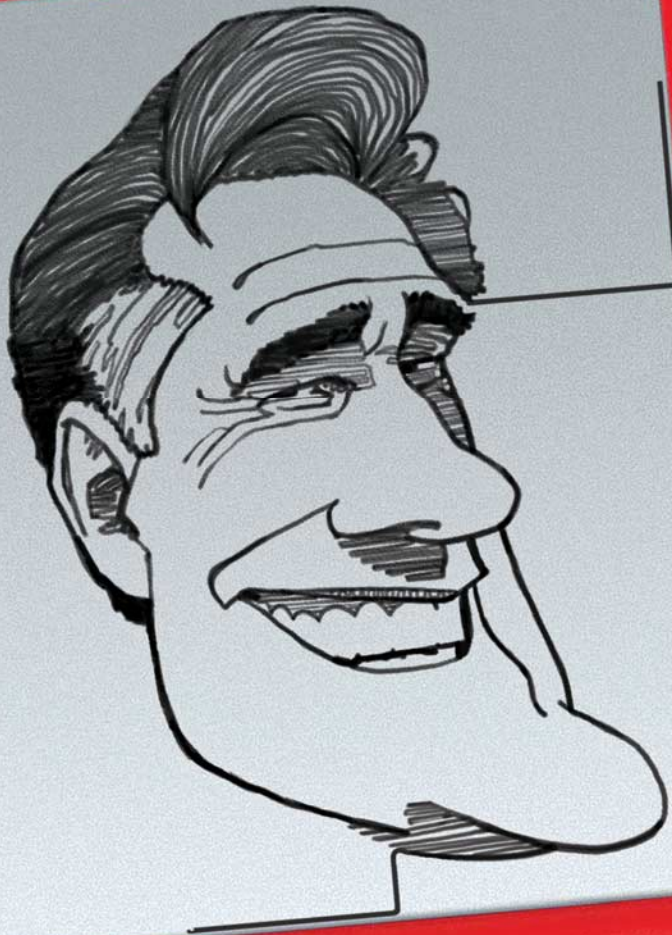


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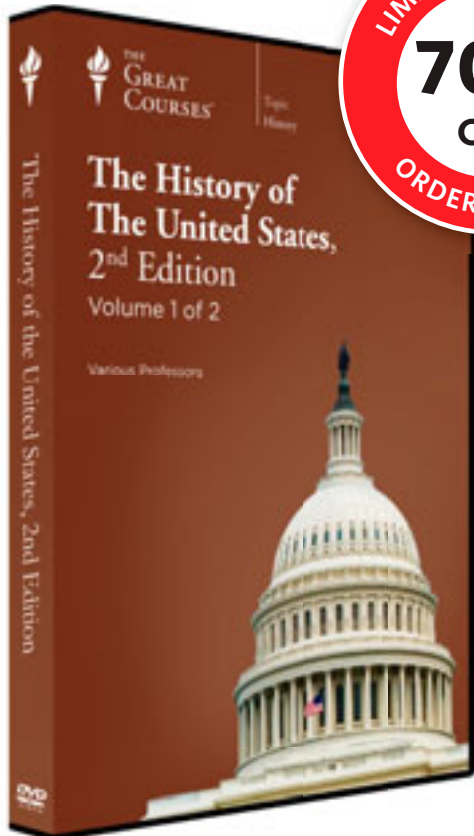
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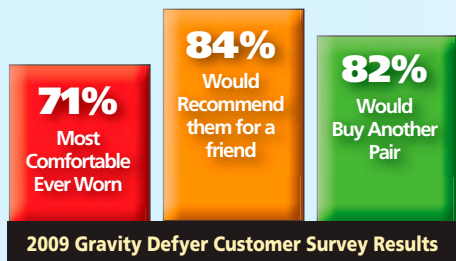
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Indentured Servant?

THE SCRAPBOOK's Headline of the Week has to be a subhed from the front page of last weekend's *USA Today*. It's a story—a very long story, by *USA Today* standards—to the effect that Hillary Rodham Clinton has been an especially wonderful secretary of state, dazzling prime ministers, thrilling ordinary citizens, piling up the frequent flyer miles. "Hillary's horizon," the story is titled, and here's the subhed: "As her tenure at State winds down, . . . Clinton's all-in approach to diplomacy is seen as innovative and indefatigable—but ultimately, some say, indentured."

How's that again?

Okay, THE SCRAPBOOK recognizes meaningless verbiage when we see it, and that series of clichés—"all-in approach . . . innovative . . . indefatigable"—could just as easily be applied to a puff piece about a football coach or hip-hop musician. But *indentured*?

We thought, at first, that we had misunderstood the meaning of the word in context. One of the secretary's admirers, "Nabila Hossain, 25, a lecturer at American International University" in the capital city of

Bangladesh, is quoted as she gushes to Clinton: "You have got a beautiful smile"! Surely, we thought, Miss Hossain is not suggesting that Secretary Clinton sports a nice set of false teeth—or that if she does, *USA Today*

And indentured, some say, to a president who has made the major foreign policy decisions himself?"

Which, of course, is another way of saying that the story is ultimately meaningless, since THE SCRAPBOOK presumes that it's impossible to be a great secretary of state if your president is his own chief diplomat.

But of greater concern (or amusement) to THE SCRAPBOOK is the choice of words in this instance. There is only one meaning of "indenture"—a contract by which a person is bound to serve somebody else—and while it is fair to say that Hillary Clinton's reputation as secretary of state is dependent on Barack Obama's performance as president, we can't help but wonder if its use here is especially inept. Americans,

after all, were sometimes indentured on plantations, and indentured servitude is really just a step or two away from slavery.

Or expressed another way: Hillary Rodham Clinton, according to *USA Today*, is the innovative, indefatigable, all-in diplomat who finds herself trapped on Barack Obama's plantation. ♦



is not attaching particular significance to her dentures!

So we were obliged to keep plowing through the purple prose—"a natural-born politician in diplomat's clothing . . . gender equality [is] one of the paramount causes of her career"—before the mystery was finally solved. Secretary Clinton, says *USA Today*, is "Indefatigable. Innovative.

Recycled Pow Wow Chow

The saga of Harvard law professor Elizabeth Warren, putative Cherokee and Democratic candidate to unseat Massachusetts senator Scott Brown, has spiraled to new heights of absurdity. The story is situated at the crossroads where liberal trendiness meets combative Boston journalism (think radio-talker Howie Carr and the feisty *Boston Herald*), a crossroads that turns out to be not

so much bloody as bloody hilarious.

When we commented on the controversy in this space two weeks ago, the outstanding questions were whether Warren had been an affirmative action hire at Harvard (still unresolved) and whether she was indeed, as she claimed family lore held, 1/32 Cherokee (looks like not).

Since then, it has emerged that there really is no genealogical evidence for

the claimed ancestry. But Michael Patrick Leahy, writing at Breitbart.com, reports that investigations of Warren's family tree were not fruitless. Au contraire!



The most stunning discovery about the life of O.C. Sarah Smith Crawford [the supposed Cherokee ancestor] is that her husband, Ms. Warren's great-great-grandfather, was apparently a member of the Tennessee Militia who

rounded up Cherokees from their family homes in the Southeastern United States and herded them into government-built stockades in what was then called Ross's Landing (now Chattanooga), Tennessee—the point of origin for the horrific Trail of Tears, which began in January 1837.

THE SCRAPBOOK is reminded of the old joke about the professional genealogist's bill for \$1,000. "Why so much?" his client asks. "You only spent a few hours at the library." The genealogist replies: "It's \$100 for my time. The rest is to shut up about what I discovered."

Meanwhile, as proof of her heritage, the Warren campaign told the *Boston Herald* of a cousin, also supposedly Cherokee, whose credits turned out to include editing a 1984 cookbook called *Pow Wow Chow*.

Pointing to the cousin turns out to have been a heaping big mistake by the Warren campaign. Five recipes in *Pow Wow Chow* were credited to "Elizabeth Warren—Cherokee." Last Friday, Howie Carr reported that at least a couple of them appear to have been plagiarized, almost word for word, from a 1979 article by Pierre Franey, distributed by the *New York Times* News Service ("Cold Omelets with Crab Meat" and "Crab with Tomato Mayonnaise Dressing").

Truly, you can't make it up. THE SCRAPBOOK is indebted for many of these piquant details to the indispensable Legal Insurrection blog by William A. Jacobson, an associate clinical professor at Cornell Law School. We highly recommend his blog, which has been all over this story, to aficionados of the most self-destructive Senate campaign in living memory. ♦

Bureaucratese in Our Time

As a taxpayer in Arlington, Va., a one-party liberal fiefdom, THE SCRAPBOOK can assure you that the era of austerity has yet to arrive in bedroom communities surrounding Washington, D.C.

To wit, we are in receipt of an



email update from the Arlington County department of parks and recreation, alerting "stakeholders" (i.e., neighbors) of progress on a modest park that is about to be improved to the tune of \$1.46 million—small beans by Arlington standards, believe it or not. The money is not the noteworthy part of this missive, though. What is really striking is, rather, the exuberant, even extravagant bureaucratese:

This project will use many sustainable building practices to develop a multi-faceted urban park with a plaza, open lawn, demonstration garden, and community canine area, among

other amenities. The new urban park will not only has [sic] a wide array of functionality for our diverse community but also will use design applications that are at the forefront of sustainability practices such as permeable paving surfaces, alternative energy, recycled storm water for use throughout the park, and recycled materials in its construction.

Multi-faceted? Wide array of functionality? "Canine," instead of dog? THE SCRAPBOOK supposes that if you're not pinching pennies, it shouldn't be surprising that you're not skimping on the syllables, either. Have a great weekend, you stakeholder, you! ♦

Communism Today

Letters to the editor of the British tabloid the *Morning Star* (about the politics of which, all you need to know is that the paper was founded as the *Daily Worker*):

I often wonder why so many of its readers find the *Morning Star* so exasperating. Despite its condemnation of zionists it yet finds space to include an item in its daily quiz about Israel's national bird.

Is the *Star* not aware there's a cultural boycott going on?

And then, despite its condemnation of the Bahrain Grand Prix and rightly so, it then goes on to tell us who won.

For goodness sake comrades, get your act together.

*George Abendstern
Rochdale*

The *Morning Star* has always been the newspaper you could rely on to support the cause of the Palestinians, so why of all the birds in the world did you choose the Israeli national bird to include in your quiz?

Maybe you don't support the methods chosen by the International Solidarity Movement of BDS [boycott, divestment, sanctions] to assist the Palestinians in their struggle for freedom and justice—a demand that came from them originally.

This includes any reference to their wildlife.

*Linda Clair
Rochdale*

Emails We Didn't Read

‘Subject: Statement by the President on the Passing of Donna Summer.’ ♦

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The Proustian Solution

Five or six years ago I found the seats at classical music concerts becoming uncomfortable. I blame the seats, but in fact I had lost the *Sitzfleisch*—in German literally “seat meat,” in looser translation “bottom patience”—to sit through a concert. In concert halls my mind wandered, I counted the people around me who had fallen asleep, searched the audience for anyone under 40, frequently checked my watch. Time seemed to pass more slowly than in a laundromat.

I used to go to from 12 to 20 concerts a year. With my loss of attention at concerts, and given the expense of concert tickets, it finally occurred to me that I was wasting time and money in dragging myself to these events. I love serious music; it was only at concerts that I couldn't seem to enjoy it. My condition was not unlike that of the English journalist Malcolm Muggeridge, who once wrote that he couldn't take his mind off thoughts of God, and it was only when he entered an Anglican church and the vicar began speaking that for him God was gone.

George Santayana late in life also found he could no longer bear to attend concerts. Going to hear serious music, he reports in one of his letters, had come to resemble an act of piety instead of one of pleasure. In Rome, where Santayana was living at the time, there was lots of good street music, and he achieved a useful compromise by listening to this music, out-of-doors and standing up. I listen to most of my music on CDs driving around the city in my car.

I recently attempted a concert-hall comeback. An all-Mozart program was scheduled a few weeks ago by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra,

with Mitsuko Uchida, the foremost Mozart interpreter of our day, playing and conducting two Mozart concerti. Uchida was splendid, the CSO turned in its usual smooth performance, and as the program ended to a standing ovation for Uchida, I said to myself, “Please don't let her play an encore.”

Two weeks later, I went to a Dame Myra Hess Memorial Concert at the Chicago Cultural Center. The program,



played by a youthful woodwinds quintet, was roughly 45 minutes long. The crowd, like most classical music audiences, was less than sprightly. The man seated to my left fell asleep just before the performers were introduced and woke—refreshed, I assume—only at their finish. I found myself rising to my feet to applaud, and went happily off to lunch with friends afterwards. Successful as this outing was, I feel no urge to return, at least not soon.

No, the best arrangement for me is what I think of as the Proustian solution. Marcel Proust was a regular concertgoer, and his interest in music was intense and highly intelligent; his fictional composer Vinteuil of *In Search of Lost Time* attests to that. He was especially enamored of the music of Beethoven and César Franck, and in

particular of Franck's String Quartet in D as played by the Poulet Quartet.

One night around 11 o'clock in the winter of 1916, wanting eagerly to hear the Franck quartet, Proust paid a call on Gaston Poulet, the leader of the Poulet Quartet. When Poulet came to the door in his pajamas, Proust informed him that he would like very much to hear his group play the Franck composition that very night in his apartment on the Boulevard Haussmann. Lured by the high fee Proust offered, Poulet agreed, and he and Proust in a cab rounded up the other members of the quartet. They arrived at Proust's apartment near 1:00 A.M.

As they began the César Franck quartet, Proust listened with his eyes closed. He enjoyed it so much that he asked the musicians to play it again, and then went to a small Chinese box from which he extracted a stack of notes redeemable for 45,000 ordinary francs, a sum grand enough for the Poulet Quartet to play the piece a second time without diminution of energy. In subsequent months, Proust called on the Poulet Quartet to play others of his favorite compositions in his apartment, Mozart, Ravel, and Schumann among them, each time one assumes for a similarly lucrative fee.

I should mention that when Proust's mother died, in 1905 at the age of 56, she left her son the equivalent of roughly \$4.6 million in current dollars, a sum that allowed him to tip waiters at the Ritz 100 percent and more and to listen to live music in the ideal conditions of his own apartment.

If only I could adopt Proust's solution to my concert-hall problem. How I should like to have the Chicago Symphony perform for me alone in my living room! And perhaps someday I shall, once I figure out how to do so without dipping into capital.

JOSEPH EPSTEIN

How to Outsmart a Millionaire

Only the "Robin Hood of Watchmakers" can steal the spotlight from a luxury legend for under \$200!

I wasn't looking for trouble. I sat in a café, sipping my espresso and enjoying the quiet. Then it got noisy. Mr. Bigshot rolled up in a roaring high-performance Italian sports car, dropping attitude like his \$22,000 watch made it okay for him to be rude. That's when I decided to roll up my sleeves and teach him a lesson.

"Nice watch," I said, pointing to his and holding up mine. He nodded like we belonged to the same club. We did, but he literally paid 100 times more for his membership. Bigshot bragged about his five-figure purchase, a luxury heavyweight from the titan of high-priced timepieces. I told him that mine was the *Stauer Corso*, a 27-jewel automatic classic now available for only \$179. And just like that, the man was at a loss for words.

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Why Not the Best?

This issue of THE WEEKLY STANDARD features advice from Yuval Levin and Jay Cost for Mitt Romney in his presidential race. A Romney victory is devoutly to be desired. But a truly grand victory requires worthy opponents. Barack Obama is one. With all due respect to our affable vice president, Joe Biden is not.

For our part, we'd like to see a decisive triumph for Romney and his running mate over two formidable representatives of contemporary liberalism, rather than a discounted victory over a flawed ticket with only one strong candidate. So we sincerely suggest to President Obama: Dump Joe Biden.

We're sure the thought has occurred to the president. He knows his undisciplined vice president did him no service by popping off about same-sex marriage on *Meet the Press*, thereby forcing Obama to engage the issue prematurely. Instead of making his announcement of his evolution in a well-prepared speech for which the groundwork had been laid, the president arranged a rushed interview in which he rather inarticulately

expressed his personal view in a way that persuaded no one who wasn't already convinced. This wasn't good for him.

Nor is Biden's presence on the ticket. In a Fox News poll last week, President Obama had a 52 percent favorable to 44 percent unfavorable rating. Vice President Biden's numbers in the same poll were 41 percent favorable to 44 percent unfavorable. In other words, Biden will clearly be a drag on Obama's fortunes this fall.

Who should replace Biden? Everyone knows the answer. Hillary Clinton received nearly 18 million votes in the race for the 2008 Democratic nomination. Her rating in a *Washington Post* survey a couple of weeks ago was 65 percent favorable, 27 percent unfavorable. Biden hurts Obama. She would help him.

What's more, she'd help with precisely the undecided voters Obama needs in November. Many of them are white,

working- and middle-class Americans who supported her in the 2008 primaries. They overcame their disappointment at Clinton's defeat to vote for Obama that November. But many became disillusioned and voted Republican in 2010, producing that year's GOP landslide. Barack Obama needs to win back as many of them as possible in 2012. They voted for Hillary Clinton once. Surely they'd be more likely to return to Obama if given the opportunity to vote for her again as part of the ticket.

Wouldn't a Biden-Clinton switch be messy and embarrassing and chaotic? Not really. There aren't many Biden loyalists around, after all, to cause much of a fuss. In fact, Biden's chief of staff, Bruce Reed, is a Clinton loyalist who could help ensure a smooth coexistence during the slightly awkward months when Clinton would be the vice presidential nominee and Biden still the sitting vice president.

Hillary Clinton would of course have to step down as secretary of state in order to campaign in September and October. But David Petraeus would be ready to move over to that job and would be

promptly confirmed by Congress; his appointment would also help politically, serving as a reassuring signal to voters as to the nature of a second Obama term. Meanwhile, Biden could still be useful as a surrogate campaigner in third-tier media markets that might be grateful for a visit from a celebrity, even one without much of a future. And of course Bill Clinton's formidable campaign skills could be unleashed effectively as the prospective second spouse.

Is this fanciful? One might have thought so—until last Monday. For in his May 14 commencement speech at Barnard College, President Obama seemed to be beginning subtly to pave the way for the switch.

In the more than half-hour-long speech, Vice President Biden is a nonperson, nowhere mentioned. Dr. Jill Biden isn't mentioned either. Hillary, on the other hand, is praised effusively, as "doing an extraordinary job as one



Obama and Clinton in Unity, N.H., June 2008

of the finest secretaries of state America has ever had.”

What’s more, in his remarks, President Obama went out of his way to point out, “Today, women are not just half this country; you’re half its workforce. . . . You’re more than half of our college graduates, and master’s graduates, and Ph.D.s.” Yet surely he’s aware that right now women fail to constitute even half of his presidential ticket. President Obama, sensitive to such matters, knows the devastating message that sends to young women—and to all the “Julias” of whatever age whom the Obama campaign considers its prototypical clients and supporters.

Even more fundamentally, as President Obama said at Barnard, “we know we are better off when women are treated fairly and equally in every aspect of American life.” True. And is it fair if the buffoonish Biden gets a second shot at being vice president of the United States while Hillary Clinton, after the “extraordinary job” she’s done, is retired to private life? The president said to the graduates, “after decades of slow, steady, extraordinary progress, you are now poised to make this the century where women shape not only their own destiny but the destiny of this nation and of this world.” Where better to start a century of women-shaping destiny than with Hillary Clinton as vice president?

President Obama’s Barnard speech looks like the beginning of an “evolution,” which will culminate with his dumping Joe Biden and elevating a woman who has worked hard and played by the rules—Hillary Clinton.

Why not the best for President Obama and the Democratic party? And how much more will victory be worth having this November when it’s a victory over the liberal dream team of Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton?

—William Kristol

Cronies 'R' Us

We were struck last week by a pair of instances of Republicans doing what Republicans do—one encouraging, one not so much. On the encouraging side, we had Sen. Tom Coburn, who never fails to lift a faltering conservative heart. He gave an interview to a blogger for the *Washington Post*, though we won’t hold that against him. In it he said many wise things, particularly about a scenario that like visions of sugarplums dances in many be-pillowed Republican heads.

“What happens if Romney wins and Republicans control both chambers [of Congress]?” he asked rhetorically. “Do they have the courage to do what it takes to fix the country? It’s kind of their last chance. If they’re given the favor of control and they don’t act on it, why should you ever trust them again?”

