divine. But that's why secularist readers (Nadler among them) have always seen Spinoza's God as a thin disguise for an orderly, perhaps awe-inspiring, but purposeless and indifferent nature. And why we're less interested now in Spinoza's logic than in his peace of mind.

Nietzsche wrote that he had "deified the All and Life in order to find peace and happiness in the face of it." Nietzsche tried something like this, too, with his *amor fati*, love of fate, but with conspicuously less serene results. Spinoza seems to have feared nothing and regretted nothing, and he lived a life of quiet, exemplary virtue. On the last day of his life, before his death at the age of 44 from lung disease, he was calmly conversing with his friends about philosophy, the same as always.

Like Einstein, we can likely use some of his soothing sense of cosmic harmony, whether or not we pay it the compliment of calling it Spinoza's God. ♦

BCA

Dog Nights

The Gulag nightmare in an animal's eye.

BY ANDREW NAGORSKI

Late on a frozen, translucent night in Moscow in 1981, I took my collie out for a walk and let her off the leash on the snow-covered playground near

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our building in the foreigners' compound where we lived. She was only a few months old and my half-hearted

Faithful Ruslan

by Georgi Vladimov
Melville House, 216 pp., \$15

training techniques had done little to restrain her rambunctious spirit. The policeman on duty (there were always

policemen on duty at foreigners' compounds) watched my futile efforts to grab her and snap the leash back on.

"It's always that way," he declared. "When you give people freedom, they don't know when to stop—they just run and run. What can you expect from animals?"

The irony is that, in the Soviet Union, a lot was expected of dogs—particularly, the guard dogs that were a mix of German shepherds and long-haired hunting breeds. Unlike my free-spirited collie, they were trained to obey every command and played a major role in guarding the camps of the Gulag, ferociously enforcing the

first circulated in *samizdat*, some readers assumed that Solzhenitzyn was the author, since it offered a similarly microscopic examination of life in the camps. But by the mid-1970s Vladimov took his defiance of the Soviet system a giant step further, smuggling out his expanded manuscript, now renamed after his main character, the guard dog Ruslan, to Germany, where it was published by an emigré press in 1978. A year later, it appeared in English, expertly translated by Michael Glenny.

By the time I was assigned to Moscow for *Newsweek* in 1981, Vladimov was one of the last survivors of the 1970s-era dissident movement, which had been

horde of noisy, smelly people" who inhabited the huts of the camp—have escaped. To his amazement, he sees the gate of the camp wide open, and the watchtower abandoned. What Ruslan cannot know or understand is that Khrushchev, in his famous 1956 speech, had denounced the Stalinist system, and this has led to the release of millions of political prisoners, including the ones Ruslan has been guarding or hunting down when they tried to escape.

Although the narrator is clearly human, the reader feels as if he's observing the events through Ruslan's eyes, recognizing the dog's confusion at this unprecedented turn in events and empathizing completely with him. Ruslan isn't just well-trained; he's exceptionally smart and loyal. But in a situation where all the rules have changed in a way that makes absolutely no sense to him, his devotion to a master who no longer wants or needs him can only lead to tragedy.

"Ruslan was forever poisoned by his love, his pact with the human race," Vladimov writes.

After his master banishes him from the camp, he goes into the town and, like the other guard dogs that are in a similar situation, gathers daily at the station, expecting to meet the next train that would bring back the escaped prisoners and escort them back to the camp. The dogs had performed such duties with new arrivals countless times, so it seems like a logical conclusion. But no trains arrive, and slowly most of the dogs abandon their posts and find new homes, taking on the jobs of watchdogs for the local inhabitants. Ruslan sees this as a betrayal of their duties, and refuses to follow suit for a long time until his master appears and offers him to a former prisoner. The only reason why the dog reluctantly accepts his new role is that he is convinced he is still guarding the just-released prisoner.

But Ruslan keeps thinking back to his old life, when all the rules were perfectly clear, as was the purpose of his life, for which he had been bred and trained. Even as Vladimov traces his protagonist's journey into



rules and tracking down anyone who was bold enough to attempt an escape.

Now Melville House has reissued one of the most brilliantly crafted dissident books of the Soviet era, Georgi Vladimov's *Faithful Ruslan*, which examines the Soviet system through the eyes of just such a guard dog. It is a slim volume that should be as well known as Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, but has been largely overlooked until now.

In 1965 Vladimov submitted an earlier version of his story, first titled "The Dogs," to *Novy Mir*, the Soviet journal that had published *Ivan Denisovich* three years earlier. The editors turned it down, which was hardly surprising. Nikita Khrushchev had already been swept out of power and the brief moment of liberalization was over. When the story

nearly obliterated by the imprisonment, commitment to psychiatric hospitals, and exiling of its members. Along with other Western correspondents, I visited his apartment often, at times after the latest search by the KGB. In 1983, he managed to convince the authorities to let him go to Germany to teach; after he left, he was promptly stripped of his Soviet citizenship, and he died in Germany in 2003.