His answer: “You shouldn’t. It’ll be the death knell of

the Republican party. They controlled it all for four years under Bush and grew the government . . . [and] went against the very tenets of what they said they believe.”

Sen. Coburn is a man of rare candor, but it’s not just the candor that’s refreshing—it’s his willingness to isolate the great promise and the great danger that Republicans confront this fall. If the voters hand them control of Congress as well as the White House, what will they do with it? It may not be their last chance, as Coburn says, but the answer will decide whether this generation of Republicans ever grows to maturity as a national party of economic freedom and opportunity.

Which brings us to the second, not-so-encouraging instance. Last week a majority of congressional Republicans joined with Democrats to renew for three years the charter



Steny Hoyer and Eric Cantor

of the Export-Import Bank, a New Deal relic that in theory helps American exporters by, among other things, offering loans to foreign traders to buy American products. Although the Ex-Im Bank is a quasi-private institution, its loans are guaranteed by the taxpayers, making it a prime instrument of industrial policy, or corporate statism, or state capitalism (choose your epithet). By favoring one company over another and choosing to subsidize one industry and not another—the faddish renewable energy field is a particular favorite at the moment—the bank lets the government, specifically the Congress, pick winners and losers in the marketplace. It mixes politics and capital in ways that Republicans customarily claim to abhor.

But not this time. The bank is a favorite not only of Democrats, who after all have no principled claim against industrial policy, but also of the big business lobby. The National Association of Manufacturers and the Chamber of Commerce strongly backed the renewal, proving again that they are less interested in free markets than in profit-making—and whether their members make money through government subsidy or market competition is of secondary importance to them. (Recall the chamber’s energetic support of the Obama stimulus.) On the other side were a few

AP / CHARLES DHARAPAK

right-wing pea shooters like Heritage Action and the Club for Growth. Guess which side of the debate the press portrayed as the power-crazed bad guys.

As most of the news stories noted, the Ex-Im Bank is a totem of that fabled bipartisanship that certain kinds of partisans cherish. That's one of the attractions of crony capitalism: It's wonderfully bipartisan, so long as "we can spread the wealth around," to coin a phrase, so that the most powerful interests stay happy enough to write campaign checks. It was especially disconcerting to see House majority leader Eric Cantor unite with his Democratic opposite number, Steny Hoyer, to forge a "compromise" that will keep the bank going another three years—and expand the portfolio of guaranteed loans from \$100 billion to \$140 billion. Like every advocate of the Ex-Im Bank over the last half century, Cantor invoked the specter of Eurosocialism to defend the bank. Letting its charter lapse, Cantor said, would signal "unilateral disarmament" in our trade competition with foreign companies that are themselves heavily subsidized by their governments. The argument might have had greater force before Europe waddled to the edge of bankruptcy, thanks in part to precisely the kind of subsidies that the Ex-Im is supposed to match. Republicans keep telling us the United States is different from Europe.

The real argument against the bank isn't fiscal. It's true that we shouldn't be putting more taxpayer money at risk when every part of government needs to be cut back. More important, unwinding the bank would have been an act of philosophical hygiene—cutting government not because "we can't afford it" but because it works against the economic freedom that brings prosperity. Meddling of the sort the bank represents distorts the market over the long term, and thus reduces the space for competition and the wealth such competition creates. Regardless of any near-term benefits, which are likely oversold, the eventual consequence of the bank's intervention is to turn businesses into rent-seekers instead of enterprises dedicated to innovation. They end up trying to please the government instead of the customer.

The bipartisan deal between Cantor and Hoyer reminds us that few concepts in Washington are more overrated than "bipartisanship." Large ideological advances are often made when Congress votes on party lines—Democrats will think here of Obamacare, Republicans of the Bush tax cuts—but the muddy trail of mischief left by bipartisanship is a long one: the prescription drug benefit, Fannie Mae, campaign finance reform, the No Child Left Behind education reform, and an almost limitless number of pernicious expenses that Republicans and Democrats together renew automatically (federal subsidies for nearly everything).

"I say the problem is not that we don't get along," Coburn said last week. "We get along too well. Government is twice the size it was 10 years ago. The president

can't spend the money if we don't appropriate it. So it's not a presidential problem. It's a congressional problem."

Coburn's right. And when we look to the promise of 2013, that's what has us worried.

—Andrew Ferguson

How About Leading from the Front?

According to recent news reports, the Romney foreign policy team is trying to figure out what the presumptive Republican candidate thinks America's role in the world should be. He's been clear regarding the Iranian nuclear weapons program, promising that if he's elected, Iran won't get the bomb. But what about Afghanistan, say, or China? With less than six months left till Election Day, is he going to articulate distinctive foreign policy positions, or will he let Obama dictate the terms of the debate?

It would be understandable, given Romney's desire to keep focused on jobs and the economy, if he were reluctant to get too far into the weeds on foreign policy. But come November, the American people will not be electing a financial adviser. They'll be electing the leader of a world power.

Romney should not actually have much trouble outflanking Obama on foreign policy. The White House prides itself, rightly, on killing Osama bin Laden, Anwar al-Awlaki, and other jihadists who threatened U.S. citizens, interests, and allies. But the national security strategy of a superpower with interests across the world cannot be reduced to counterterrorism. Nor can our global responsibilities be fulfilled, in the immortal phrase, by "leading from behind."

The lie was given to this bizarre conceit as early as the Libya intervention. Where Obama's advisers boasted that leading from behind represented a new kind of leadership, scaled to the modest expectations of a post-financial crisis world, the reality was that while France and the United Kingdom were out front, it was American firepower that brought down Qaddafi. When Obama disdains to lead elsewhere, someone else fills the vacuum—often at the expense of American interests and values.

Consider Syria, where the Obama administration has handed its policy off to the Russians, by way of former U.N. secretary general Kofi Annan. It took Obama five months into the uprising and thousands of casualties before he called for Assad to step down. But because the administration does not believe that the Free Syrian Army is capable of toppling

Assad—a prophecy that without American arms and training might be self-fulfilling—it has opted to work with the “international community” for what it calls a political solution, in the hope that Moscow will force Assad from power, leading to a democratic transition.

The White House is not able to describe the mechanism by which such an outcome might be engineered, and that is because Moscow doesn’t particularly want to topple Assad. Some of the reasons Russian diplomats have put forth for preserving Assad are nearly comical—for instance, a Sunni Islamist regime in Damascus would embolden Chechen rebels. But what matters to Russia is that it has become the de facto power on the ground because the White House has let it. Any regional actor that wants some movement on Syria, whether it’s the Saudis, Qataris, or Turks, has to go to the Russians. Moscow has no intention of abandoning the role that Obama handed it. Not since the Cold War have the Russians enjoyed such diplomatic prestige—and all thanks to Obama’s foreign policy weakness.

So long as Moscow gets to play powerbroker, the Russians don’t care how many Syrians the Assad regime slaughters. The question Romney needs to be asking is shouldn’t this matter to the president of the United States? If Obama is moved to pity or anger by all those corpses piling up in the streets of Syrian cities, then why is the White House deferring to the Annan process—as if U.N. monitors are capable

of enforcing a ceasefire? Why won’t the White House do more than promise “nonlethal” aid to a civilian population suffering the depredations of Assad loyalists?

Middle East expert Fouad Ajami calls Syria Obama’s Rwanda, referring to the (much larger) 1994 slaughter that happened on Bill Clinton’s watch. It is that, but it’s something else, too. What we’ve been witnessing for more than 15 months in Syria is a profound historical event, one finally defined not by regime violence but by the risks the opposition has taken to rid the country of a dictator. Men, women, and children have been taking their lives in their hands to challenge a tyrant and his murderers, and have paid dearly—with more than 10,000 dead at this point. How, Romney should be asking, can an American president not be moved to action?

Other Republicans have challenged the White House’s stance on Syria, like Sen. John McCain, who called for military assistance to the Free Syrian Army and foreign airpower. And recently the last Republican president provided a larger context for the Syrian uprising: “America does not get to choose if a freedom revolution should begin or end in the Middle East or elsewhere,” wrote George W. Bush. “It only gets to choose what side it is on.”

Romney should be making clear which side, as president, he’d be on in Syria.

—Lee Smith

Let Small Businesses Drive Growth and Create Jobs

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

American small business men and women have a lot of balls in the air. For most, every day is a juggling act of balancing the books, keeping track of inventory, managing staff and payroll, handling their own IT challenges, and more. These multitasking, enterprising individuals are driving our recovery and creating good jobs for U.S. workers.

This week, add advocacy to the to-do list. Hundreds of small business owners and entrepreneurs from across the country are gathered in Washington for America’s Small Business Summit, and thousands more are participating online and through social media. During the Chamber’s summit, participants are lobbying lawmakers and getting the latest on the legislative and regulatory developments impacting their companies.

It’s never been more important for

small businesses to make their voices heard in Washington. They face a slew of obstacles—not the least of which is uncertainty. On top of the typical challenges of operating a business, they must negotiate an impossibly complex tax code, miles and miles of regulatory red tape, and a broken legal system. America’s ballooning debt and the looming entitlements crisis only compound the pressure and add to the uncertainty.

Against these odds, small businesses are still out there getting the job done. They are taking risks, brainstorming new products and services, working hard, and making things happen. They are leading us out of this difficult economic time. But Washington could give America’s job creators a hand by passing pro-growth policies to modernize the tax code, reform our legal and regulatory systems, and restore fiscal sanity to government.

There isn’t always a lot of glory in owning and operating a small business. The hours are long, the list of challenges even

longer, and there are obstacles to overcome every single day. But the rewards are equally great—being your own boss, giving people the dignity of work, and, if you’re lucky, turning a profit.

More than that, small businesses are living proof of the power of free enterprise. Every day a mom-and-pop operation hangs the “OPEN” sign in their store front, an entrepreneur makes a new sales pitch, or an online vendor does business in a vibrant Internet marketplace, they are signaling that the American dream is alive and at work in this country.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce stands strong with the small businesses of America. Together, we are calling on Washington to lighten the burden and to let small businesses do what they do best—drive economic growth and create American jobs.

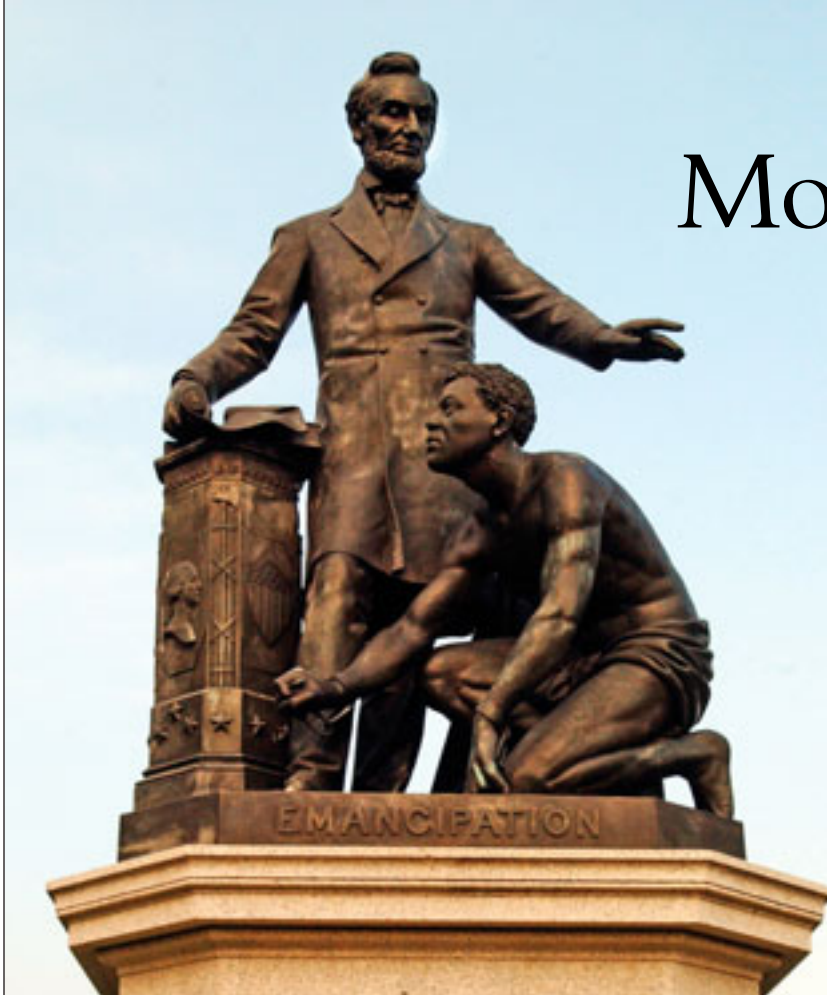


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Monumental Battles

Why we build memorials.

BY DIANA SCHAUB



**The Freedmen's Monument
in Washington's Lincoln Park**

In the midst of the current controversies over the Martin Luther King and Dwight Eisenhower memorials in Washington, it's worth examining the human impulse toward memorialization, so that we can appreciate what is at stake in the inevitable battles—aesthetic and moral—over the shapes our collective memory will take. The best guide for this inquiry, to my mind, is Frederick Douglass, the great 19th-century abolitionist and agitator, who for all his radicalism was also, in key respects, profoundly conservative.

After the Civil War, and even as he campaigned for expanded rights for blacks and women, Douglass devoted great efforts to remembrance of things past. He was a master of the eulogy and the anniversary address.

Diana Schaub is professor of political science at Loyola University Maryland and a member of the Hoover Institution's Task Force on the Virtues of a Free Society. She is the co-editor (with Amy and Leon Kass) of What So Proudly We Hail: The American Soul in Story, Speech, and Song.

The most important of these performances was his 1876 "Oration in Memory of Abraham Lincoln," delivered at the dedication of the Freedmen's Monument in Lincoln Park, one mile due east of the U.S. Capitol. This was one of the very first statues of Lincoln to be unveiled, and it bears the further distinction of having been paid for with money donated by newly freed slaves. Although there was a separate attempt by Congress to commission a national memorial to Lincoln, that effort took almost half a century to come to fruition.

Douglass often began his commemorative addresses by reflecting on the significance of the act of commemoration. In a typical passage, he said that the desire to erect monuments

is native to the human heart, and among the holiest of all. It is composed of two elements, pious gratitude on the one hand, and an earnest desire to perpetuate illustrious examples of "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure,

whatsoever things are of good report" [Phil. 4:8] and to make them the property of posterity.

According to Douglass, what moves us is the twofold motive of gratitude and perpetuation. Memorialization is an act in the present that expresses our debt to the past and our gift to the future. In acknowledging the nation's ancestral benefactors, we enshrine examples that can be emulated by generations to come. Thus, memorialization accomplishes the task of cultural transmission.

Douglass pointed out that this faculty is unique to human beings and calls it "the highest attribute of man's nature." Other "creatures of earth" possess minds, but only humans are capable of re-minding by translating our "subjective consciousness" into "objective form."

Of course, the use of this sublime faculty is not always welcome or wise. As he said, "tyrants and oppressors . . . who . . . rode to high places upon the necks of fallen millions . . . have their

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monuments” (usually erected at their own instigation). The last two decades have seen hundreds of objectifications of Lenin and Stalin and Saddam Hussein and now Qaddafi toppled and dragged and dismembered. While the desecration of the human body, living or dead, is always wrong, the same can't be said of the demolition of a statue. The monuments of tyranny deserve their ignominious fate. (Even the Lenin statue rescued from a scrapyards in Slovakia by an enterprising American and now erected in Seattle has become the favored target of pranksters, protesters, and performance artists.)

In an interesting speech from 1861, early in the Civil War, entitled “Pictures and Progress,” Douglass described how this expressive faculty, which he called the “picture making faculty,” becomes a battleground of “contending interests and forces.” He testified to the power of the imagination for both good and evil; as he said, “the master we obey in making our subjective nature objective, giving it form, color, space, action and utterance, is the all important thing. . . . [I]t will either lift us . . . or sink us.” According to Douglass, our civic life is decisively shaped by “symbols and songs.” It matters who and what and how we memorialize.

The Freedmen's Monument was dedicated on Good Friday on the eleventh anniversary of Lincoln's assassination. Speaking before a racially mixed crowd of 25,000 which included President Grant and numerous members of the Supreme Court and Congress, Douglass made clear that he thought Lincoln worthy of honor, and worthy of honor in particular from blacks, for the act of emancipation. However, he also had serious reservations about the execution of the monument—reservations that were shared by others at the time and have only become more pronounced since. The sculpture by Thomas Ball depicts Lincoln, Emancipation Proclamation in one hand, extending his

other hand over the crouching figure of a nearly naked black slave. Douglass was reported to have departed from his written text to criticize the slave's submissive posture, remarking that “a more manly attitude would have been indicative of freedom.”

There had been an alternative design by the female sculptor Harriet Hosmer, which was rejected as too costly. It would have depicted Lincoln atop a central pillar, flanked by smaller pillars showing, among other figures, black Union soldiers. Douglass would doubtless have preferred this concept, embodying as it did the central role



Solemnity and grandeur: The Lincoln Memorial

of Lincoln in issuing the Emancipation Proclamation, while crediting as well the cause and consequence of that act, namely the military necessity to deprive the rebellion of the labor of the slaves and instead enlist the freedmen on the Union side.

As Douglass had insistently argued for more than a year before the issuance of the proclamation: “We are striking with our white hand, while our black one is chained behind us.” Douglass rightly wished that the monument had conveyed less paternalism and more of the reciprocal heroism involved in Lincoln's unchaining of the sable arm.

As the featured speaker at the dedication of a statue with which he was dissatisfied, Douglass brilliantly and subtly corrected certain implications of the monument. Without lessening the heartfelt gratitude toward Lincoln, Douglass supplied the missing element

of black dignity and equality. Two decades later, the more manly spirit of freedom would be given sculptural form by Augustus Saint-Gaudens in his Robert Gould Shaw Memorial on Boston Common, and Ed Hamilton would capture it again a century later in his African-American Civil War Memorial erected at 10th and U Streets in Washington in 1997.

What do we learn from our two Lincoln memorials? The theme of the first is emancipation; the theme of the second, the national Lincoln Memorial that anchors the Mall in Washington, is union. This is explicit in the inscription, which reads: “In this temple, as in the hearts of the people for whom he saved the Union, the memory of Abraham Lincoln is enshrined forever.” The theme of union is symbolically present also. There is a peristyle of 36 Doric columns, representing the 36 states in the Union at the time of Lincoln's death, and the states are named in the frieze that wraps the building. Above that frieze is another, naming the 48 states that made up the Union at

the time of the monument's construction. Thus, the point is made that Lincoln's saving the Union gave rise to its subsequent growth and flourishing. Also present throughout are images of the eagle and the Roman fasces, traditional symbols of sovereign authority. On one interior wall is incised the text of the Gettysburg Address, the great rallying speech for the cause of union, on the other the text of the Second Inaugural, laying the foundation for the restoration of brotherly union between north and south.

In an odd twist, reflecting I think the difference between successful and unsuccessful memorialization, the Freedmen's Monument lost its audience over time. Although early on it was the site of annual parades and programs celebrating emancipation, those observances tapered off in the 20th century. Because of discomfort with

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its representation of race relations, the statue never became a site to which hopes or demands for racial advance could attach themselves. The Freedmen's Monument spoke to the past as an expression of gratitude, but not to the future as a model for emulation.

The Lincoln Memorial, meanwhile, has gained "audience share." Although designed to celebrate the union of the states, it has acquired a strong connection with racial union as well.

At the dedication ceremony in 1922, the keynote address was given by a noted African-American leader, Robert Moton, who succeeded Booker T. Washington at the helm of the Tuskegee Institute. Despite that honor, Moton was seated in the segregated black section rather than on the speakers' platform with Chief Justice Taft, President Harding, and other dignitaries. Moreover, the planning commission vetted Moton's speech, insisting that he not link his theme of the Negro's debt to Lincoln with a call for the nation to acknowledge its unpaid

debt to the Negro. The censoring of Moton led to calls in the black press for a boycott of the memorial until it could be more fittingly dedicated.

One could argue that a truer dedication occurred on Easter Sunday 1939, when Marian Anderson began her open-air concert on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial by singing "My Country, 'Tis of Thee," after she'd been denied permission to sing in Constitution Hall. Finally, in 1963, Martin Luther King returned to Moton's original idea, summoning the nation to make good on its promissory note of freedom and justice for all Americans.

Whatever reservations one might have about the new King monument, it seems right that it is situated on the line of sight between the Jefferson and Lincoln Memorials, since King drew on both the Declaration's assertion of human equality with respect to rights and the beginning of the vindication of that commitment in the statesmanship of Lincoln.

Worth remembering, too, is that

there was serious opposition to the design of the Lincoln Memorial. Leading architects and critics of the day, like Frank Lloyd Wright and Lewis Mumford, were appalled. Many thought something more humble would have been more in keeping with the beloved folksy figure of Honest Abe. They made the case for a log cabin shrine. Perhaps they had a point; the log cabin bespeaks greatness by evoking the distance between Lincoln's origins and his accomplishments and so suggesting democracy's possibilities.

Nonetheless, it would be hard to imagine such a modest monument inspiring the nation as the Lincoln Memorial undoubtedly has, with its solemnity and grandeur. In Lincoln's first great speech, his Lyceum Address, he called for a political religion—a temple of liberty upheld by pillars hewn from the rock of reason. We can be grateful that the memorial took the form it did, with Lincoln on the judgment seat superintending the destiny of the Republic. ♦



The Foreign WTO Now Outrageously Controls Our Economy, Fate and Future

Six Disastrous Points that Negate Our Constitutional Rights

It is inconceivable that we should even tolerate this! The WTO is a biased undemocratic organization of 153 nations that limits America's ability to act in its own best interest. In it, the United States has no larger vote than a smaller country, such as Grenada (Article IX, p. 5).

By signing the agreement with the World Trade Organization, the U.S. Congress agreed to concede a major portion of our sovereignty and usurp our democratic legislative process, including:

- Conforming U.S. laws, regulations and administrative procedures to the will of the WTO (Article XVI, p. 10)
- Subjecting all federal, state and local laws and practices that effect trade to international review by the WTO (Article XVI, p. 10)
- Allowing any WTO member country to challenge federal, state and local laws and practices as trade impeding (Section 2 of the Dispute Settlement Understanding)
- Taking all trade disputes to the WTO judiciary giving the WTO final jurisdiction over all trade altercations. No appeal exists outside of the WTO (Section 2 of the Dispute Settlement Understanding)
- Empowering the WTO to enforce its rulings by imposing fines on the United States until we comply
- Disallowing Congress to change the agreement



Sorry Sam, We're the boss now. You signed away your constitutional rights in 1995. Now do as your'e told!

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The Rights of America are Subservient to the Will of the World Trade Organization. Those who Signed this Lengthy Agreement did not Read the Fine Print or did not have the Interests of America in Mind.

America's WTO Agreement Puts Control in Destructive Foreign Hands!

Here is just one example of many infractions that may be making us sick, or even killing us.

The WTO outrageously delivered a ruling against a U.S. ban on chicken products imported from China. The ruling forces the United States' market to open up for processed, often toxic, chicken breast exports from China. The WTO's ruling stated that the U.S. ban was not in accordance with WTO rules and regulations, and officials concerned with the matter would not disclose further details, citing reasons of "confidentiality."

This WTO-forced importation of dangerous goods provides yet another example of the United States inability to protect national trade interests.

We do not even have the right in the international community to block the importation of foods that are well below the standards of our country.

Clearly, the U.S. needs to dissolve our own membership, or our interests will continue to be represented by international entities that clearly do not have our nation's best interest in mind.

Though consumers may never know, many will soon be subjected to purchasing chicken raised via dangerous methods that were once banned in the United States for health and safety reasons. Current regulations do not require stores to label the country of origin on processed meat.

Do we really need foreigners telling us what to? Shouldn't we be allowed to do what is in our best interest? The truth is, we can't afford to let other nations make decisions to our detriment. The WTO must be eliminated!

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Addressing supporters in St. Petersburg, Fla., May 16

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The core Republican message is a winning one.

BY JAY COST

Now that Mitt Romney has sewn up the Republican presidential nomination, the general election battle has begun. Team Obama obviously recognizes this; since Romney basically sealed the deal after the Wisconsin primary in April, the president and his team have launched a series of attacks designed to distract the country from the real stakes of this election.

This raises an obvious question: What should Romney do? Many commentators have correctly suggested that he not take Obama's bait on items like the "war on women." There is no need to play the game by the rules

Jay Cost is a staff writer at

THE WEEKLY STANDARD and the author of Spoiled Rotten, a new critical history of the Democratic party (Broadside Books).

Obama wishes to set. However, that only explains what Romney should not do. Is there a clear, positive strategy for him to follow?

There is. An examination of this year's electoral landscape, relevant polling on President Obama, and the history of how Republicans win the presidency shows a pretty straightforward path for Romney.

Fortunately for Romney—in contrast to nominees like Bob Dole in 1996 and Walter Mondale in 1984—he does not have to convince people that their eyes are lying to them, that the state of the union is actually worse than it appears. People know that times are tough right now; they do not need Romney to convince them of that.

This is also President Obama's key vulnerability. His job approval has

been under 50 percent since the end of 2009, with only a few temporary exceptions; worse, his approval on the big issues is well into negative territory, with solid majorities disapproving of his handling of the economy, the deficit, and health care.

Romney's essential task is thus to persuade people to act on their convictions. A majority of the American electorate is disappointed—one way or another—with the performance of this president. Romney just needs to convince them that things will not improve in a second Obama term.

It is important to note that almost all of the electorate is already locked in. Over the last 25 years, the numbers of core Democrats and Republicans have been roughly equal, such that it is a very rare event in the modern era for either side to fall under 45 percent of the vote. There really is only 10 percent of the public up for grabs. This small slice of the electorate must be Romney's focus.

This points to the paths he should not pursue. Conservatives are deeply frustrated with President Obama and view him as aloof, arrogant, and unqualified. Polling, however, indicates that the middle of the country sees things differently. They like the president; they think he sympathizes with their plight, and they see him as a credible leader. So Romney should eschew any and all ad hominem attacks; with the president's personal favorability ratings above 50 percent, it would be a waste of time.

However, these same voters do think Obama is more liberal than they are. This is Romney's opening, for an unabashed liberal has not won the White House since 1964. Presidents Carter, Clinton, and Obama all secured victory by running, in some form or another, against or at least away from dogmatic liberalism. People nowadays simply do not trust the government very much—the country has generally been suspicious of big government for a couple of generations—which means that appearing to be a liberal is not a good way to win a national election.

Romney therefore can take the top three issues the country is concerned

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about—the economy, the deficit, and health care—and connect the people’s disappointment with Obama to their perception of him as a liberal. In other words, Romney needs to explain why things have remained so sour during the Obama tenure. That story is really a simple one: Things are bad three years after the worst of the recession because Obama’s policies have been too liberal to succeed.

On the economy, the stimulus failed because the solution Obama offered was premised on growing the government. That is no way to restore economic health.

On the deficit, Romney can argue that it is out of control because liberals cannot help but run up a deficit. They like to grow government, and so Obama has spent, spent, and spent without paying for it, resulting in an enormous deficit. Worse, his big spending failed to jumpstart the economy, which means tax revenues have remained depressed.

On health care, Obama promised to solve this key structural ailment via government activism. But Obamacare is only going to make matters worse—by hiking the cost of care, it will make it harder for employers to add new workers; it will mean less money in the pockets of average citizens; and it will exacerbate runaway federal deficits that depress future economic growth.

So the general idea is simple. Obama has failed because he subscribes to an outdated, ineffective governing philosophy, one that the country has consistently rejected for almost half a century—and one that is now failing throughout the world. And worse, Obama ignored the warning sent by voters in the 2010 midterms. That was a clarion call for Obama to tack back to the center as Clinton did in 1995. Obama ignored it. Instead, he doubled down on failed policies. So there is no reason to expect things to be any different in a second Obama term.

This has to be the message Romney carries around the country. It is the best and most persuasive way to connect public dissatisfaction with the state of the nation, disappointment with Obama’s handling of the

biggest issues, and the widespread belief that the president is too liberal. If he can convince the average swing voter that Obama is too far to the left to fix the big problems the country faces, he is almost home at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

But “almost” only counts in horse-shoes and hand grenades. How does Romney close the deal? It can only be by promising to do the things that Obama cannot do. And for that, he has to stretch deep into the history of the Republican party, to understand why this coalition, whose original purpose was to stop the spread of slavery, has endured for 150 years.

Fortunately for Romney—in contrast to nominees like Bob Dole in 1996 and Walter Mondale in 1984—he does not have to convince people that their eyes are lying to them, that the state of the union is actually worse than it appears. People know that times are tough right now; they do not need Romney to convince them of that.

If the core Republican philosophy were a constellation, it would be anchored by three stars: William McKinley, Calvin Coolidge, and, above all, Ronald Reagan. Each of them articulated the basic beliefs of the Republican party in ways that led to decisive victories. McKinley promised voters in 1896 that he was, as one supporter put it, the “advance agent of prosperity.” Coolidge famously proclaimed that the “business of America is business.” And Reagan’s economic policy is so famous and enduring that the party faithful have embraced it as “Reaganomics.”

Romney can follow their examples. All three of these leaders reminded the country that the single most

progressive force in the world is American private enterprise. That is the great engine of prosperity in the United States, and ultimately the means by which we become the “more perfect union” that the preamble to the Constitution promises. None of these presidents promised a laissez-faire state of nature, contrary to the claims of the Democrats then and now. They understood that the government has a positive role to play in encouraging private enterprise—not for the sake of profits for the few, but to assure growth that lifts the entire populace.

Romney has to articulate these core ideals. He has to tell Americans that government is not the solution to our problems, and that we ourselves hold those solutions. We can fix the economy, tackle the deficit, and improve our health care system. The job of the government is to facilitate this, not to do it for us.

Romney has to offer a simple justification for every policy he proposes, namely: This will unleash the great engine of the American economy and help us all in the long run.

And he might keep in mind the experience in Europe, where the left on that continent has managed to turn the concept of “austerity” into a kind of four-letter word. This was not a hard thing to do. During times of economic crisis, people do not want to see the government cutting back simply to balance its own books. Instead, they want to see the government do more. For liberals, this of course means ever higher deficit spending. But for conservatives in the McKinley-Coolidge-Reagan tradition, it means smart deregulation to help businesses grow, tax cuts that foster growth, a trade policy that benefits ailing American industries, and so on. Put another way, Romney has to promise a vigorous government, but not one that seeks to tax, spend, and regulate; rather, it should be actively seeking ways to help private citizens solve their own problems.

This is where Romney’s experience can play a valuable role. Liberal Democrats, naturally, think working in venture capital is a bad

thing—unless, of course, they are accepting campaign contributions from those very same “vultures”—but Romney has a positive story to tell about his time at Bain Capital, one that syncs with the broader narrative he wants to articulate about a Romney presidency. The value of Bain for the Romney candidacy is that a lot of what he did there was give promising entrepreneurs the capital they needed to make their businesses work. That’s exactly what he wants to do with the whole country—not fix the problems himself, but give the people the tools they need to fix them.

Ditto the Olympics in Salt Lake City. Romney himself did not put the Olympics on—the good folks of Utah did that. Romney was there to help organize and channel their initiative so as to make the whole spectacle a success. If people think Romney can do for the country what he did for the Salt Lake City Olympics, it can help him in November.

As the Romney campaign puts forward this message, the Obama team will respond with all sorts of non sequiturs that are meant to divert Romney. They see the exact same polling data—they know that Obama is unpopular on the big issues, that people think he is too liberal, and that voters are inclined to make a change. Obama is going to try to get Romney to talk about gay marriage or student loans or the “war on women” because any day that Romney spends not delivering his core message is a good day for Obama. While the Romney team has to be ready to respond to attacks that could tarnish his image, the candidate himself should keep steering the discussion back to his winning issues.

And for good measure, Team Romney should hang in every room of their headquarters the old James Carville slogans that were the guiding light of the Clinton campaign in 1992, with one additional point as a nod to the Ross Perot candidacy:

Change vs. more of the same.

The economy, stupid.

Don’t forget health care.

And let’s get that deficit under control! ♦

Mitt Romney’s Schooldays

The *Washington Post* invents a narrative.

BY NOEMIE EMERY

There is literal truth, grounded in fact; there is poetic license, which is truth stretched a little to make it seem stronger; and then there is emotional truth, which is what some people imagine must have happened, based on their view of the world. For an example of the latter, we go to *Mutual Contempt*, Jeff Shesol’s book on the feud between Lyndon B.

was jumping the shark. Johnson was drawn as an ugly and menacing figure: He didn’t just walk, he “heavily lumbered”; he didn’t just sit down, he “sprawled.” Worse, he forced Kennedy to go hunting with him one morning and, though the president-elect had resisted, insisted he shoot a deer. The image of the animal “caught in his sights” had haunted Kennedy, as Man-

chester put it, leaving a deep “inner scar.” This was hardly the best way to open a book about a man who would be killed by a rifle in Texas, and, as Schlesinger said, defined the book as “a conflict between New England and Texas, decency and vulgarity, Kennedy and Johnson.” Schlesinger thought that the LBJ portrait “too often acquires an exaggerated symbolism—so much that some critics may write that the uncon-



Romney at Cranbrook

Johnson and Robert F. Kennedy, which tells of the first draft of William Manchester’s *Death of a President*, (recounting the murder of Bobby’s brother).

Manchester’s opening scene described John Kennedy’s visit after his election to the LBJ ranch in Texas in vivid and startling terms. So vivid and startling were they that they brought forth a letter from Bobby’s friend Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. that he circulated among Bobby’s associates, warning them that their author

scious argument of the book is that Johnson killed Kennedy (that is, that Johnson is an expression of the forces of violence and irrationality that ran rampant through his native state).”

Evan Thomas, Manchester’s editor (and father of the present-day author and journalist), feared his author was so “carried away that his ‘tragic narrative’ had become a ‘fairy tale,’” in which the Texans appeared as a collection of rednecks and rabble, “plucked from the dung heap by magical Jack.” In the end, Thomas prevailed, and the incident was shortened, toned down, and moved to a different part of the narrative, but for Manchester and

Noemie Emery is a contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD and a columnist for the Washington Examiner.

a fairly large number of people, the “emotional truth” of the matter rang true: Kennedy had been killed not only in but *by* Texas.

In Manchester’s footsteps comes the story, run in the *Washington Post* two weeks ago, that, much as Lyndon Johnson and Texas disposed of John Kennedy, Mitt Romney and Cranbrook, the prep school in Michigan that he went to in the 1960s, broke and ruined the life of John Lauber, a schoolmate in the class just below his, simply because Lauber was gay.

Ostensibly an exhaustive study of Mitt Romney’s schooldays, the piece starts and ends with Lauber, who is framed as Mitt Romney’s opposite—small, frail, unconnected, and vulnerable. And where Romney had the short, dark, clipped hair of the era, Lauber’s was long, dyed blond, and dipped over one eye in the manner made famous by the starlet Veronica Lake. This apparently aroused the ire of Romney, who one day led a “prep school posse” that tackled the youngster and held him down for Romney to clip off his blond locks. Lauber disappeared for a few days, then reappeared with his short hair back to its natural color. He was expelled the next year when he was found smoking by a senior prefect, who turned him in with “an excess of the ‘dorm trooper’ mentality instilled” by the school. “He just disappeared,” one classmate tells the reporter.

“Sudden disappearances at Cranbrook were not unheard of,” the story continues, making the school sound like Chile and Argentina in the late 1970s. After Cranbrook expelled Lauber, he came out as gay, and led the life of a “vagabond,” roaming the world and taking the sorts of jobs not expected of Cranbrook alumni. (The piece says that after “an extreme fit of temper” he checked into the Menninger Clinic in Kansas, but does not say when this happened, what caused it, what he was treated for, or if the treatment helped.) Meanwhile, Romney graduated in June 1965, in a ceremony at which his father delivered the keynote address, and after which the class sang the school song, “Forty Years On.” And it was just forty

years after that, in 2005, that Mitt Romney, a millionaire and a governor and about to embark on his first run for president, accepted the academy’s Distinguished Alumni Award. And the year before that? John Lauber died in a Seattle hospital, unremarked on by Cranbrook, unknown and unsung.

Johnson did a crude thing if he bullied Kennedy into killing an animal, but the “emotional truth” told by Manchester is that Johnson and Texas killed Kennedy. Mitt Romney did a cruel and crude thing if he cut off the hair of John Lauber, but the “emotional truth” told by the *Washington Post* is that he and Cranbrook hunted down Lauber because he was

People have noted that most of the witnesses to Romney’s rape of the locks seem to be Democrats, but here, too, opinions diverge.

a non-conformist and/or homosexual, and ruined his life. But nothing else in Romney’s life suggests he’s a sadist or homophobe; rather the opposite.

Michael Barone, whose own time at Cranbrook overlapped with Romney’s, remembers a school tolerant of eccentricity, respectful of intellect, and open to diversity. He also says the interpretation of the event is “anachronistic,” as long hair at the time was connected to the Beach Boys and the Beatles, to surfers and rock stars, not sexual preference. “Hair length was a big issue in the 1960s,” he tells us. “Men of the World War II generation, who had memories of military short haircuts, took umbrage when teenagers let their hair grow, and fathers would badger their sons to get haircuts.” Lauber didn’t become a millionaire and a governor, but neither do most of us. He did study dressage in England, tour with the Royal Lipizzaner Stallions, work as a chef on a freighter, and later as a cook for civilian contractors in war-torn Bosnia and Iraq. Iraq and Bosnia were no places for wusses, and the job that

he did there was surely important. No wonder his sisters said that the facts in the story were not correct and that “If he were still alive today, he would be furious.”

Nonetheless, the *Post*’s account is a donation-in-kind to the campaign of Obama, allowing the Democrats to weave together the newly discovered concern over bullying to the less newly discovered cause of gay equality and present them in a neat bundle to concerned suburban women, or some other niche group du jour. That the story exactly coincided with the president’s “evolution” on gay marriage set it up even better, though in retrospect this might not have been such a wholly good thing. People have noted that most of the witnesses to the rape of the locks seem to be Democrats, but here, too, opinions diverge. According to ABC News, Phillip Maxwell, one of the four boys who helped pin down Lauber, found the whole thing horrific: “When you see somebody who is simply different taken down that way . . . and you see that look in their eye, you never forget it,” he said. His brother Peter, who was also at Cranbrook, says that his brother likes to “expound” upon matters, and finds this reaction extreme. Romney “was the kind of guy who would go out of his way to help people, and for him to be characterized as a bully would be the farthest thing from the truth.” He said to his brother, “Come on, what really was it?” and his brother replied, “The kid had long hair, and it wasn’t really what people were into at that time.” Peter responded, “Let’s look at it that way. Let’s not make it into a national media event for an incident that happened in 1965.”

The victim’s survivors would seem to agree: “The family of John Lauber is releasing a statement saying the portrait of John is factually incorrect and we are aggrieved that he would be used to further a political agenda” has been their last word on it all.

The problem with “emotional truth” is that emotions vary from person to person, and are frequently colored by politics. Perhaps newspapers should simply stay with the facts. ♦

Morality, Not Theology

The importance of Romney's Liberty University speech. BY MEIR Y. SOLOVEICHIK

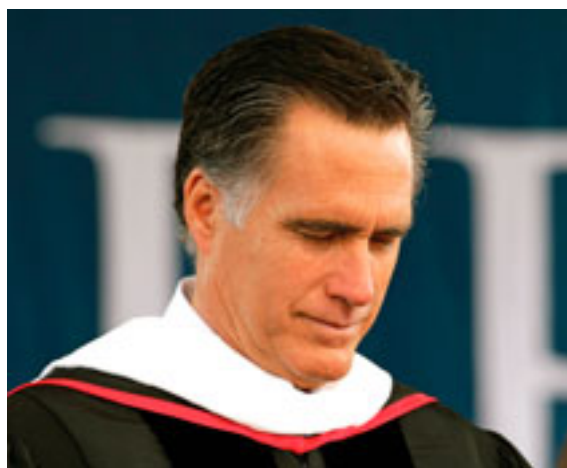
In 2007, Mitt Romney, facing a surging Huckabee campaign in an Iowa caucus that was supposed to launch him to the nomination, delivered a speech about the role of faith in public life. As eloquent as the speech, entitled "Faith in America," may have been, it did little to bolster his Iowa campaign. He lost badly, in large part because of Huckabee's evangelical supporters.