Ruslan's story begins on the day that "Master," the guard in charge of him, takes him out and he discovers that his Siberian camp is suddenly empty and silent: "He had never known silence like this before, and it aroused the most frightening suspicions," Vladimov writes.

Ruslan becomes convinced that somehow all the prisoners—"the

a perplexing new world, he offers glimpses into the terrifying realities of camp life in the Stalin era. Among the prisoners, as Ruslan and the other dogs learned, there was always a special category of men who were to be treated with respect. They were the informers, who were hated—and sometimes beaten or murdered—by the other prisoners. In one such case, Ruslan easily identified the murderer, who was led out by Master to be shot. As the dog looked on, the condemned man grasped his executioner's boots and begged for mercy—to no avail.

While Ruslan was taught to believe that his master was “great, all-powerful,” he also comes to recognize the differences between humans and dogs. No animal would beg for mercy like that; instead, it would fight for its life even against hopeless odds. Moreover, man is capable of more wanton evil than the animal kingdom ever allowed: As Ruslan realizes, man's “greatness extends equally far in the direction of both Good and Evil.” Under the influence of vodka, humans “did things that they didn't like, and without any compulsion—something that no animal would ever do.” When Ruslan shares a yard with a runt who irritates him, he never attacks him because “he was forbidden by the law of his nature from killing his own kind—the favorite occupation of bipeds, so proud of their conquest of nature.”

For all his perspicacity, Ruslan is still a product of his harsh training by humans, and he cannot imagine how the new world will function. When he sees new buildings arising at the outskirts of what had been the camp, he is troubled by the lack of barbed wire and watchtowers. As he contemplates the predicament of what he views as a camp that is expanding its border, he realizes it may be impractical to have the same security measures: “Perhaps the time had come to live without any barbed wire at all—and the whole world would be one huge, happy prison camp.” While Ruslan recognizes this vision can't really work, the metaphor couldn't be more obvious: Even with many of the

campers gone, the inhabitants of the post-Stalinist Soviet Union remained mentally imprisoned.

That includes Ruslan and the other guard dogs. In the breathtaking final scene, a train finally arrives at the station and disgorges a group of construction workers who start walking to the camp. The training of the dogs instantly kicks in and they begin escorting the group. The workers are at first amused, then terrified when the dogs attack anyone who tries to break ranks. A pitched battle ensues, and the construction workers corner and beat the dogs who, as Ruslan knew, fight back. Outnumbered by workers with spades and other weapons, the dogs are doomed.

Ruslan has two final thoughts. Thinking back to the brief time before he was taken away from his

mother and siblings, “He wanted now to return to an animal's first joy—to freedom, which he never forgot and to the loss of which he was never reconciled.” And about his experiences with men: “He had learned enough in his waking life about the world of humans, and it stank of cruelty and treachery.”

The incident with the construction workers is based on a true story after Khrushchev started closing the camps, but the real power of Vladimov's book is its broader message about the psychological toll of the Stalinist system on an entire people. Little wonder that—even today, after all the dramatic changes following the collapse of the Soviet Union—Russia remains a country where there is profound ambivalence about the notion of genuine freedom. ♦

BCA

Man Onstage

The importance (?) of being Stephen Fry.

BY KYLE SMITH

What makes Stephen Fry so (his words) “slappable ... odious ... punchable”? Part of it is the smug expression, the striped socks. We may also curse the ubiquity. Here he is on dramatic television (*Bones*), film (*Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows*), hosting documentaries, whipping up novels, sprawling across newsprint. He turns up like the Cheshire Cat—and supplied the voice of that elusive feline in last year's *Alice in Wonderland* film.

To cast an eye over the life story is to invite disbelief. Seemingly born at

Cambridge and made a fully licensed celebrity immediately upon graduation, Fry became a millionaire in his twenties by accident. His agent handed him the book for his father's vintage musical “Me and My Girl” and ordered up a coat of contemporary polish that became a long-running 1980s revival both on Broadway and in the West End.

Meanwhile, on the basis of a Cambridge sketch-comedy show, the BBC and other television producers simply handed him the keys to the box, giving him and his friends the opportunity to create and star in one show after another. All this for a man who (now in his fifties!) is capable of such shudder-inducing phrasecraft as: “These pages

The Fry Chronicles
An Autobiography
by Stephen Fry
Overlook, 448 pp., \$29.95

Kyle Smith writes about film for the New York Post.

deal with some of the C-words that have dominated my life. Before the chronology of the chronicles commences, let me catalogue a couple more Cs.” Just a few pages later in this, his new (and *second*) memoir, he offers, “Caries, cavities and cankerous ulcers were constant companions.” The book ends with Fry—aged 30, wealth growing exponentially, career leaps taking place with lunar ease—plunging nostrils-first into a cocaine habit. Greater triumphs are still to come. Can’t something be done about this would-be Wodehouse, this Oscar Milde?