Last Saturday, Mitt Romney returned to the heart of evangelical America. In accepting the invitation to address the graduates at Liberty University, Romney surely could not have predicted that the commencement would occur during a week in which President Obama embraced same-sex marriage. Yet Romney chose, rightly, not to ignore what had occurred, and ended up delivering one of the most effective speeches of his political career. In understanding why this is so, it is instructive to study the writings of the Orthodox Jewish Talmudist and philosopher Joseph Soloveitchik.

During the heady days of Vatican II, Jews of less traditional denominations were eager to engage in dialogue about theological doctrines with the church, optimistic that new religious commonalities could be discovered. Rabbi Soloveitchik, in contrast, discouraged such engagement. Matters of theology, he stressed, "are personal and bespeak

Meir Y. Soloveitchik is director of the Straus Center for Torah and Western Thought at Yeshiva University and associate rabbi at Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun in Manhattan.

an intimate relationship which must not be debated with others whose relationship with God has been molded by different historical events and in different terms." Working to find substantive common ground on these theological matters, he argued, is ultimately unproductive because Jews and Christians "will employ different categories



Liberty University commencement, May 12

and move within incommensurate frames of reference and evaluation."

Soloveitchik was speaking of Judaism and Christianity, but the point is equally applicable to the doctrinal differences between evangelical Christians and Mormons. As a case in point, let us take Romney's description in his 2007 speech of his own Mormonism, responding to the many questions from Christians he had met while campaigning. "There is one fundamental question about which I often am asked. What do I believe about Jesus Christ? I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the savior of mankind." Romney further noted that his beliefs about Jesus may be very different from those

of others, and that it is inappropriate for a political candidate to discuss doctrine. But if the intention was to strike a common chord with evangelicals, there is little evidence that Romney succeeded. By "savior" Mormons undoubtedly mean something somewhat different than evangelical Christians. Seeking commonality on the matter only emphasizes the deep divisions between Mormons and evangelicals on dogma, matters on which their respective missionaries are competing as they seek converts.

This does not mean, however, that members of diverse faiths cannot find religious reasons for unity. Even as he discouraged public dialogue on doctrinal matters, Joseph Soloveitchik stressed that when Jews and Christians "move from the private world of faith to the public world of humanitarian and cultural endeavors, communication among the various faith communities is desirable and even essential." Soloveitchik, moreover, insisted that primary subjects of interfaith engagement should include "man's moral values" and "the threat of secularism," matters that "revolve about religious spiritual aspects of our civilization." He then added that in engaging these matters, people of different faiths can discover a profound commonality:

As men of God, our thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and terminology bear the imprint of a religious world outlook. We define ideas in religious categories and we express our feelings in a peculiar language which quite often is incomprehensible to the secularist.

Soloveitchik's point was that Jews and Christians share a moral vision and language that unites them in a society suddenly secular. These moral categories and values, he wrote, are "religious in nature and biblical in origin," but they embody what he called "the universal and public—not the individual and private—in religion."

Similarly, at Liberty, Romney chose not to emphasize doctrinal

AP / JAE C. HONG

commonalities. In the presence of tens of thousands of evangelicals, no mention was made of his belief in Jesus as “Lord and Savior.” In fact, he emphasized the fact that Mormonism and evangelical Christianity are different faiths. At the same time, he stressed the ability of the biblical moral vision to unite faiths despite their differences:

People of different faiths, like yours and mine, sometimes wonder where we can meet in common purpose, when there are so many differences in creed and theology. Surely the answer is that we can meet in service, in shared moral convictions about our nation stemming from a common worldview [emphasis added].

Like Soloveitchik, Romney emphasized that these shared moral convictions revolve about essential aspects of our civilization:

You enter a world with civilizations and economies that are far from equal. Harvard historian David Landes devoted his lifelong study to understanding why some civilizations rise, and why others falter. His conclusion: Culture makes all the difference. . . . Central to America’s rise to global leadership is our Judeo-Christian tradition. . . . The American culture promotes personal responsibility, the dignity of work, the value of education, the merit of service, devotion to a purpose greater than self, and, at the foundation, the preeminence of the family. . . . Culture matters. As fundamental as these principles are, they may become topics of democratic debate. So it is today with the enduring institution of marriage. Marriage is a relationship between one man and one woman.

The speech produced rave reviews from evangelical leaders, and rightly so. There are many unexpected twists and turns yet to play out in the election, not to mention the conventions and debates. But if the first Wednesday in November leaves us looking at President-elect Romney, elected in part by a united conservative base whose divisions in 2008 destroyed his dream, we will look back on the Liberty University speech as a major moment. ♦

Forgive Us Our Debts?

The war between lenders and borrowers.

BY IRWIN M. STELZER

Debtors of the world, unite—you have nothing to lose but your IOUs!

That seems to be what the Greeks are discovering—that they have less to lose by default, with all of its consequences, than by trying to be Germans.

One of the most surprising aspects of the financial crises being played out around the world is the failure of policymakers to concede perhaps the most important underlying fact: This is a war by creditors, in control of the institutions of power, to saddle debtors with the cost of the errors in which both borrowers and lenders are complicit. It is in its way very much like some past debtor-creditor brawls: farmers vs. mortgage lenders, hard money financiers vs. those who wanted to avoid crucifying mankind on a cross of gold, Latin American dictators vs. foreign bankers.

Start with Europe. In Greece, Spain, Ireland, Portugal, France, the Netherlands, and Belgium—that may prove to be only a partial list when all the numbers are in—citizens are being asked to tighten their belts, to tolerate austerity-induced joblessness that has driven economies into recession and eurozone unemployment rates into double digits. They are being asked to do without some of the social services to which they have grown accustomed, some of those services the frosting on an already-rich welfare cake, some of them essential to a minimal standard of living for the poor. They are being asked

to pay higher taxes on their incomes, property, and wealth at a time when their real incomes are declining.

Why? To prevent the bankruptcy of some sovereign governments, a bankruptcy that would impose losses on the owners of European bank stocks and would threaten the euro, a currency based on the shaky assumption that fiscal union is not a necessary concomitant of monetary union. The end of the euro, of course, would mean an increase in joblessness—among the bureaucrats who by the thousands inhabit the best flats and restaurants of Brussels, and earn salaries and benefits that are the envy of national politicians. The Eurocrats contend even now that they need an inflation-busting increase in their budget, financed if necessary by higher taxes on residents of the European Union and on the financial services industry, primarily in Britain, which had the good sense to hang onto the pound sterling rather than enter the eurozone.

On to the United States. Some debtors are losing their homes. Many of them were imprudent to take on mortgage debt they could not possibly repay, but some were wiped out because the economic downturn, for which they were in no way responsible, destroyed long-held jobs or drove down property values. These debtors are the collateral damage of macroeconomic disasters unleashed by others. The lenders, institutions presumably schooled in the fine art of risk management, and armed with information from staffs of economists and the fabled quants, were not merely innocent victims of the debt crisis. They made loans with their eyes wide open, unless blinded by the thought that they were too big

Irwin M. Stelzer is a contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, director of economic policy studies at the Hudson Institute, and a columnist for the Sunday Times (London).

to fail, or that they could simultaneously make bad loans and sell them to trusting clients. The borrowers lost homes and equity, the lenders were bailed out, and although shareholders in lending institutions did not escape unscathed, many of the bankers to whom they entrusted the management of their wealth did. Compare the plight of an evicted family with the banker fighting a rearguard action to prevent shareholders from reducing his bonus by the odd million or two. Or the prudent saver who now finds there is an almost zero return on his savings—virtuously accumulated by deferring gratification—so that the Fed can keep rates low enough to boost bank profits.

On to the biggest creditor of all, China, at risk should the United States decide to (dis)honor its obligations by running the printing presses and otherwise reducing the value of the dollars being used for repayment to a fraction of those it borrowed. China received those dollars in return for goods it sold to America, and invested them in the IOUs of the U.S. government rather than allowing its currency to appreciate and opening its markets to made-in-America stuff. And it is using the wealth, much of it amassed by stealing intellectual property, to build a military that threatens American security and economic interests around the globe. Although some of China's gains from trade would be reduced by depreciation of the dollar, its claim to sympathy is somewhat weakened by the fact that a good portion of those gains were ill-gotten.

I exaggerate, but only to raise an important question. Is now the time to follow the biblical injunction that debtors be released from debt every seventh year? The answer is “no,” lest credit become unavailable except in the form of short-term loans. But not because of moral hazard, the valid concept misused by creditors and their supporters.

Yes, if default were to become the solution to the world's problems—in essence a transfer of wealth from creditors to debtors—moral hazard would rear its ugly head. Pardon illegal immigrants, and millions more will troop across our borders in the hope of another pardon. Pardon debtors, and those capable of repaying their debts might decide that remission beats repayment as a financial strategy. But that is a risk the possible cost of which must be weighed against the social cost of existing policies that favor creditors: wide-scale unemployment, impoverishment, the scuppering of democratic

ahead either way, but surely the home of democracy would rather have its voters choose their own form of suffering than wait to learn what Germany has in store for them. A “Grexit,” as it has come to be called, would leave Greece no poorer than it now is, and freer to decide how to live within its straitened circumstances rather than be told how to do so by a foreign power or an unelected technocrat imposed on it by a foreign power.

Of course, there are alternatives to widespread default. One such, alluded to above, is inflation. So desperate are the Germans to keep Greece in the euro, and to prevent a fracturing of the eurozone, that inflation-phobic Berlin is sending signals it will tolerate a bit of inflation—a tiny bit, driven by wage increases, something that Germany's iron chancellor, Angela Merkel, cannot help but find attractive as she faces a tough reelection campaign.

Such a move would make other eurozone countries a bit more competitive with German manufacturers, although my guess is not by enough to affect the relative performance of the German and southern European economies. It is, instead, a bone thrown to those who are demanding greater flexibility on the part of Merkel, and might make it possible for France's new Socialist president, François Hollande, to claim he has won the pro-growth concession he promised voters. With that under his belt, he can raise tax rates on the rich to 75 percent, lower the retirement age, and adopt other sops that his Socialist colleagues find attractive, proving their imperviousness to both experience and economic logic.

In America, the government could reduce the real debt burden by printing it away. Poof! and the real burden of what we owe China is reduced. Yes, incomes would be redistributed internally from creditors to debtors. And



L'austérité? Mais non! Brussels in December 2011.

governments in favor of “technocracies,” to mention a few. In this difficult policy area, elevating the fear of moral hazard to the sole policy criterion surely is not the answer, as John Maynard Keynes recognized in 1923 when he recommended debt cancellation to “avoid general disorders and unrest.”

So consider default—as a thought experiment if nothing else. In Europe that would take the form of refusal by sovereign governments to repay their debts, followed by negotiations with disappointed creditors. It has been done dozens of times before and, if recollection serves, without ever permanently freezing the defaulter out of world credit markets. If Greece defaults and exits the euro, it will in a stroke become free to craft its own economic policy rather than wait for the latest edict from Berlin: Harder times are

yes, that would affect the price lenders would demand of borrowers in the future. But a policy of inflation-as-default would merely be an explicit and one-shot application of what the Fed is now doing gradually and by stealth.

Does this mean I am recommending massive defaults? No: There are alternative policies that might result in more tolerable sharing of the pain of debt repayment, more tolerable than austerity alone. One such alternative would be to complete what advocates of a united Europe call the European Project: Add fiscal union to monetary union. Germany can make its high credit rating available to the troubled nations by agreeing to a eurobond. Future borrowing would be guaranteed by the eurozone as a whole, aka Germany. Investors, secure in the knowledge that they will be repaid, would make funds available at interest rates far below those being demanded of Spain and Italy, but somewhat above those offered to Germany. This is a covert transfer of income from Germany southwards, but if Germany really fears a breakup of the eurozone, it might be willing to pay this price, especially since it would be more or less invisible to most voters. To prevent Greece and others from returning to their profligate ways on the back of this German guarantee, the eurobond might apply only to some portion of the borrowings of individual countries, leaving them dependent on their own credit standing and the capital markets for the balance.

Then, too, it might well be that in some cases structural reforms associated with austerity measures can heal sick economies, or that the shovel-ready infrastructure projects that seem to exist in the fantasies of politicians actually do exist. Or better still, that some way can be found to induce private-sector players to finance infrastructure improvements such as toll roads and a usable rail system, perhaps in partnership with governments. All I am suggesting is that blind insistence on austerity and repayment is a choice, one of several, and is not graven in stone. Or even demanded by the Bible. ♦

No More Mister Nice Guy

Obama squanders the likability factor.

BY FRED BARNES

By the time he took office in 2009, President Obama had fashioned a reputation as an idealist committed to reforming the way business is done in Washington. But as president, he's allowed this reputation to fritter away. And what's left of it is now being destroyed by his harsh and misguided campaign for reelection.

Obama has become his own worst political enemy. Even when his job approval first began to fade, his poll numbers for being well-liked personally remained high. Now those are fading too. He's on the road to defeat.

In 2008, Obama ran a "bring us together" campaign. He presented himself as a political uniter eager to bridge differences between the parties. This year, he's unleashed an "us versus them" campaign, catering to Democratic interest groups and seeking to marginalize Republican challenger Mitt Romney as an unacceptable alternative as president.

Neither of these tactics is new to politics. FDR ran a divisive campaign for reelection in 1936, uniting Democratic factions and tarring his opponents as "economic royalists." In 1964, Democrats isolated Republican Barry Goldwater as a conservative outside the mainstream of American

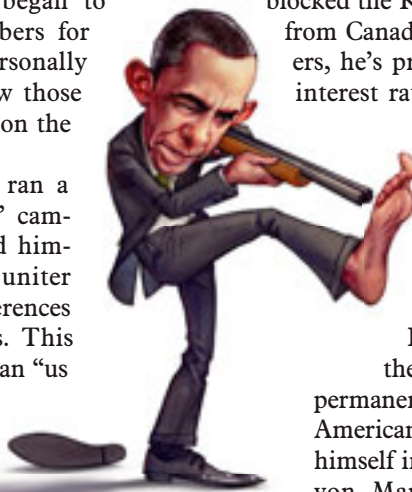
politics. Likewise in 1972, Republicans succeeded in branding Democrat George McGovern as unacceptably left-wing.

Obama has pursued these tactics crudely. He's done little to disguise his preferential treatment of narrow (but sympathetic) slices of the electorate. He's been concentrating on special interests, not the national interest, and it shows.

To appease environmentalists, he blocked the Keystone oil pipeline from Canada. For younger voters, he's proposed to keep the interest rate on student loans from doubling. Feminists got the contraception mandate. To appeal to Hispanic voters, he promoted the DREAM Act to give their children a path to permanent residency. African Americans? Obama intruded himself into the case of Trayvon Martin, whose shooting death touched off a protest led by Jesse Jackson and

Al Sharpton. If he had a son, Obama said, he'd look like Martin. For gays, he declared his support for same-sex marriage. For organized labor, he stacked the National Labor Relations Board with union partisans.

His blatant political favoritism has backfired. The pipeline, it turns out, has broad public support. The requirement that health insurers provide free contraceptives, with no conscience exemption, infuriated Catholics and evangelical Protestants. His endorsement of gay marriage was seen



Fred Barnes is executive editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

DAVE MALAN

by two-thirds of Americans as politically motivated.

To ostracize Romney, the Obama campaign wants to make him *personally* unacceptable as a possible president. This is different from the way Goldwater and McGovern were marginalized—and more risky. They were attacked for their ideology and policies. With Romney, it's the morality of his decisions as head of Bain Capital that's being questioned. Obama would have you believe Romney is a bad person.

There's a reason for this. It would be difficult to stigmatize Romney as politically extreme. In a May survey by the GOP polling group Resurgent Republic, 58 percent of Americans regarded him as moderate or somewhat conservative. "They view Mitt Romney the same way they view themselves," pollster Whit Ayres says. "It's Obama they view as outside the mainstream."

Romney, by the way, has responded more deftly to criticism of his business career by the Obama campaign than he did to similar attacks by opponents during the Republican primaries. Andrea Saul, his spokeswoman, said this after an Obama TV ad blamed Romney for closing a steel plant:

Mitt Romney helped create more jobs in his private sector experience and more jobs as governor of Massachusetts than President Obama has for the entire nation. President Obama has many questions to answer as to why his administration used the stimulus to reward wealthy campaign donors with taxpayer money for bad ideas like Solyndra, but 23 million Americans are still struggling to find jobs.

Romney didn't need a compelling response to an Obama television spot that alleged Romney would not have seized the opportunity to kill Osama bin Laden, unlike the president. This is absurd. How could the Obama team know this? In truth, any president probably would have jumped at the chance to execute bin Laden. I suspect most people think so.

Obama's style of running for reelection has taken its toll. "The Greek columns are now in ruins,"

says Steve Law, who heads American Crossroads, the Republican super-PAC. He was referring to the makeshift columns erected on the Denver stage where Obama delivered his acceptance speech in 2008. Obama's "ham-handed" campaign has wiped out his "last shred of brand equity." He's descended to the lowest common denominator. He's a Washington pol.

Yet Democrats continue to cite Obama's likability as a political strength. Indeed, it once was. But no more. In the recent bipartisan Battleground Poll, nearly one-quarter of voters said they like Obama personally but disapprove of his policies. But here's the rub: Sixty-eight percent of those voters said they won't vote for Obama, and another 20 percent said they'll "consider" someone else. Only 6 percent said they plan to vote for him.

"For the Democrats to focus on the likability factor at the current time, however, largely appears to be fool's gold," insists GOP pollsters Ed Goetz and Brian Nienaber.

Obama has a bigger problem: the growing assessment he's simply incapable of reviving the nation. American Crossroads has conducted a series of focus groups with swing voters who backed Obama in 2008. Last fall, they reluctantly acknowledged he'd failed to solve the country's problems, though they didn't regard their vote for him as a mistake.

This spring, they've begun to render a tougher verdict: Obama may not be up to the job. Law says these swing voters won't be attracted to Romney by negative attacks on the president. Instead, he must persuade them he can succeed where Obama hasn't.

Obama's continued decline is not inevitable. As Ayres points out, presidents win a second term when their job approval trends upward in the months before the election. This was true for Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton, and could be for Obama. But he'll need a far better campaign than we've seen so far—and a better presidency too. I'm not betting on it. ♦

The Politics of Polarization

Why you won't see a centrist Third Way this year.

BY JEFFREY BELL

The organization "Americans Elect" spent \$35 million on a new "centrist" party and nobody came. In announcing that no presidential candidate had received the 10,000 online votes needed to qualify for its online convention, the group's chief executive, Kahlil Byrd, said there was "an almost universal desire among delegates, leadership,

Jeffrey Bell is policy director of the American Principles Project and author of The Case for Polarized Politics: Why America Needs Social Conservatism.

and millions of Americans who have supported Americans Elect to see a credible candidate emerge from this process." Alas, the group would have to change its "people power" rules and turn its process into an elitist, top-down affair in order to qualify its current frontrunner—former Louisiana governor Buddy Roemer, a Democrat-turned-Republican who waged a microscopic campaign early this year for the GOP nomination—much less anyone further back in the standings.

Byrd told sympathetic liberal columnist Dana Milbank that the

absence of a credible candidate wasn't for lack of trying: "We've had hundreds of [candidate] briefings. We have met with current and former governors, current and former senators, university presidents, think tanks, mayors of large cities, and people who have been running Fortune 300 companies." Not only did Americans Elect attract 3.5 million people to its website and qualify for the presidential ballot in 29 states, but polls showed 40 percent or more of American voters were open to an alternative to the two major parties.

Even so, 2012 is not looking like an election that will attract the next Ross Perot, George Wallace, or Robert La Follette. And the reason is simple: America's two parties are polarized as never before. Their candidates aim to take the nation in diametrically opposite directions in just about every policy area.

Take today's most prominent social issue. When President Obama endorsed same-sex marriage, he said he favored letting each state make its own decision. But that claim is belied by his administration's campaign, in the courts and Congress, to repeal the Defense of Marriage Act of 1996—the main legal barrier to judicial imposition of same-sex marriage in all 50 states. If Obama wins, he will almost certainly appoint Supreme Court justices who would effectively override the wishes of referendum voters in 32 states. If Mitt Romney wins, the momentum will shift to social conservatives, who will continue to defend traditional marriage.

The day before Obama completed his evolution on marriage, North Carolina gave 61 percent of the vote to a state constitutional amendment that bans not just same-sex marriage, but also same-sex civil unions. North Carolina is a state Barack Obama carried in 2008 and hopes to carry in 2012, as witness the fact that Team

Obama opted to hold the Democratic National Convention in Charlotte. Why, so soon after a striking repudiation of gay marriage in a target state, would the president move aggressively in the opposite direction?