And yet resistance to Stephen Fry’s charms proves impossible. His success, it turns out, is as much a bafflement to him as it is to you and me. He is properly observant of fortune’s quirky tastes, sweetly appreciative of the importance of his many famous friends (including university mates and frequent costars Hugh Laurie and Emma Thompson), profoundly rooted in family and mournful about his moral stumbles. The overwhelming sentiment of the present volume and its equally delightful predecessor, *Moab Is My Washpot* (1997), is gratitude. In the previous book he wrote, “Someone once said that all autobiography is a form of revenge. It can also be a form of thank-you letter.”

The Fry Chronicles begins badly, with a segment about Fry’s childhood fixation on candy that feels like an outtake from the previous book, which covered early youth, boarding-school expulsion, a decreasingly larky thieving custom, a suicide attempt, and rousing climactic arrest at 18 for binging with a stolen credit card. In this book he spends a few weeks in prison (the gravity is undermined by the name of the institution, Pucklechurch), then rights himself to win admission to Queens’ College, Cambridge.

Arriving in 1978, he affected tweed and corduroy, a pipe. He confesses that he devised a single facile theory of Shakespeare’s tragic and comic forms and deployed it at every opportunity. In three years he attended three lectures. Time was free for the vital: “talk a lot, listen to music, drink coffee and wine, read books and

go to plays. Perhaps *be* in plays?” In one eight-week term he performed in 12 productions, putting off his tutors with such pleas as: “I’m really sorry, Dr. Holland, but I’m still trying to engage with the eschatology of ‘Paradise Lost.’ I think I’ll take another week to come to terms with it.”

Amusing, but self-serving. Here comes the Fry touch, the inviting admission: “It is shameful and lowering to confess how I would mine dictionaries of literary and philosophical terms



Stephen Fry, 2006

for words like eschatology, syncretism and syntagmatic.”

The authenticity of such self-deprecation isn’t in doubt. It comes with a depth that is rare in literary memoirs (where I place these two books) and nearly unknown in the entertainment variety. Upon receiving a note from a professor who favorably compared his Volpone with Paul Scofield’s, he showed the missive to only two people.

[For] my pride in refusing to allow myself to appear boastful . . . was even more intense than any pride I might have had in my achievements.

There was sometimes a fight between these two species of pride, but usually the first type won and was mistakenly called modesty.

Fry twinkles with anecdotes (we learn that outsiders to show business are “muggles” to the charmed circle). A first glimpse of Emma Thompson on stage delivers the insight that one of the best things a performer can do is to relax an audience, another to provoke a feeling of unpredictability. Thompson, he realized, could do both at once. Tom Stoppard appears, at a time when he “smoked not just between courses, but between mouthfuls.” Admonished by a dinner-party guest—“And you so intelligent!”—Stoppard replied, “How differently I might behave if immortality were an option.”

Neither the Wilde nor the Wodehouse has been wasted. “You will see therefore that writing, ghastly at the time but great afterwards, is exactly the opposite of sex” is a line worthy of the former, while P.G.’s spirit frolics in an aside about springtime amid the Cantabrigians: “As St. John’s College alumnus William Wordsworth put it, ‘Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, but to be young was very heaven!’ He was writing less about May Week and more about the French Revolution, but the thought holds better for the first.”

Nor are Waugh and Forster, two more models, entirely absent here. Fry’s years on the Cam blended seamlessly into life among actors (“embarrassing featherheads and ludicrous naifs,” but kind, funny, and loyal) to create a never-ending tableau of comedy and champagne. Fry never grew up, never had to. Why begrudge this grateful child his many gifts? As he writes of dappled undergraduate days:

Blazers and flannels, self-conscious little snobberies and affectations, flushed youth, pampered youth, privileged youth, happy youth. Don’t be too hard on them. Suppress the thought that they are all ghastly tosspots who don’t know that they’re born, insufferable poseurs in need of a kick and a slap. Have some pity and understanding. They will get that kick and that slap soon enough. ♦

Cruise Control

When the going gets tough, it's deep-dish time.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ



On one of the lousier days of my life, taken up with hospital visits and worrisome health news about dearly loved ones, I made my exhausted way to an undeniably stupid movie on a giant IMAX screen with sound booming forth from approximately 279,000 speakers on the floor and in the ceiling and in the walls—a stupid movie I will always remember with fondness and gratitude.