In his hastily arranged interview with ABC reporter Robin Roberts, Obama tried to attribute the recent change in his thinking to the empathy of daughters Sasha and Malia toward the gay parents of some of their friends. But within a fairly short time, the real reason appeared in off-

side of the argument? The polarization of the two parties on economic, size-of-government, and foreign policy/national defense issues may be less striking, but not much.

Washington elite opinion disappoints sternly of partisan polarization, particularly when it emanates from the right. The Republican primary defeat of six-term Indiana senator Richard Lugar was especially galling, coming as it did the same day as the North Carolina marriage referendum (and by the same 61 percent landslide margin) and on the heels of the even more unbearable retirement of Maine's Olympia Snowe, one of the last nonpolarizing (that is, liberal) Republican senators.

Like the push to lock in the Democratic party's commitment to same-sex marriage, the defeat of Lugar was the work of his party's ideological base. The biggest event in Republican politics in the Obama years has been the rise of the Tea Party, which was ignited by

CNBC business reporter Rick Santelli less than a month after the new president's inauguration. Though it has occasionally been construed as an adversary of social conservatism, the Tea Party in fact has brought to a new set of issues the same kind of morally grounded analysis, drawing on the American founding, that social conservatism has brought to social issues in recent decades.

Does this base-driven pressure for polarization, coming from both left and right, discredit the polls cited by Americans Elect showing 40 percent of voters open to a new party? Not at all. Such polls reflect intense anti-incumbent sentiment rooted in dissatisfaction with today's sterile politics and ineffectual government.

But an election so polarized as to begin looking a bit like Armageddon is unlikely to be the one that ushers in any Third Way. ♦



Sorry, Buddy—not gonna happen

the-record press interviews: Vice President Biden's outspokenness in a *Meet the Press* interview two days before the North Carolina referendum simply moved forward a decision that had been made inevitable by the sentiment of the Democratic base. Grass-roots delegates were going to write an endorsement of same-sex marriage into the Democratic national platform no matter what the president did. What's more, one-sixth of his high-dollar fundraisers have identified themselves as gay, and most of the rest of the party's high-dollar financial base backs same-sex marriage as well.

Why would anyone on either side of this intense debate—committed social conservatives or committed social liberals—look for a "centrist" alternative that might lessen the chances of the party that takes their

Our Age of Anxiety

*Romney's challenge is to address the deep uneasiness in America
and point the way to a comeback*

BY YUVAL LEVIN

There is something very strange about the 2012 presidential race so far. The election comes at a time of extraordinary public unease, which clearly demands some response from the political system, and especially from the men running for the highest office in the land. But the two presidential candidates are both running campaigns oddly detached from what is rightly worrying voters.

If you were to judge the state of the country by listening only to the Obama campaign, you would conclude that we are on the verge of the long-awaited triumph of the liberal welfare state, and that all that stands in the way is a gang of retrograde Social Darwinists who somehow manage to be simultaneously nihilistic and theocratic. That band of reactionaries ran the economy into the ground for the sake of their wealthy patrons, and now they're coming for our social programs and for women's freedoms. Only if they are held off can the forward march of history proceed.

If you were to judge the state of the country by listening only to the Romney campaign, you would conclude that all was well in America until we took a wrong turn four years ago and elected a president hostile to freedom and prosperity. If we just correct that error and undo what he has done, our economy will be ready to bloom again.

But neither of these stories speaks to what actually seems to have voters uneasy. The persistently weak economy is at the core of that uneasiness: Thirty-five months after the recession technically ended, economic growth remains anemic, and unemployment remains very high. But Americans are nervous not only because the economy has yet to bounce back, but also because we have a sense that the economic order we knew in the second half of the 20th century may not be coming back at all—that we have entered a new era for which we have not been well prepared.

To say that we are not, in fact, on the verge of the triumph of welfare-state liberalism is of course a gross

understatement. We are, rather, on the cusp of the fiscal and institutional collapse of our welfare state, which threatens not only the future of government finances but also the future of American capitalism. But at the same time, American capitalism is not exactly ready to bloom once the shadow of Obama is lifted at last. While our welfare state has grown bloated and bankrupt, our economy has grown increasingly sclerotic—weighed down by a grossly inefficient public sector, the rise of crony capitalism, demographic changes transforming the workforce, and a general loss of focus on productivity and innovation. The American economy still has great stores of strength, but it is not well prepared to make the most of those strengths or to address its deficiencies as a global competitor.

This is not the fault of conservative plutocrats or of Barack Obama. It is not the fault of income inequality or of the Federal Reserve. It is the fault of our country's failure to adequately modernize its governing institutions and its economy—its public sector and its private sector. This failure exposes us to a grave risk of stagnation, and, therefore, decline. And it is that risk, which we all have been sensing in our bones in recent years, that has Americans exceptionally anxious.

It is easy to see why President Obama would avoid taking up this challenge: As the incumbent, he bears responsibility for the fiscal disaster and poor economic performance of the past few years. Worse yet, the vision of the liberal welfare state is the very core of his own governing philosophy, and to acknowledge the failure of that vision and the end of the economic order in which it was dominant is to acknowledge that Obama has nothing constructive to offer. It is to confront directly the disastrous failure of his economic policies, and the dismal unpopularity of his signal domestic achievements. The president can only win reelection by changing the subject—by getting the public to ask questions to which his brand of liberalism might be an answer. And so he desperately seeks to tell a story in which income inequality is at the heart of our economic woes and our existing entitlement system is the key to prosperity and security—a story both internally incoherent and utterly detached from reality, and which could only be sustained by misdirection and distraction.

Yuval Levin is a contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, Hertog fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center, and editor of National Affairs.

It is more difficult, however, to see why Mitt Romney would not be laying out the nature of America's predicament before the public. He has begun to offer an agenda that speaks to some key elements of the predicament, but he has not made a coherent case for that agenda as a whole, and so ends up presenting voters with laundry lists of policy ideas wrapped in general criticisms of Obama. He has yet to state clearly the problem to which he offers up his economic policies as a solution.

The problem is that America is unprepared for the future, and Barack Obama is not so much the cause of that problem as the embodiment of it. He stands for what has gone wrong, and his ideological views, his party's most powerful constituencies, and his policy commitments stand in the way of America's future prosperity.

A proper understanding of the nature of that problem would not only help to show voters why Obama must be sent packing, but would also reinforce the case for Romney's particular strengths in this unusual moment. The Romney campaign has yet to make an overarching case for the candidate. They would be wise to notice that a careful assessment of what America lacks as a new global economic order takes shape could add up to just such a case.

THE GREAT SLOWDOWN

The American public knows that the nation's economic prospects are in exceptional peril. Huge majorities of voters say that this recovery feels like a recession, that the country is on the wrong track, and that their children's economic prospects seem dimmer than their own. There is more going on than a cyclical downturn.

There are many ways to describe what appears to be worrying these voters, but if we were to sum up the danger in one word it would be stagnation. After decades of galloping growth, America now faces the prospect of a harsh and sustained deceleration, and therefore of falling behind in the world economy.

In the 60 years following World War II, the American economy grew at an average rate of 3.4 percent per year—a truly astounding persistent pace of expansion. This growth brought with it sustained improvements in income and standards of living—improvements that we have come to regard not as miraculous advances but as the normal course of American life. Our sense of the

nation's overall standard of living takes such growth for granted, so that a period of significantly slower growth feels like a real step down.

We have been living through such a period lately. Annual economic growth averaged 3.5 percent between 1960 and 1999, but only 1.7 percent between 2000 and 2009. In the Obama years, we have averaged 0.6 percent growth.

It will not be easy to regain our old trajectory. Economic growth is in essence a function of two factors—workforce expansion and productivity improvement—and the growth of the past half-century has involved both in roughly equal measure. As the population grew in the wake of the baby boom and women entered the workforce en masse, the American labor force grew by leaps and bounds, accounting for just under half the total economic growth in this period. Meanwhile, as new technologies and business-model innovations emerged in fierce succession, productivity gains accounted for the rest.

It is already perfectly clear that this balance of factors cannot be sustained. As the baby boomers retire and the proportion of women in the workforce plateaus, the growth of the labor force contributes less and less to the growth of the economy. In the past decade, productivity gains accounted for 80 percent of total economic growth, up from 53 percent in the 1990s and 47 percent in the 1980s, according to a recent study by McKinsey and Associates. The role of the labor force is diminishing quickly as the growth of that labor force slows. This suggests that economic growth in the coming decades will depend decisively on productivity growth. If we are to experience anything like the prosperity of the postwar era, our economy will need to be more productive than ever. Efficiency must be the watchword of our economic policy.

But we are not well positioned for the kind of explosion of efficiency we will need. Our government finances are in shambles, our public sector is woefully inefficient, and our private economy is very poorly served by a set of policies and institutions that seem intent on denying us a productive future workforce and on subjecting more and more of the economy to a regulatory mindset that prefers consolidation to growth.

The story of our public finances is the story of the collapse of the liberal welfare state. The edifice of the Great Society entitlement system, poorly constructed in a time of plenty and shielded from reform ever since by a bipartisan conspiracy of political convenience, is

America is unprepared for the future, and Barack Obama is not so much the cause of that problem as the embodiment of it. He stands for what has gone wrong.

crumbling all around us. At its core are the health care entitlements—Medicare and Medicaid—which between them are responsible for essentially all of the growth of government as a share of the economy over the last four decades, and all of its projected unsustainable growth in the next four. At its periphery is an approach to discretionary spending that has left us with a broken budget process and an array of bloated and ineffective public programs. It all adds up to an explosion of the national debt—which has nearly doubled in just the past four years—and to a course of spending and borrowing that we could not hope to chase with tax increases even if we wanted to, and that our creditors know we cannot sustain. This is not the government of a lean, efficient, 21st-century economic power.

And it is not just government spending but government work that is holding us back. The two sectors of our economy that have seen the most job growth in the past decade have been the two most government-dominated sectors: health care, and government employment itself (especially in education). In both cases, that growth has decidedly not been matched by improvements in productivity. Our health care system—largely as a result of Medicare and Medicaid and of the poor design of the tax treatment of employer-purchased health insurance—is horrendously inefficient, inflating costs without any relationship to outcomes and playing a central role in an economy-wide wage stagnation. In education at all levels, meanwhile, we have been paying more and more for less and less—the very opposite of productivity improvement—while much-needed reforms have been prevented by powerful unions and their allied politicians.

The private economy is not exactly getting geared for efficiency either. The failure of education reform makes it difficult for too many younger Americans to gain the skills they will need to compete with foreign workers in tomorrow's economy, and our immigration policy imports low-skilled foreigners to compete with low-skilled American workers while denying employers the high-skilled workers they lack. It is the worst of all worlds for building American human capital and driving productivity and innovation.

The tax code, meanwhile, undermines the competitive position of American producers and imposes immense efficiency costs on the entire economy. And

from the financial sector to the auto industry, energy, health insurance, pharmaceuticals, and beyond, federal regulators are busily constructing rules and incentives to bring more and more of the economy into line with the objectives of government managers, rather than consumers and producers.

Economic policy is increasingly dominated by an ideal of state capitalism, in which regulators prefer to work with a few large players in each industry—functioning essentially as public utilities—while making the lives of smaller competitors and innovators next to impossible. This is where the health and insurance sectors are being driven under Obamacare. It is where Dodd-Frank wants to take American banking and finance. It is a

vision suited to managing stagnation—with big government, big business, and big labor dividing responsibilities and benefits and keeping outsiders out—rather than to enabling growth.

All of this makes it very difficult to see how America can take the necessary steps to return to a trajectory of growth in the 21st century. The way is blocked by the partisans of the status quo, who are sternly opposed to any reforms that would enable innovation and efficiency at the cost of undermining the spoils system built up over half a century.

Barack Obama personifies

this opposition to the reforms essential for growth. His express objectives are to protect our existing entitlement system from structural reforms, to increase the tax burden on investment and employment, to further empower and liberate regulators, and to bring more of our economy into the public sector. His economic policy is unimaginative in the extreme—combining early-20th-century social democratic theory with mid-20th-century pork barrel politics. His answer to the government's fiscal woes is to squeeze the military and the taxpayer to buy a few more years of denial. In every respect, he stands for stagnation and stasis, for defensive consolidation rather than aggressive growth. He thinks the best we can do is to manage decline.

Simply put, President Obama has no interest in a new way of thinking about America's prospects, and therefore essentially nothing to offer to assuage the public's growing anxiety. All he can do is try to direct that anxiety away from himself. He is at best irrelevant, at worst a great impediment, to the effort to keep America growing in the new economic order we are entering.



Opposition to reform, personified

PROMOTING GROWTH

To help voters see that fact, Republicans this year will have to show that they are not similarly disconnected from what worries Americans. Rather than beginning from Obama's failures, or from vague if well-meaning allusions to the importance of liberty, Mitt Romney should begin his appeal by explaining the sources of public concern. He should be frank about the danger of stagnation, clear about identifying President Obama with precisely the difficulty we face, and then explicit in offering his own alternative and his own qualifications.

That alternative should aim not simply to remove obstacles to prosperity, but to cultivate the sources of strength and growth in the American economy—to help enable the kind of productivity boom necessary to get us back on a trajectory of growth.

Ironically, one plausible source of the next productivity boom is American health care. Today's health sector is horrendously inefficient—thanks largely to poorly conceived federal policy—and yet demand for care is great and growing in our aging society, which makes health care primed for an efficiency revolution.

This would require above all the transformation of Medicare, which is principally responsible for the distorted fee-for-service business model of American medicine. By using the government's immense leverage to drive innovation and contain costs through competition (rather than to drive volume and inflate costs through price controls), a gradual reform of Medicare into a premium support system could not only offer seniors more options but help unleash a wave of innovation throughout American health care. And at least as important, it could save Medicare from fiscal collapse, and so allow it to continue providing guaranteed, comprehensive health coverage to the elderly.

A reform of the broader health sector could advance the same cause. Like Medicare's fee-for-service structure, the design of today's tax exclusion for employer-provided care and the design of the Medicaid system both aggressively inflate costs rather than encouraging productivity and value in health care. Obamacare doubles down on the worst elements of them all: further tightening price controls in Medicare, vastly enlarging an unreformed Medicaid system, and building a new open-ended federal entitlement alongside today's tax exclusion for employer

coverage. Repealing that law must obviously be part of any agenda for American prosperity. But so must a real health care reform that moves in the opposite direction from Obamacare, toward a more competitive insurance market that drives health care providers to offer better quality at lower cost.

This should involve transforming today's tax exclusion for employer-provided coverage into a fixed tax credit available to anyone (or at least to people not currently covered by a large employer) for the purchase of coverage. The credit would replace the value of the tax exclusion while giving people far greater control over their own insurance. By putting the credit on the table, moreover, such a reform would create an enormous incentive for insurers to

offer attractive products to today's uninsured at roughly the cost of the credit—by adjusting the balance between premiums, co-pays, and deductibles and offering some catastrophic-coverage options rather than only fully comprehensive ones. This would put at least some meaningful insurance within reach for essentially all of the uninsured at a fraction of the cost of Obamacare.

Meanwhile, the open-ended federal contribution to the Medicaid program (which helps propel that program's rapid cost growth today) should be converted into a block grant that states could choose to

employ in the form of an additional means-based credit—allowing the poor to enter the general insurance system, rather than segregating them in today's inferior Medicaid ghetto. Such a transformation of health care policy would not only help cover the uninsured and save the federal budget, it could enable a productivity explosion in one of our economy's fastest growing yet least efficient parts.

A second and perhaps no less surprising potential source of strength is the energy sector. While the president has indulged in embarrassing fantasies about solar and wind power and electric cars, America's domestic energy supply has undergone an utter revolution in the past few years. Advances in technologies for recovering oil and gas from previously inaccessible sources now look increasingly likely to make available astonishing quantities of domestic fossil fuels.

Producers and investors are clearly adjusting to this new reality, but it has barely begun to be noticed in our political system. In a May 10 hearing of the House Science Committee's energy subcommittee, for instance, Anu Mittal of the Government Accountability Office told a



Where to begin? Why not health care?

stunned panel of members that oil-shale deposits in the Green River Formation in Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming alone “are estimated to contain up to 3 trillion barrels of oil, half of which may be recoverable, which is about equal to the entire world’s proven oil reserves.” Newly accessible natural-gas reserves around the country could be equally staggering in volume. The United States may be on the verge of becoming the world’s fossil-fuel colossus.

But the Obama administration’s response to these developments has been largely to ignore them, as they are at odds with the green energy agenda. The age of nonfossil fuels will surely come someday—though it will likely require a serious adjustment in the left’s attitude toward nuclear power. But that day remains far off, and for the moment fossil fuels are not only essential to powering our economy but may be the source of the next great wave of productivity and wealth creation in America. The administration’s choice of lifestyle liberalism over this new opportunity for growth is nothing short of governing malpractice. Mitt Romney should make the public aware of the good news regarding American energy, and should propose to put the federal government fully behind the domestic fossil-fuel revolution: making public land available, helping develop new exploration technologies, and encouraging innovation toward cleaner ways to burn oil and gas.

While promoting reforms to encourage these two potential boom sectors in particular, Romney should also seek to modernize the federal government’s approach to the economy more generally, to make it supportive of the productivity improvements we need. One obvious target for reform is the tax code, which, as nearly everyone by now agrees, needs to be made broader and flatter to raise more revenue more efficiently. The daunting maze of credits and deductions should be pared back to serve just a few essential ends (like charitable giving, health insurance, and child rearing), rates should be lowered where they can be, and the corporate income tax rate in particular must be brought into line with those of our competitors abroad.

President Obama seems to prefer to make the code even less conducive to investment and employment in an effort to score some cheap political points. Here as elsewhere, Romney must show how fundamentally unserious the president has become, and how disconnected from our real needs and circumstances.

Governor Romney should also shine a light on the disturbing expansion of regulatory power that has

accompanied the growth of the liberal welfare state (under Republican and Democratic presidents alike). Regulation obviously has a crucial role to play in governing free markets, but as bureaucratic discretion has increasingly replaced clear and predictable rules approved by elected officials, our regulatory system has become an obstacle to innovation. Romney should call for rebalancing our constitutional separation of powers by requiring all major regulations (judged to carry costs of \$100 million or more) to be approved by Congress, along the lines of legislation passed by the House last year, and for pulling back the unprecedented regulatory discretion granted by Dodd-Frank.

Finally, he should pursue a human capital agenda to help supply the labor force our economy will need if we are

Mitt Romney should begin his appeal by explaining the sources of public concern. He should be frank about the danger of stagnation, clear about identifying President Obama with precisely the difficulty we face.

to pull off a productivity revolution. This is no simple matter. One key element must involve turning our immigration policy on its head: Rather than importing low-skilled workers to compete with the Americans most hard-pressed in our evolving economy while preventing the world’s best and brightest from coming here, we must control the southern border and rein in our family reunification policies (allowing spouses and children but not other relatives of naturalized immigrants to come

here) while significantly increasing the volume of high-skilled immigrants we permit.

But the real heart of a human capital agenda must be education reform, which for the most part is not the federal government’s purview. Romney should propose to put Washington on the side of serious reformers in the states working to modernize K-12 education by breaking the stranglehold of the teachers’ unions, permitting more choice and variety, and beginning to think beyond our 19th-century system of school districts and local boards of education. He should also not be afraid to put the weight of the federal government behind efforts to reduce the costs of college—using the leverage of federal dollars (not only the billions in subsidized loans, but even the billions in academic research grants) to deflate the higher education bubble, rather than vigorously pumping it up as federal dollars now do, and encouraging alternatives to the traditional four-year degree.

And as he pursues pro-growth reforms like these, Romney should also lay out a new vision of the American safety net, understood as a way to make the benefits of a thriving economy available to all—of making the poor less dependent, not making everyone else more so. Productivity and

efficiency need not come at the expense of financial security and social cohesion; indeed, they have often gone hand in hand throughout our history. Only in a stagnant economy, in which redistribution is the only means of bettering the condition of the needy, is the good of employers and producers fundamentally at odds with that of workers and consumers, or with that of the poor.

Economic growth driven by competition and innovation has been easily the most effective means of lifting people out of poverty, particularly when coupled not with an empty promise of material equality but with a fervent commitment to upward mobility. And for those unable to rise, the safety net should work in line with the broader economy, using market mechanisms to offer options and encourage choice, and never coming at the expense of the family, religion, or civil society—as our welfare state too often has. The welfare reforms of the mid-1990s offer a model for such a broader transformation of our often counterproductive antipoverty programs. They should be adapted for the various related aims of our safety net.

None of these reforms would dramatically disrupt the lives of most Americans. They could all take the form of modest, gradual reorientations of our governing institutions and policies directed to better preparing America for the new economic order we confront. And none of them would require a dramatic rethinking of Romney's agenda, either. He has already proposed a number of these ideas, and could easily find his way to others. What he has lacked is a unifying thread—an understanding of America's particular predicament that could begin where anxious voters are and end with a platform for renewal.

What ties these various elements together is the need to modernize our economy to compete and grow. That is the essence of a conservative reform agenda to get us out from under the rubble of the liberal welfare state and help America come to terms with both its considerable strengths and its very real weaknesses in the emerging world economy.

A ROMNEY AGENDA

It is hard to imagine a figure more poorly suited to this essential task than Barack Obama—so committed is he to the dying order, and so sternly opposed to nearly every reform this moment requires. And it is also hard to think of a figure better suited to this particular way of approaching our economic challenge than Mitt Romney. This is not only because his more market-oriented views are closer to the attitude we need, but also because Romney in particular has spent much of his career helping various enterprises discover their hidden strengths and modernize to compete.

The conventional wisdom of this campaign has been that Romney's background in private equity would be a liability for him—exposing him as a wealthy bloodsucker and professional firer of blue-collar workers. But this assumes that Americans accept Obama's version of the problem we confront: that all is well with our welfare state and the only thing standing in the way of America's success is the greed of the wealthy. This has never been a common view in America, and there is no reason to think it is now.

If, however, American voters can come to see that our economic challenges—and their own anxieties about the future—are grounded in our being genuinely unprepared for the 21st century, then Romney's biography might offer some powerful reasons to elect him this fall. The fact is that private equity is a productivity engine. Firms like the one Romney started, Bain Capital, invest in companies that have potential but are underperforming and—using market incentives and an intense focus on efficiency—seek to dramatically improve their productivity and help them grow and prosper.

They do not always succeed, of course, and the productivity improvements they impose do sometimes involve job losses as well as job gains. But their goal is growth, and their effect has been to create more jobs and to create more wealth. Romney's background does not mean he would govern as a private equity manager but rather that he understands what it takes to be effective and productive in the private sector and to create jobs and wealth—that he has seen what the modern economy requires, and what the American economy lacks. His experience can allow him to speak to the nation's concerns in practical rather than strictly ideological terms, and to make the case that, while our problems are real, our great strengths are too, and the era of American growth and opportunity is by no means behind us.

To be sure, this way of seeing things is helpful largely in the economic arena, and Romney's approach to foreign policy, social issues, and many other questions is informed by other ways of thinking. But the insights gained through decades of experience in fueling productivity would be of great use in the effort to fix our ailing entitlement system, to implement broader government reform, and to put the economy right.

America needs more than economic growth. But without growth, we cannot hope to take up our other priorities. With the crumbling of the liberal welfare state and the passing of the postwar economic order, we are badly in need of a new vision for growth. Barack Obama stands for the old order. If Mitt Romney chooses to stand for the new one—for American principles, drive, and ingenuity applied to our novel circumstances—America's anxious electorate might just stand with him. ♦

High Noon in Wisconsin

Governor Scott Walker hangs tough

BY STEPHEN F. HAYES

Caledonia, Wis.

Geeta Jensen had some exciting news: Governor Scott Walker was visiting Jensen Metal Products to announce the addition of 39 new jobs, part of a company-wide expansion accelerated by tax credits his administration had offered to encourage hiring.

“It is an honor to have the governor of the state of Wisconsin visit us in this, our 90th anniversary year,” she said in introducing Walker, her slight Indian accent marking her words. “When Jungbert Jensen immigrated to Wisconsin from Copenhagen, Denmark, around 1911, and started making rain gutters and milk pails out of a garage in Racine, he never imagined that his great-grandchildren would one day be hosting the governor of Wisconsin in the shop he started. But, well, here we are!”

When she finished her introduction, it was evident that a few of the 25 employees assembled for the brief ceremony did not share her enthusiasm. Most of the workers applauded the governor in a show of support that ranged from polite to fanatical. But a burly man in a black T-shirt celebrating the company’s 90th anniversary sat quietly staring at the floor as most of his colleagues clapped. A man to his left, wearing an old softball uniform with the arms cut off, folded his arms across his chest.

I asked Jensen about this after Walker’s brief remarks. She told me that four of the company’s longest-serving employees told her they considered the Walker visit a “slap in the face.” They asked to be excused during Walker’s visit but were told that his appearance was more about jobs than politics. They were given the choice of coming to the announcement or working. They attended but didn’t seem thrilled. Walker is used to this.

To say that Wisconsin is divided—even deeply divided—doesn’t quite capture the intensity of the feelings here less than a month before the recall vote. In Brule, “up north” in

the sparsely populated northwest corner of the state, the low-key owner of a funeral home kicked off an annual fly-fishing trip with a prayer that included a strong plea for divine intervention on Walker’s behalf. Across the state to the east, a previously apolitical entrepreneur put up a pro-Walker sign and opened his establishment to the local Republican party for fear that his business could not survive a return to higher taxes and more regulations under the state’s Democrats. Virtually everyone you talk to here can tell you a story about lifelong friends who are no longer on speaking terms because of opposing views on the governor. (Indeed, one recent poll found that 3 in 10 Wisconsinites say they have ended relationships themselves.) Tavern owners report regular disputes among customers that range from muttered comments to full-scale shouting matches. And worse.

In Chippewa Falls, on May 8, Amanda Radle was driving to a Pizza Ranch in nearby Eau Claire with her estranged husband, Jeffrey, when they began to discuss the recall primary election being held that day. Amanda says that when she told her husband she planned to vote for a Democrat in the primary, he became angry and said she couldn’t vote. She threatened to stay in the car rather than join him for lunch—she was attempting to “rekindle” their relationship—if he tried to stop her from voting against Walker. The argument escalated, and when the two returned to the home they used to share, it turned violent.

According to a police report summarizing Amanda’s statement to authorities, her husband “attempted in several ways to convince her to vote for Scott Walker,” but Amanda “indicated she was of free mind to vote for whoever she wished to vote for.” When her husband asked about their future together, she responded: “Whatever you decide, I am going to vote.” Amanda told police that her husband, who was outside of her Dodge Durango at the time, opened the car door and threw his ring at her. According to the police report, “Amanda indicated she did not want the ring and whipped it in the yard.” With that, according to Amanda, she attempted to drive off, only to have her husband fling himself onto the hood in an effort to keep her from voting.

Jeffrey Radle and a witness, Ashley Grill, say that

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

Amanda actually turned the car to run over her husband, squealing the tires to mow him down. Jeffrey Radle downplayed the recall election in his statement to the police, but his brother told the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*: “These crazy liberal nuts are always pulling this crap.”

So there’s no doubt Wisconsin is divided. The question is why.

By virtually every objective measure, Walker has been an extraordinarily successful governor. In just 16 months, the state has erased a \$3.6 billion budget deficit, and according to figures released this month by the Wisconsin Department of Revenue, it will have a \$154.5 million surplus on June 30, 2013. Property taxes, which had risen by more than 40 percent since 1998, are down for the first time in years.

The unemployment rate is down from 7.7 percent when Walker took office in January 2011 to 6.7 percent in April 2012. Last week, the state’s Department of Workforce Development released numbers showing that Wisconsin had gained some 23,000 jobs in 2011—correcting a misleading earlier report suggesting the state had lost more than 30,000 jobs over the same period.

The subjective measures look good for Walker, too. On the stump, Walker is fond of citing *Chief Executive* magazine, which had ranked Wisconsin as the 41st-best state for business in 2010 and now ranks it 20th. Walker also points to a survey by Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce that found only 10 percent of business owners thought the state was headed in the right direction in 2010, while an eye-popping 94 percent think so today.

So why is Scott Walker facing a recall vote? He hasn’t broken any laws. He hasn’t been charged with a crime. No one has accused him of accepting bribes or molesting children or any of the things most people think of when they think about recalling a sitting governor.

Walker is facing recall for one reason: His reforms have diminished the power of unions, and the unions want revenge.

The reforms that Walker introduced a month after he was sworn in—formally known as Act 10—restricted collective bargaining for most of the state’s employees; in particular, benefits were taken off the table. As a result, most public employees now contribute 5.8 percent of their salary to their pension; and

most also now pay 12.6 percent of the cost of their health insurance premium.

Walker had served as Milwaukee County executive since 2002 and in that job had seen his many attempts at spending reform stymied by unions. He had come to believe that unless the collective bargaining power of public employee unions were limited, as governor he would never be able to bring about the changes that serious spending reform required. His top policy adviser hinted at the changes Walker supported in an interview with the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* in August 2010, three months before the election. “The way the proposal would work is we would take the choice out of the collective bargaining process,” said Ryan Murray, describing how Walker would rework state employees’ health insurance programs.

When Walker, once elected governor, formally introduced the changes, the unions exploded, and Democrats in the Wisconsin senate fled to Illinois to avoid a vote on the measure, effectively blocking it. The subsequent standoff—with national unions orchestrating raucous protests in Madison—lasted several weeks and gained lots of national attention. But ultimately, Republicans in the legislature passed the bill, it survived legal challenges, and it became law.

The passage of the bill triggered two separate processes, one substantive and one political. On substance—the collective bargaining restrictions gave local governments across Wisconsin the ability to offset budget shortfalls (and avoid layoffs) by requiring public employees to pay more toward their pensions and health care. But even as the changes were being implemented, Democrats and the unions that back them began a campaign to undermine reform. Kathy Vinehout, a Democratic state senator and later a candidate in the Democratic recall primary, says her party conceived of the recalls while they were holed up across Wisconsin’s southern border. “I do believe it was something we talked about when we were in Illinois,” she said at a Democratic candidate forum last month. “And it wasn’t just the governor, but it was a whole lot of our colleagues in the senate.” Democrats, she said, were thrilled when the budget repair bill passed. “The first thing we thought was, ‘Yes! Now the recalls are gonna happen.’”

So they spent millions on recall campaigns against six sitting Republican state senators, defeating just two in an outcome that the *New York Times* called “a victory for Gov. Scott Walker.” And unions participated vigorously in a state



January 2012: Launching the recall

supreme court election that pitted a justice closely associated with Walker—David Prosser—against a candidate backed by the state Democratic establishment and the unions. Despite heavy union spending against him, Prosser won.

As the Democrats' political efforts mostly failed, the reforms themselves were beginning to produce results. The school districts that have avoided the Walker reforms so far—either by working under existing contracts that could not be changed or by renegotiating their contracts to skirt the changes—are cash-strapped and laying off teachers. Districts that have taken advantage of the reforms are reporting surpluses and in some cases are actually hiring new teachers. In Neenah, for example, the school district saved \$1.8 million on health insurance and raised the minimum pay for teachers by 18 percent. New Berlin schools saved more than \$3.5 million in health care and retirement costs. Teachers in the Milwaukee Public Schools, however, protected from the reforms by an existing contract that was grandfathered in, did not agree to the changes voluntarily and as a result have experienced two waves of layoffs.

The reforms have proven so successful that the Democrats seeking to unseat Walker seldom mention them. That's significant. The ostensible reason to recall Walker was his restrictions on collective bargaining. And yet when Milwaukee mayor Tom Barrett won the Democratic recall primary on May 8, he never mentioned collective bargaining in his victory speech.

Why? Beyond the fact that the benefits of the reforms would not have been possible without the restrictions, the union position is just not terribly popular. In a Marquette University poll taken last week, voters said they'd prefer to keep the new restrictions on collective bargaining rather than return to the old rules, by a margin of 50-43 percent. Independents, who comprise a disproportionate number of the very few persuadable voters in Wisconsin these days, prefer the new restrictions to the old rules by 53-38 percent. In a version of the poll taken before the May 8 primary, voters were asked to name their most important consideration in picking a nominee. "Restoring collective bargaining rights for public employees" was only the fourth-most-mentioned concern, brought up by a mere 12 percent of self-identified Democrats surveyed. ("Creating new jobs" was the top choice of Democrats, mentioned by 46 percent.)

So Democrats are seeking to recall Walker but are avoiding the issue that triggered the recall in the first place. That's awkward.

The result is that they've been trying to gain traction on an ever-changing series of other issues: the "war on women," a "John Doe" investigation of alleged misdeeds of former Walker aides, the Koch Brothers, Walker's ideology, even Paul Ryan's entitlement reform proposals. None of them has worked.

Over several weeks leading up to the Democratic primary on May 8, the Democrats competing for the right to challenge Walker focused their campaigns on jobs. There was some logic to this. Voters in Wisconsin, as noted above, tell pollsters that they're worried about jobs and the economy. Beyond that, Walker ran for office promising that the state would create 250,000 private sector jobs during his first term. Critics mocked the goal as implausible. Walker acknowledged that it was ambitious but noted that Wisconsin had seen similar job growth under former governor Tommy Thompson.

Since Walker's inauguration in January 2011, the unemployment rate had fallen steadily, but the state was still not adding jobs fast enough to meet his goal. If he had a vulnerability, this was it. Then Democrats got a break, at least temporarily. A new report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics found that Wisconsin's jobs performance in 2011 was poor. In some ways, the report seemed to contradict other indications that the unemployment picture was getting better. But the report was political gold. A headline splashed across the front page of the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* on April 25 declared: "State Job Losses Worst in U.S."

Within a week, Tom Barrett had turned it into an ad. Speaking directly to the camera, Barrett declared: "Scott Walker is attacking me because he can't defend his own record on jobs. Last year," he continued, holding up the *Journal Sentinel* front page, "Wisconsin lost more jobs than any other state in the entire country. I'll end Scott Walker's ideological war and focus on putting Wisconsin back to work." It was a pretty clean hit, though the jobs picture was better under Walker than under his Democratic predecessor, Jim Doyle. And the newspaper was a good prop. With the success of Walker's budget reforms beyond dispute, it was probably Barrett's strongest argument—for a time, anyway.

Barrett won the Democratic primary on May 8, handily defeating Kathleen Falk (58-34 percent), former Dane County executive and a Madison liberal who was backed by organized labor. The good news for Barrett didn't last long. Walker had no serious opponent in the GOP primary, only an Abraham Lincoln impersonator who slid down the marble rails of the capitol in a YouTube video. Despite mounting no real get-out-the-vote effort, Walker drew more than 600,000 votes, nearly 15,000 more than the top two Democrats combined. Those results don't guarantee Walker victory on June 5, but they suggest that concerns about Republican "recall fatigue" were overblown.

The bad news for Barrett was about to get worse. On May 16, the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development released new numbers on 2011 job growth. The state had not lost 33,000-plus jobs, as the earlier Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates had suggested, but had gained more than 23,000. Unlike the BLS estimates, which are

based on surveys of less than 4 percent of the state's establishments, these numbers are based on actual employment records businesses submit to the state and cover more than 95 percent of Wisconsin employers. They're far more accurate, something most opponents of Walker—at least the intellectually honest ones—readily concede.

Tom Barrett does not belong in that group. The morning the revised numbers were released, Barrett and his campaign accused Walker of “cooking the books,” and he took to his Twitter feed to mount a counteroffensive. He tweeted links to two articles with headlines that seemed to bolster his case. The first was a Bloomberg article that made no judgment about the new numbers but hinted that the release was mostly political. The second was an article published on Forbes.com by Rick Ungar, a frequent Walker critic. Barrett tweeted the headline—“Scott Walker Magically Turns Dismal Wisconsin Jobs Numbers into a Pre-Election Miracle”—and a link to the piece.

But the Forbes.com article had been published the day *before* the new jobs numbers were released, and the author had assumed, understandably if incorrectly, that Walker would be using a different measure to count jobs. The entire article was based on that mistaken assumption. By the time Barrett tweeted it, it was at best irrelevant and at worst highly misleading.

If Barrett is not being intellectually honest, one of the sources for his argument deserves credit for taking a different approach. When I emailed Ungar about his article, he acknowledged that the new numbers “used a third approach” and were more accurate: “It does use a much wider sampling because it includes pretty much all of the businesses in a state (about 95 percent).” Ungar believes the new numbers have problems of their own—he notes correctly that they don't (yet) lend themselves to state-by-state comparisons and that they still leave Walker behind the pace of job growth needed to reach his ambitious goal. But while there could be minor adjustments to the net jobs number after the Bureau of Labor Statistics reviews the data, Ungar thinks they're likely to track the Walker number closely. Any major difference, he says, “would mean that Walker is kind of fudging the data—and I don't think he'd do that.” So much for cooking the books.

What's more, as my colleague John McCormack reported this week, Dennis Winters, the chief of the Office of Economic Advisers at the Department of Workforce Development, which is responsible for compiling the data, signed the petition to have Walker recalled. So much for cronies.

Barrett is undeterred. Late last week, he released an ad attacking Walker for being a right-wing “rock star” and claiming—still apparently on the basis of data virtually everyone acknowledges are less accurate—that “Wisconsin's lost more jobs than any other state.”

Walker seemed more amused than angry about the attacks when I sat down with him last week in a conference room at Crites Field, the airport in Waukesha County. “If you're concerned about jobs, is the mayor of Milwaukee the one you want to put in?” he asks with a laugh. “Taxes and fees have gone up 43 percent [in the city]. Property taxes have gone up 25 percent. Unemployment's up over 28 percent. It's the ninth-poorest city in the country. On every measure, there are problems.”

In our 45-minute interview, and in appearances across the state on May 14, the governor seems undaunted by the continuous protest campaign against him for the past 15 months. Sitting at a conference table wearing a French blue shirt, navy slacks, and a red tie, Walker talks candidly about the reforms and the short time he has left to campaign to retain his job.

“We did what we did because it helped us avoid all of the other bad choices,” he explains. “We didn't have to raise taxes. We didn't lay off thousands of public employees. We didn't cut Medicaid—in fact I was actually able to add more money to Medicaid than any governor in Wisconsin history. And we didn't use budget tricks. If we hadn't done what we did, there's no way we'd have been able to avoid one of those, if not all of them.”

For months, polls have shown the state evenly divided about Walker and his reforms. People either love Scott Walker or they hate him. “Most of the time, when we poll on governors, about 20-25 percent have strong opinions,” says pollster Scott Rasmussen. “With Walker, it's 85 percent and split right down the middle.” But over the past two weeks, Walker has edged into a slight lead. Three surveys taken in the last two weeks show Walker with a lead of at least 5 points—Rasmussen (50-45), Public Policy Polling (50-45), and Marquette Law School (50-44). In the Marquette and PPP polls, just 3 percent of voters were undecided. In Rasmussen, it was 2 percent.

Although the Wisconsin news media have not trumpeted the successful results of Walker's reforms with quite the fanfare that accompanied the temporarily bad jobs numbers, the steady stream of less-celebrated reports over many months seems to have registered with Wisconsinites. In the Marquette poll, voters were given three choices to describe their view of Walker: “I like what he's done as governor,” “I like what he's done but not how he's done it,” and “I don't like what he's done as governor.” Thirty-seven percent said they like what he's done, 22 percent said they like what he's done but not how he's done it, and 38 percent said they don't like what he's done. The bottom line: Six in 10 likely voters recognize that the reforms have worked. Walker may not win all their votes, but to lose, he'd need to have a good chunk of voters who like what he's done vote for someone else on June 5.

Walker is concerned about the likelihood of voter fraud. The Wisconsin legislature passed, and he signed, a voter ID law to prevent such fraud. But a circuit court judge in Dane County issued an injunction blocking the law, so Wisconsin's liberal voting laws will prevail on June 5. "I've always thought in this state, close elections, presidential elections, it means you probably have to win with at least 53 percent of the vote to account for fraud. One or two points, potentially."

That's enough to change the outcome of the election. "Absolutely. I mean there's no question why they went to court and fought [to undo] voter ID."

Unions and other Walker opponents have certainly shown a willingness to do anything to win. Walker and his family have been harassed regularly. Unions and their backers have marched on Walker's personal residence in Wauwatosa. His wife has been subjected to repeated verbal harassment. His sons have been targeted on Facebook. Walker himself has been compared to a variety of terrorists and, of course, to Adolf Hitler. He long ago stopped eating out at restaurants and has stepped up security for all of his public appearances.