The fourth of the Tom Cruise *Mission: Impossible* films, *Ghost Protocol* is not defensible as a piece of storytelling or character construction. What little plot *Ghost Protocol* has involves a crazy genius who wants to start a nuclear war for reasons the screenwriters don't even bother to make clear. It feels like the most expensively produced episode of a TV series ever made; it even seems to break at the right moments for commercials. With the exception of the wonderful British comedian Simon Pegg, who plays the

stereotypically nerdy computer guy, the acting is indifferent.

And yet I found *Ghost Protocol* a total gas, a cinematic antidepressant. Unlike its three lugubrious predecessors, *Ghost Protocol* is light as a feather and almost

giddy when it comes to the pleasure it takes in placing Cruise in a series of life-threatening circumstances, one more preposterous than the next.

From an opening jailbreak in a Russian prison set to the tune of Dean Martin's "Ain't That a Kick in the Head," the movie progresses to Cruise dolled up with grey hair and a mustache almost singlehandedly invading the Kremlin.

Fortunately, the movie dispenses with the ridiculous makeup trope of the earlier three—the magical face mask that transforms Cruise into any person whose photograph he has, even though Cruise is approximately 4 feet 9 inches tall—by turning it into a running gag. That is characteristic of the first live-action directing job by Brad Bird, the Pixar genius largely responsible for *The Incredibles* and *Ratatouille*. Bird brings some of Pixar's gaiety to the proceedings, especially in a

sequence set in an automated parking garage that directly evokes the climactic scene in *Monsters, Inc.*

In general, Bird and the screenwriters have decided simply to treat Cruise (and his body doubles) as though he were an animated character—Road Runner, only with code-word clearance. They have him bouncing off moving cars, running 20 miles an hour in an Arabian sandstorm, even climbing up the side of the Burj Khalifa tower in Dubai only using a pair of suction gloves for traction.

Bird handles the Cruise walk at the top of the world's tallest building with such control and aplomb that he puts Michael Bay, the director of the *Transformers* movies, and other present-day action-movie veterans, to shame. For one thing, he doesn't dwell too long on it, while others would have, given how fiendishly difficult and expensive the whole thing must have been to shoot. For another, it's actually funny. And funny is what I needed that day—funny and mindless, but *intelligently* mindless, if that distinction makes any sense to you.

The idea that we go to movies to get a brief respite from our troubles is such a cliché by now that it has appeared in 32 Woody Allen films. But it can't just be any movie; it has to be a movie that knows its purpose is to offer silly, unserious fun. Had I gone to *War Horse*, Steven Spielberg's World War I movie, or *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*—which has the profound good taste to combine 9/11 and autism in one package, sort of like a Reese's Peanut Butter Cup from Hell—I would have emerged from the multiplex ashen and twice as burdened as when I entered.

Preston Sturges's glorious comedy-drama *Sullivan's Travels* (1941) is the story of a movie director who wants to make serious pictures. He meets a girl on the road and tells her with embarrassment that he is the director of *Ants in Your Plants of 1939*. She is thrilled; she loved it. "There's nothing like a deep-dish movie to drive you out in the open," she tells him. *Mission: Impossible - Ghost Protocol* is the deep-dish movie that drove me out into the open with a far lighter step on a day when I needed nothing so much as that. ♦

**Mission: Impossible -
Ghost Protocol**
Directed by Brad Bird



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

"White House chief of staff Bill Daley's abrupt decision to resign his office caught official Washington by surprise as it came just a year after he was named to the job."

—Washington Post, January 9, 2012

PARODY



OFFICE OF
THE CHIEF OF STAFF

January 10, 2012

President Barack H. Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

While it is unusual to submit two letters of resignation, I do feel it is necessary to let you know once again I am not resigning out of bitterness and frustration but because it simply wasn't the job I thought it would be. Little did I know you actually employ two chiefs of staff—one with the formal title (me) and one who actually serves as your chief of staff (Valerie). In addition, I did not realize that I would answer directly to the first lady, although I appreciate her concern for my health. I know I'll look back fondly on her insistence I do ten jumping jacks each time I entered her office.

I also want to express my deepest regret that I am resigning earlier than planned—not at the end of the year but rather as soon as I can pack up my office belongings and various White House swag (are we really out of those M&Ms?).

This past year has been incredible (as in "hard to believe"). And I will be leaving with a heavy heart. There was so much more I had hoped to get done during my time in the White House. Nevertheless, I am proud of the few things I actually did accomplish, like training Bo not to chew on your Oval Office sofa and convincing the vice president he will remain on the ticket this November. ;)

You've got a big year ahead of you, Mr. President. I'm sorry to be leaving prior to the toughest fight of your political career. But you can rely on me to deliver those Chicago votes come November! You are also in good hands—Jack will do fine in my place. Rest assured, I told him about helping you fill out your NCAA brackets.

Best of luck,