Kristi LaCroix, a Kenosha teacher who appeared in a pro-Walker ad supporting the reforms, received so many threats that she later said she wished she'd never done the ad. When a student at Two Rivers High School showed up at school wearing a pro-Walker T-shirt, the head of the school's technical education program, who is also the chairman of the local teachers' union, sent an email to the business that produced the T-shirt noting that the company does business with the school and threatening a "loss of profits." A reporter for a liberal Madison newspaper telephoned Ciara Matthews, communications director for the Walker campaign, and expanded the definition of "news" by publishing an entire article about the fact that she worked at Hooters to put herself through college. Another Walker staffer returned home one day to find his dog defecating blood. The veterinarian who treated the dog—at a cost of \$1,500—told him the most likely culprit was a high dose of rat poison, something he doesn't have in his house.

Despite all of this, Walker has few regrets about his short tenure as governor. He says he's learned from the experience and says that if he had it to do over again he'd spend more time explaining the process to Wisconsinites before moving to implement the reforms. But when I asked him whether there's a part of him that wishes he hadn't pursued the reforms to balance the budget, he's resolute, then reflective. "On substance? No," he says. Then he pauses. "A friend

of mine, a supporter, asked me: 'Do you ever think that if you hadn't gone so far you might not be facing recall?' And I thought about it. If I hadn't gone so far, I wouldn't have fixed it. I'm running to win. I'm doing everything in my power to win. But I'm not afraid to lose. To me, it's not worth being in a position like this if you're not willing to do things to fix it. And that means sometimes not worrying about whether or not it's going to help you win or lose."

Still, he wants to win. Speaking to volunteers that afternoon at a Walker "victory center" in Waukesha, the governor acknowledges the new polls and his impressive showing in the primary and offers his supporters a word of caution. "Do not let apathy be the thing that defeats us on June 5," he says, urging the volunteers to keep up their efforts. "There are a lot of hardworking taxpayers in this state who for the past 15, 16 months have been sitting on their hands and saying, 'You know, I don't need a bullhorn, I don't need a protest sign, I can let my words be heard in the election, at the ballot box.' We just need to make sure that all those voices show up on June 5."

Tom Barrett has offered few specifics about his plans for the state if he wins. And while he talks in general terms about wanting to undo what Walker has done, he stands little chance of accomplishing that. Regardless of the outcome of the elections on June 5—which include recall votes on the lieutenant governor and several state senators—Republicans will still

have a 59-39-1 majority in the state assembly and will be in a position to block anything Barrett proposes.

And there is an irony. Barrett is running as the candidate who can bring to an end the "civil war" in Wisconsin. But his election, more than anything, would ensure it continues. If he tried to roll back Walker's reforms, he would, by definition, have to refight the earliest battles of the very war he promises to end. And there is no way he can win them.

So the struggle would continue. Further, a Barrett victory would establish a dangerous precedent. If the Democrats succeed in recalling a governor on policy differences, not malfeasance, the Republicans will likely respond in kind. "That's why the recalls are such a joke," says Walker. "That's why putting the mayor in would be so ridiculous. In the next 12 months are we going to go through the same thing all over again? If we win, the lieutenant governor wins, if the senators win—I've got to believe that effectively puts an end to recalls in this state. If we lose, it becomes recall ping-pong. Back-and-forth and back-and-forth."

Recall ping-pong. Not likely to replace beer, cheese, and the Packers as the state's favorite pastime. ♦



Walker: more amused than angry



1959 Cadillac El Dorado

Big Wheels

The American and his/her car. BY P.J. O'ROURKE

Paul Ingrassia, former Detroit bureau chief for the *Wall Street Journal*, is probably the best broadsheet reporter ever to cover the car business. He and Joseph B. White won a Pulitzer Prize for their articles about how General Motors got busted to corporal by its fool management and union. Ingrassia wrote the book on “The American Automobile Industry’s Road from Glory to Disaster,” that being the subtitle of his *Crash Course* (2010). Now he’s broached yet a larger subject, the car’s whole effect on our entire nation.

Picking 15 vehicles as tent poles

P.J. O’Rourke is a contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

Engines of Change
A History of the American Dream in Fifteen Cars
 by Paul Ingrassia
 Simon & Schuster, 416 pp., \$30

for this sprawling canvas was a good idea, and Ingrassia chose well. Ford’s Model T and GM’s first assay of the “affordable luxury” market, the 1927 LaSalle, exemplify the realist and symbolist schools of car selling. Contrasts between the VW bug and Microbus and the 1959 Cadillac show that the 1950s had more than one Cold War. The Ford Mustang and the Pontiac GTO illustrate the two-sided, flitty-gritty nature of baby boomers. And

the Chrysler minivan was the grim fate that awaited them all. The Honda Civic tells the tale of how the Japanese abandoned the ill-conceived tactics of Pearl Harbor and conquered America. The BMW 3 Series is a rolling David Brooks column about educated elites, and the Prius illustrates the self-punishing nature of people who appear in David Brooks columns. The Jeep and the Ford F-150 pickup truck illuminate political and sociological pretensions, with blue state nature boys who never go outdoors pretending to be red state good ol’ boys who never go home.

The Chevrolet Corvair was intended to be innovative, but what its creativity created was the modern tort system. And by making Ralph Nader

GM CORP.

famous, hence making him preeningly egotistical, hence a presidential candidate in 2000, the Corvair created the George W. Bush administration.

Why Ingrassia put the Corvette on his list isn't exactly clear. But since the Corvette invented the midlife crisis, a bunch of us old guys say thanks for the divorce and the Viagra. High-functioning Asperger syndrome car buffs (not that I'm confessing) will quibble with Ingrassia. In the battle between utility and status, the Model T arguably fought itself—lumpy farm Flivver vs. snappy two-seat runabout. British sports cars are ignored, though it was they, not the Volkswagen, that introduced Americans to the joys of substantial power-to-weight ratios in slight vehicles. And Austin-Healeys, Triumphs, and MGs had wonderful, precise handling while the treacherously bum-heavy VW would have been a better subject than the Corvair for Nader's *Unsafe at Any Speed*—if VWs had gone fast enough to get hurt in.

There has always been a strong prosaic people-hauler segment to the American car market. I doubt it has social science implications. The minivan just happened to be the first vehicle you could get your Grateful Dead tribute band and amplifiers into that drove like a regular car. Pickups do send a message to Washington, but not the one Ingrassia thinks. Because until recently trucks (and truck-based SUVs) escaped various federal safety and fuel economy regulations, buyers could get more for their money. Honda changed the cheesy meaning of "Made in Japan" into brie, but mostly with its motorcycles. The *Tora! Tora! Tora!* Japanese car was the 1968 Datsun 510—all the fun of a European sports sedan without costing as much as a BMW 2002 or sitting in your driveway because you couldn't get it started like

an Alfa-Romeo GTA. And the Mustang trick of hatching a swan from the egg of an ugly Ford Falcon duckling, and the GTO stunt of dropping dad's engine into mom's Pontiac Tempest, were things hot-rodders had been doing forever.

Ingrassia also hampers himself with some awkward technical writing. An antiroll bar is not "just a heavy metal bar bolted under the front of the car to even out the weight." The "hemispherical shape on the ends of its eight combustion cylinders" is actually found at the top of the Chrysler

the team that developed the new, estimable generation of Mustangs. "This car embodies freedom," Thai-Tang said. But Ingrassia understands that freedom mostly at the margins, talking about how the Model T "promoted social networking" and "fostered a sexual revolution." Facebook friending and the zipless you-know-whats have come to many places where a car and permission to go someplace in it are still fanciful aspirations.

Ingrassia doesn't seem to comprehend the horizontal mobility that gives Americans our trust in self-sovereignty, even if vertical mobility eludes us. He cites John Steinbeck's claim that, because of the car, "the theory of the Anglo Saxon home became so warped that it never quite recovered." But Steinbeck's Joad family jalopy trek in *The Grapes of Wrath* is hardly a paean to America's urge to "strike out for the territories." Nowhere does Ingrassia come near to the forceful statement made by David E. Davis Jr., former editor of *Car and Driver*, founder of *Automobile*, and late

doyen of automotive journalists:

We drive our cars because they make us free. . . . Governments detest our cars: They give us too much freedom. How do you control people who can climb into a car at any hour of the day or night and drive to who knows where?

Speaking of which, Ingrassia doesn't seem to connect Jack Kerouac with cars at all. Instead of reading about the bathtub Hudson, pontoon-fendered '47 Cadillac, and beloved-of-customizers '37 Ford that make the trips in *On the Road*, we get "a novel describing . . . journeys of personal discovery far removed from the middle-class Jell-O mold of American conformity." Identically preformed bourgeois treacle is one of Ingrassia's



Jean Harlow and Packard, 1933

Hemi's combustion chambers. And a "broad gear spacing that improved the car's acceleration" would not do so. Plus, Ingrassia professes an enthusiasm for front-wheel drive that indicates he's never experienced the uninvited thrill of throttle steer coming out of a curve at 80 mph. I'll show him where I wrecked my girlfriend's Saab.

But the real problem with *Engines of Change* is that, as a broadsheet reporter and now deputy editor in chief of Reuters, Ingrassia has breathed the newsroom air. The exhalations of received wisdom have gone to his head.

Ingrassia realizes cars foster liberty. He interviews a Vietnamese war refugee, Hau Thai-Tang, who became an automotive engineer at Ford and led

themes. He takes seriously the spoutings-off of such highbrow frowning clowns as Vance Packard in *The Hidden Persuaders* (1957). He quotes approvingly from John Keats—not that Keats, though he'd have been hell on cars, too—who, in 1958, wrote *The Insolent Chariots*, saying Detroit made cars for “daydreaming nitwits.” Behold the '58 Corvette, John Nitwit, and dream on.

Ingrassia is dutifully appalled by the things those in receipt of received wisdom are careful to let bother them. Conspicuous consumption, for one. As if we'd all be better people if we wore our old underwear on the outside, to cover our new suit pants and jacket. Planned obsolescence gets a knock. Never mind that the right-thinking heirs to those who deplored planned obsolescence in cars are standing in line all night awaiting the newest iPad. The “witty and self-deprecating” VW advertising is said by Ingrassia to have been “beyond the comprehension of Detroit.” Obligatory tsk-tsking is done about the size of SUVs and how their drivers, by eschewing minivans, are “showing off.” As the owner of two Chevrolet Suburbans, I offer to spend a day at the top of my double black diamond mogul field driveway watching Mr. Ingrassia try to get up it in a Dodge Caravan.

Putdowns pop up to no point: “TV’s bland Wonder bread wasteland.” McCarthyism is somehow found in the automotive culture’s trunk. GM’s top executives are stuffy and square: “GM’s view of shirts was sort of like Henry Ford’s attitude toward cars: employees could wear any color they wanted as long as they wore white.” GM’s top executives are also macho lunatics. “After a drinking binge in New York,” GM chief of design Bill Mitchell “heisted a horse-drawn carriage near Central Park and tried to drive it into a hotel lobby.” The *bien-pensant* are all in favor of people expressing themselves, until people do.

But nothing is given more grief than tailfins. There are at least nine disparaging mentions of this minor styling trope that was in vogue for

barely a decade. Some fins were an attractive styling exuberance, like those on the 1957 Plymouth. Some fins were a bit much, like those on the 1959 Chevrolet. Without fins, the Batmobile would have been a big, black car. Tailfins were fashionable because of gorgeous automobiles: the 1953 Bristol 450 and a set of “concept cars” made by Bertone coach-builders for Alfa-Romeo the same year. Even more influential was the most beautiful car ever, the mid-'50s D-Type Jaguar, with its Constantin Brancusi sculptural single fin rising from the driver’s headrest. Ingrassia makes fun of Detroit’s claim that fins improved directional stability. Below 120 mph, they probably didn’t. But the designers of the Le Mans-winning 1958 D Jag weren’t laughing.

What is it about tailfins that has always so disturbed people of correct opinion? *Engines of Change* raises many such questions. Any book on

a topic so overwhelming as the car in America has to be more of a goad to, than a proof of, argument. And here Ingrassia has succeeded. He provides some answers and invites more. Was the automobile master or man to American industrialization? Did ubiquitous self-powered contraptions affect our thinking? How does the waxing tech-mind differ from the waning mech-mind? Is the car becoming a mere appliance, an office cubicle on wheels, and a motorized cupholder? Is the Google driverless car any more appealing than the eaterless meal? And why *do* intellectuals hate cars?

Not that I’m dirtying Paul Ingrassia with that epithet. He may have made the mistake of listening to intellectuals, but he likes cars and doesn’t much like Ralph Nader or the Prius. Anyway, I know why intellectuals hate cars. I’ve ridden in a car while an intellectual was driving. ♦

BCA

Viennese Waltz

The second novel from a master of historic horror.

BY STEFAN BECK

Graham Greene famously divided his books into two categories: novels, and what he called “entertainments.” He wished from time to time to indulge an appetite for pulp, and it was only fair to let his readers know what they were getting into. The joke, of course, is that, being Graham Greene, he never wrote anything even close to pulp fiction. Nobody could possibly mistake Greene’s antic satire *Our Man in Havana*, which he subtitled

Stefan Beck writes on fiction for the New Criterion and elsewhere.

“An Entertainment,” for, say, the adventures of Blackford Oakes.

The novelist Dan Vyleta, who owes a significant debt to Greene, would run into the same problem if he set out to

write an embossed-jacket potboiler. The raw materials are certainly all there: Vyleta, the German-born son of Czech refugees, holds a doctorate in history from Cam-

bridge, and his work draws on a wealth of historical knowledge. His debut, *Pavel & I* (2008), is a spy novel set in Berlin during the brutal, brutalizing winter of 1946–47. His new book, *The Quiet Twin*, is a police procedural boasting Nazis, serial murder, and dark,

The Quiet Twin

A Novel

by Dan Vyleta

Bloomsbury, 384 pp., \$16

shameful secrets. There's even a rather unsavory mime, for good measure.

Unfortunately for Vyleta, but fortunately for us, he just isn't a bad enough writer to ride this stuff to the bestseller list. It's possible to read *Pavel & I* almost to the end without quite registering that it's genre fiction. Espionage and violence are incidental to a more probing story about how human psyches bend or break beneath hardship. The central mystery is less fascinating than the Dickensian grotesques: Pavel, a decommissioned GI with kidney problems; Anders, the boy spiv who becomes his caretaker; Sonia, their upstairs neighbor, mistress of villainous Colonel Fosko; and Peterson, the unlikely narrator, a one-eyed operative who, tasked with torturing Pavel, instead falls under the spell of his quiet intensity.

Much of *Pavel & I* takes place in a tenement building, and almost all of *The Quiet Twin* does. The setting works to a different effect in each book. In *Pavel*, it creates an uncomfortable sense of waiting, marking time, hiding out—dull dread. In *The Quiet Twin*, the building is not in postwar Berlin, but rather Vienna in 1939. It will come as no surprise, then, that *The Quiet Twin* is about surveillance, paranoia, and the mounting fear that one doesn't know nearly enough about the people with whom one is surrounded.

It is a fascist state in miniature, a nightmarish dollhouse in which everyone can look into every room. That isn't to suggest that the tenants of Vyleta's building are symbolic, or that their intersecting stories are in some way allegorical. They are real (if anything but ordinary) people whose lives have been disrupted, set on edge, both by the rise of the Nazi party and by a string of local killings. The most recent is the disembowelment of a dog belonging to one Professor Speckstein, a disgraced doctor turned Nazi *Zellenwart*, or neighborhood supervisor and informant.

The hero, so to speak, of *The Quiet Twin* is another doctor, 34-year-old Anton Beer, who operates a small

practice out of his apartment and is treating Speckstein's niece Zuzka for an apparently hysterical illness. One night, Speckstein summons Beer, gives him confidential files on the murders ("I have some influence, you understand"), and explains, "Somebody killed my dog. I have reason to believe they may be after me." It turns out that Beer is not only a doctor but also a scholar of forensic psychiatry—not a great thing to be at a time when familiarity with Freud could invite unwanted scrutiny.

Soon everyone is an amateur investigator, and everyone is, as they say, a suspect. Zuzka reveals, a little too



Dan Vyleta

casually, her own penchant for voyeurism, showing Beer how her window looks out on the courtyard and into other apartments. In one lives 9-year-old Anneliese Grotter and her alcoholic father; in another, a mime:

[H]is face emerged, greasepainted, out of the darkness of the window: hung wide-eyed, unmoving, at the very centre of its frame, held up by neither noose nor neck nor block of wood. When [Zuzka] had first seen him, disembodied it had frightened her and made her take him for a ghost. Then he had stripped one night, had peeled off sweater, gloves and tights, and hung them out into the wind, so very black that they cut deep holes into the fabric of the night. . . . [I]t was tempting to think

of him as nothing but a face: paper white, with hairline cracks running through its cheeks where the paint had dried and flaked upon his skin.

Much of Vyleta's description is written in a kind of morose, monochromatic poetry, and it would not be mere blurb-speak to say that it can be haunting. In this, as in many other scenes, we are reminded that not all watching is malicious or invasive; much of it is done in loneliness and desperation, boredom and curiosity. It is, nevertheless, curiosity that will get Zuzka into trouble: She learns that the mime keeps a woman confined to his apartment, and she sets out, like the heroine of a children's book, to find out what's afoot.

Though character is a greater asset to Vyleta than plot, he does craft a pretty topnotch story, and it wouldn't be right to give too much of it away. It is enough to disclose the following: The stoic, tight-lipped Beer, whose wife has left him for obscure reasons, is hiding at least one fact about himself. Zuzka, who tempts fate by confronting the mime, escapes not wholly unscathed: Against the reader's too-logical expectations, she falls for him. Anneliese Grotter endures something so shattering that the reader will be forgiven for wishing Vyleta would let just one ray of sunshine into his benighted city block.

The Quiet Twin (like *Pavel & I*) features a villain it would be too charitable to call larger-than-life: Teuben, the corrupt Nazi police inspector (was there another kind?) who engages Beer in a campaign of infuriating harassment and blackmail. In a book flyblown with misery, sickness, and existential horror—Graham Greene would be proud—one little domestic scene is almost too much to bear:

A child came into the room, nine years old, his hair jet black like his father's. He had a milky and somewhat sickly complexion and was prone to coughs. Quickly, with light, rapid steps, he walked up to the seated man, pressed his face into the sleeve of his uniform, then began to clamber into his lap. Teuben was

indulgent with his only living child and helped him to gain his perch. . . . “What are you reading, Daddy?” Robert asked, scanning the newspaper articles and the pages of notes Teuben had assembled on his desk. “I am reading about a girl only a few years older than you.”

Teuben’s intentions toward the girl in question are far from pure. It seems that evil, wearing the greasepaint of banality, isn’t really so banal after all.

The mime, Otto, turns out to be the player whose motives are easiest to pick out in this goulash of neurosis, fear, and evil. He is also the centerpiece of some of the most beautiful, balletic passages of action and description in either of Vyleta’s books. One does not expect to read about a mime without being irritated. (Then again, Vyleta incorporated into *Pavel & I* those two great mainstays of hack comedy, the midget and the monkey, without straying an inch from high seriousness.) Two scenes, one in which Otto performs for soldiers departing to the front, the other in which he’s the entertainment at a dinner party of Nazi officials, are too long to quote and too good not to withhold. They must be read in context.

“I think my resistance to the Nazi era,” Vyleta said in an interview, “was partially there’s a lot of clichés these days around it. . . . I didn’t want to write something that felt exploitative of the period. In particular, there’s an element to the plot, the whodunit part, and even the serial murder part, that could easily become very *schlocky*.” So Vyleta wrestled not with the impulse to call *The Quiet Twin* an “entertainment,” but with the earnest fear that someone else might. There’s no danger of that.

In two books, he has shown that he can take milieux far removed from us—thrilling ones, horrifying ones—and use them, with care and decency, to examine the limits of just what a human being can bear. Never mind his improbable twists, his lurid tableaux, his Nazi evildoers. With apologies to *The Third Man* and Harry Lime, Vyleta isn’t interested in cuckoo clocks. Neither is literature. ♦

BCA

Sexual Overload

Sometimes promiscuity is just promiscuity.

BY ANN MARLOWE



Rep. Anthony Weiner (D-NY) announces his resignation from Congress, 2011.

Sex addiction may not exactly be an existential threat to the United States, but as this book makes clear, the cultural trend which created this farcical “illness” has much graver consequences. The medicalizing of what was hitherto seen as a moral issue and the promotion of a ridiculously broad notion of addiction aren’t just silly: In last year’s Dominique Strauss-Kahn scandal, the term “sex addict” was tossed around as though it explained something—homely maid walks into hotel room, and boom! Sex addict is ready to go.

David Ley gets at the philosophical heart of the matter: the dualism inher-

Ann Marlowe is a visiting fellow at the Hudson Institute and blogs for World Affairs.

ent in the idea that “sex addiction” overrides a person’s good impulses and makes them do bad things that aren’t really in their nature. “We are what we do,” Ley responds. He is squarely in the cognitive psychology camp, urging, “if you want to change how you feel, change what you do.” Ley points out that the argument that pornography causes rape, and

particularly that the use of Internet porn leads to sexual violence, gets things backwards. Sexual violence has dropped by half since 1993, when web browsing became widely available, and even teen sex, teen pregnancy, and venereal disease rates have fallen. As should be intuitively obvious, people who spend most of their time panting over porn on their computers are less likely to be out in the real world getting in trouble.

The Myth of Sex Addiction

by David J. Ley
Rowman & Littlefield, 256 pp., \$32

TIMOTHY A. CLARY / AFP / GETTY IMAGES / NEWS.COM

Ley's chapter on pornography makes all sorts of reasonable arguments for porn's harmlessness in the context of most men's lives. But it doesn't address any of the aesthetic issues with porn, most notably the way it has led an entire generation of men to a remarkably uniform and clichéd idea of a "sexy" woman and a "hot" sexual encounter. The problem isn't that porn leads to rape; it's that it leads to banality. And amid the common sense, there is also an annoying strain of valorization of male promiscuity in Ley's work. He proclaims that "infidelity and promiscuity is a fact of human existence and a long-standing component of masculine eroticism":

Rates of last-year male infidelity in Mexico City are around 15 percent, Haitian men at 25 percent, and Mozambique males as high as 29 percent. The African countries of the Ivory Coast, Cameroon, and Togo report rates of last-year male infidelity as high as 36 and 37 percent. . . . In Russia, there is an almost universal social acceptance of infidelity. . . . In countries where male infidelity is expected, even celebrated culturally, the concept of sex addiction has not taken hold, and male sexual exploits are not seen as a sign of weakness but as a strength.

But Ley somehow never notices that these are spectacularly unsuccessful societies.

With greater persuasiveness, he argues that "sex addiction" is a label placed by (some) women and a feminized culture on more or less normal male desires. He is right to say—though perhaps he says so at excessive length—that "the limits on 'healthy' sexual desire and frequency that are set by sex addictionologists are most similar to the female norms and ignore these gender differences." But he goes overboard in arguing how much men and women supposedly differ in their views on sex: "50 percent of males think about sex more than once a day, compared to only 19 percent of females" is one of the more implausible claims.

For anyone who has cringed once too often at the term "sex addiction"—or questioned the blanket

use of "addiction" as an explanation for behavior that is really a matter of moral choice—Ley's demolition of the bad science and worse reasoning behind the sex addiction industry will be refreshing. For a while. This workmanlike, plodding book is no more than serviceably written and, alas, has fewer spicy bits than the reader might have hoped; it is all rather clinical. It also suffers from an inherent defect of books about addiction: rendering one thoroughly tired of the subject matter. Ley, like the addiction advocates, has quite a lot of sex. If a Martian were to read this book, he would have the idea that most Americans spend more time having sex than they do working, shop-

ping, and watching television, and that sex is how most of us define ourselves.

This probably comes with the territory of being a sex expert. But it's a relief to close Ley's brief volume and reemerge into the fresh air of a wider world, where sex is neither a feverish, tawdry addiction nor the central concern of life. There is, in fact, nothing like a book on sex addiction to reduce sex to the status of a tiresome obsession. It makes one nostalgic for the bygone days when sin, rather than addiction, was the framework for looking at illicit sex, when moral failings had the gravitas of Don Giovanni being dragged down to hell versus today's mewling on *Oprah*. ♦



Chain of Miracles

A rabbi reflects on the meaning of survival.

BY ROBERT M. GOLDBERG

There are many remarkable episodes in this compelling autobiography of Israel Meir Lau, the former chief rabbi of Israel. One in particular captures Lau's character and shapes his future. Lulek (as he was called) was 5 years old in 1942 when he saw his father, Moshe, also a rabbi, beaten and deported to Treblinka, and only 6 when his mother, Chaya, was taken from him and murdered at Ravensbruck. Thereafter, he and his older brother Naphtali were—after working in a glass factory near the Piotrków ghetto—shipped to the Czestochowa labor camp in Poland.

The defining episode occurred when the labor camp's commandant had lined up the 10 children in Czestochowa and told them that they would

be slaughtered because they were "useless." The 7-year-old Lulek imagined he had "formed a small mound from the mud and stood on top of it in order to make myself taller." From that imaginary mound, Lau relates, "I gave the first speech I had ever given in my life, which was also the speech of my life, in the battle for my life. . . . I have delivered thousands of speeches [since], but none has been comparable to this speech":

Why does the commandant say such things about us? That we are useless? That we are incapable? For twelve hours a day in Hortensia, the glass factory in Piotrków, I pushed a cart with sixty bottles of water among the furnaces of the glass-blowers. . . . Fill, empty, fill—and that was already a year ago. Now I'm older and I can do more. I, the youngest, and my friends who are older than I am—we have a right to live, too.

Out of the Depths
*The Story of a Child of Buchenwald
Who Returned Home at Last*
by Israel Meir Lau
Sterling, 400 pp., \$24.95

Robert M. Goldberg is vice president of the Center for Medicine in the Public Interest in New York.

Lau writes that he did not “know exactly what came over me next, who gave me the courage to open my mouth, or who put the words into it,” though we do discover many sources of his unyielding spirit. While Lau carries the memory of his father being savagely beaten and dishonored in public, he also carries the “image of Father, with astonishing spiritual strength, bracing himself from falling, refusing to beg for his life. . . . For me, that image of his inner spiritual strength completely nullifies the helplessness that accompanied the humiliation.”

Before their deaths, Lau’s parents entrusted Naphtali with his younger

tor who convinced the guards that the young, blond, fair-skinned Lau was Polish; a Russian prisoner named Feodor who acted as his “guardian angel.” Lau writes: “Often, when I think about my childhood during the war, I find myself amazed at the chain of miracles I experienced, and I say to myself that nothing happens by chance and that the hand of Divine Providence guides everything.”

They had all helped keep Lau alive. But survival was only the beginning. He had to get to Israel to begin life again. Israel was a dream without shape to Lulek, but he realized how important getting there was. Just

Lau’s maturation parallels the growth of religious life in Israel, led by rabbis who had left Europe or survived the Holocaust to establish yeshivas. In particular, Lau was blessed to have Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, one of the greatest Jewish scholars of modern times, urge him to study physics, since it dealt with the creation of the world, and engage him in “one of the most important conversations of my life.” Shlomo told Lau that his voice was a “melodious bell” that must be heard to sustain the Jewish people:

God gave you the power of speech. You have a mission in life—you take after your father. We must not spurn God’s gifts; we should not turn our backs on Him. I don’t know whether this is what grabbed you by the hair and pulled you out of the piles of ashes in Europe. . . . But one thing is clear to me: you must dedicate yourself to your studies, learning more and more, so that when the time comes, you will ring this bell and make it heard afar.

Today, Rabbi Lau comforts the victims of terror, visits wounded Israeli soldiers, and attends many weddings as three of the most important of his various responsibilities. He has urged Fidel Castro, Pope John Paul, King Hussein, and President Hosni Mubarak to promote peace and secure a better life for Jews in other lands.

Ultimately, Rabbi Lau is a warrior who believes he must teach future generations to fight for survival as he did. He recalls the speech he gave at the bar mitzvah of his oldest son, about the last verse in the chapter of Exodus, which describes the Israelites’ battle against Amalek. In Jewish tradition, Amalek is not simply a tribe described in the Bible; it is the desire, “from generation to generation,” to wipe out Judaism:

We cannot fight the enemy Amalek—the nation or the phenomenon—with weapons or with ammunition. Rather, we are obligated to fight this battle in every generation, each generation passing on our heritage to the next. The struggle for the continuity of generations is the true battle, and the great spiritual-divine victory of Israel against the adversary Amalek. ♦



Israel Meir Lau and Pope John Paul II, 2000

brother’s care and survival. Lulek would be the one to carry on the 37 generations of rabbis on both sides of his family. Lau’s father “emphasized that if we escaped this inferno safely, we would know how to find our home. . . . ‘Your home will be in Eretz Israel, even if you have to acquire it through suffering,’ he said.”

Naphtali risked his life and endured great suffering to carry out this instruction. His actions not only averted imminent death but inspired others in the camps to care for his brother: a prison guard whom he bribed to let Lulek (deemed too young for Buchenwald) live; the prison doc-

weeks before the liberation of Buchenwald by American forces, the Germans began evacuating the camp by train. As Naphtali was being herded on a boxcar, facing separation from Lulek and death, he ordered Lulek not to go to any other place than Israel. As the death train moved away, Naphtali jumped out and walked back to Buchenwald and Lulek’s cellblock.

After the liberation, the brothers left a relocation camp and emigrated to Israel, where Lau encountered and contributed to another “chain of miracles.” This book captures both the turmoil and excitement of growing up in the newly established Jewish state:

Dramatic License

The character in 'The Columnist' is not the Joseph Alsop I knew. BY EDWIN M. YODER JR.

As the perpetrator of two historical novels and other fictional pieces that place real people in imaginary situations, I can't be sanctimonious about what follows. But my history genes are in turmoil over the new play about Joe Alsop, the late Washington columnist, and the commentary the play, called *The Columnist*, inspires.

Joseph W. Alsop (1910-1989), for those stumped by the name, was perhaps the most influential columnist of the 1940s to 1970s generation, and certainly the most assertive and best connected. Theodore Roosevelt's favorite sister was Alsop's grandmother, and elite schooling at Groton and Harvard stamped him like a row of chest ribbons and medals. In his later years (when I knew him), he held court at his Georgetown house and kept a gourmet table for select friends and sources.

When he died in 1989, I examined the rich Alsop papers at the Library of Congress and decided to write a book about him, half history and half personal reminiscence. In truth, I had hung about him like a lesser Boswell. I interviewed Joe's friends and relatives, and my book emerged in 1995 as *Joe Alsop's Cold War*. It focused on his paradoxical double role in the 1950s as a heroic foe of the McCarthyite inquisition and resolute cold warrior.

Alas, while I suspect my book and

Edwin M. Yoder Jr. is the author, most recently, of Vacancy: A Judicial Misadventure.

others may have been drawn upon in the making of the play, playwright David Auburn's Joe Alsop is a distasteful parody of the man I knew. I can't entirely disclaim responsibility. As far as I know, I was the first to tell,



Joseph Alsop, 1963

in print, the disturbing story of his entrapment by the KGB in a Moscow hotel homosexual tryst, which now constitutes the opening scene of the play. (It is as if his distant kinsman Franklin D. Roosevelt were characterized by his paralysis.) Moreover, like so many friends of this gaudy American original, I was amused by his sometimes self-satirizing gruffness: "Here you are," he barked at me

one night at a Washington party when I failed to identify and present some late-arriving Carter administration bigwig—"Here you are, the brains of a great newspaper, and you don't know a goddamned thing."

I laughed and he laughed. But many subjected to such Alsopian blasts did not grasp the tone, took offense, sulked, and joined Joe's detractors. It was presumably this misimpression that prompted the *New York Times* reviewer of the play to remark, with wild inaccuracy, on Joe's "tendency to treat people as less than human."

When I was researching my book, I invited a sophisticated mutual friend who had known Joe well to dinner for an interview. As we were leaving the restaurant, he asked: "How are you going to handle the Moscow incident?"

"What incident?" I asked, in innocence. He then told me what little he knew of the KGB entrapment. I was astonished. Even now, the most diligent sleuth would not learn the story from the scanty evidence in the Alsop papers. Joe's friends and enemies in Washington knew the story, I soon discovered, but, with more restraint than in the blogging age, kept it to themselves.

I faced a dilemma. I had grown up in a decorous Southern world in which the human foibles and frailties that absorb most of us (sex, divorce, mispent wealth, death, etc.—but chiefly sex) were mentioned in hushed tones, and by mandarin indirection. I was uncomfortable in the role of history gossip.

Yet the heroic story of Joe's Cold War could not be told in the round if the buried Moscow mishap were left out.

Fortunately, Joe's former wife, the kind and urbane Susan Mary Jay Patten Alsop, serenely provided the missing pieces when I overcame my embarrassment and asked. While Joe, when he proposed marriage, had told her frankly of his sexual orientation, the persistent effort of the KGB hoodlums

to blackmail Joe became an ordeal for her as well. For instance, someone had scrawled “Joe Alsop is queer” in big letters on the dusty windshield of a car parked outside their house. When she probed, however, even relatives disclaimed interest.

The ugliest sequel was that the Russians circulated explicit photos to various Washington recipients, including Joe’s friends and colleagues—even, absurdly, Art Buchwald, with whom Joe had quarreled over Buchwald’s play, *Sheep on the Runway*, which had featured a pompous and suspiciously named columnist, Joe Mayflower. No recipients of the naughty pictures reacted, other than with disgust at the senders. Perhaps the KGB did not know that Joe had filed a full account of the incident with old CIA friends, as a safeguard against blackmail. But the harassment persisted until the late Richard Helms threatened drastic reaction in kind through back channels.

There is a journalistic sequel. One evening in Lexington, Virginia, where I was then teaching, Jack Nelson of the *Los Angeles Times*, one of the great reporters of our day, learned that my book was in galleys and ready for launch. I told Jack that I was about to spring this hidden tale for the first time, and was far from comfortable about it. He asked if he could write the story. Trusting his craftsmanship, taste, and judgment, I “leaked” the relevant chapter to him and he wrote an excellent piece, rounded and nuanced. His story was seen the day before it appeared in Los Angeles in the *Washington Post* newsroom, and the *Post*’s press reporter phoned. He demanded a briefing. Otherwise, he said, Jack’s story and mine would get little play in the *Post*. I explained that I had promised Nelson an exclusive and would stick by it, but the *Post* the next day ran a stunted fragment of Jack’s piece.

I was embarrassed and angry and so was Katharine Graham, Alsop’s close friend and publisher of the *Post*. I told her the story of the version that had appeared in her paper. She pronounced the curtailment of the

Nelson story “stupid” and ordered up a lengthy treatment of the tale. It duly appeared under a fitting headline: “The Hawk and the Vultures,” an allusion to Joe’s notoriously hawkish views on Vietnam, and also to those who exploited his sexual embarrassment, notably J. Edgar Hoover.

End of story? Not quite, since today the vulnerable, all too human, brilliant, gifted, and irascible Joe Alsop has become a theater caricature. The excellent actors, including John Lithgow, I do not blame for this infantile distortion; it is ever the way of the world that, as eras fade, the past becomes increasingly susceptible to whimsical and ignorant pastiche. But generations to whom Joe is a stranger, and who haven’t a clue what he was like, need to know what a paltry, walk-

ing shadow they see on the stage.

Joe could be bearish, and occasionally his manners slipped; but he had his values straight. Read, for instance, his centennial appraisal of the character of his cousin Franklin D. Roosevelt—it is a sure mirror of his own. And he could be generous. One evening, at a joint birthday celebration with Margaret Jay (his 70th, Margaret’s 40th), he turned to Margaret, then joint ambassador with her husband Peter at the British embassy, and said: “What, after all, do we wish of friends? Intelligence, physical beauty, and a good heart.”

Perhaps an eccentric idea of physical beauty had betrayed him that far-off night in Moscow. But of his own fundamental benevolence and his good heart there was not the slightest doubt. ♦

BCA

Geezers’ Delight

A fable for the underserved, over-50 crowd.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

Every year, there is a movie that becomes an unexpected hit because it finds an audience among people the Hollywood studios resolutely ignore: the over-50 crowd. Last year, Woody Allen’s *Midnight in Paris* struck a chord loud enough among those who still dream of arrondissement-hopping with Gertrude Stein to earn \$149 million worldwide. In 2010, regular guys with AARP cards got to compare notes on retirement with CIA assassins Bruce Willis and Helen Mirren in *Red* (\$199 million).

The undisputed queen of the oldies is Meryl Streep (born in 1949), who cooked French cuisine in a fat suit in

2009’s *Julie & Julia* (\$130 million) and sang 1970s pop anthems in *Mamma Mia!* the year before (\$610 million). And, of course, there was the grandmother of them all, *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, a \$5 million groaner that came

out of nowhere in 2002 to earn \$241 million in the United States alone without ever spending a day at the top of the box office charts.

The latest sensation for us geezers and soon-to-be-geezers (me, 51 years old) is *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*, about a retirement community for Britons in the Indian city of Jaipur. The city is a riot of noise and dust and ill-paved streets, and the home turns out to be a fantasy notion of a young dreamer named Sonny (Dev Patel, the star of *Slumdog Millionaire*), whose late father ran the titular hotel into the ground.

The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel
Directed by John Madden



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



Dame Maggie Smith

The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel looks good and is well-told by director John Madden, who has been floundering since his 1998 triumph *Shakespeare in Love*. *Marigold Hotel* is based on a fine and sharp 2004 novel called *These Foolish Things* by Deborah Moggach, which I commend to you highly. Ultimately, though, *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel* is never less than diverting; it is neither all that fine nor all that sharp. It is a nice picture that proves to have as much spice as would a curry served up to folk sporting mouse-ear millinery were they gamely to sup inside an Indian restaurant at Epcot.

The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel is a movie about old people in which death and illness play a glancing role at most, and a portrait of emotional and physical dislocation in which nothing cuts too deeply. When convenient for plot purposes, a decades-long relationship simply comes to an end while characters are caught in a traffic jam; when convenient for tearjerking purposes, an act of teenage betrayal that has haunted a man for 50 years is forgiven with a hug. And when we need a funeral for travelogue purposes, that too is supplied by a quick, painless, no-nonsense heart attack.

Two of the characters are obsessed with sex—a lips-pursed, onetime harlot

who goes husband-shopping at the old imperial club in town, and a salty devil with a beard and bad sports jacket who sits around reading the *Kama Sutra*. The movie is deeply amused by them. And since it's so nice and all, they are both rewarded for their odd values.

Mostly, though, *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel* is a movie about being both game and stiff-upper-lipped at the same time, and since these are qualities we all wish we possessed, it has what most successful but mediocre films have: a profound element of wish fulfillment. Are you broke and lonely with weak family ties in your golden years? Hie off to a cheap, wacky motel in India! The better the movie does, the more likely it is there will be a sitcom spinoff come 2013.

All the same, its very lack of sharpness is surely part of the reason *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel* is this year's must-see for the mature moviegoer. For, after all, who really wants to watch people decline and die—that is, unless they've been run through by a superhero or are turned into a vampire immediately before their expiry? There's no raging against the dying of the light here, and that's all to the good, box-office-wise.

And for those who really love British actors, *The Best Exotic Marigold*

Hotel is a late-life version of *The Avengers* in the sense that it assembles a Murderer's Row of them for this one movie. You bounce from Judi Dench to Tom Wilkinson to the glorious Bill Nighy to the equally glorious (though sadly little-known in the States) Penelope Wilton before settling down, yet again, with the one who may actually be the greatest of them all.

Maggie Smith, bereft of makeup and with a horrendous haircut, plays an old racist working-class bag—a character far removed from the dowager countess in *Downton Abbey*, in which she has become a sensation, once again, in her seventies. And yet, Smith's Mrs. Donnelly is every bit as lived-in, as considered, as controlled. This is not just great acting, it's joyous acting that transmits a sheer love of performing and makes you happy just to watch it. Forty-two years ago, Smith won her first Oscar as the inspiring, maddening, and literally fascist girls'-school teacher in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*; 33 years ago, she won her second in the deservedly forgotten Neil Simon short-film trip-tych, *California Suite*. Unless something very unlikely happens between now and next February, she will win her third for *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*. She will be the only thing one really remembers about it anyway. ♦

“[President] Obama has inserted himself into official biographies of past presidents on the White House Web site, linking their deeds to his own.”

—New York Post, May 16, 2012

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- Millard Fillmore
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- James Buchanan
- Abraham Lincoln
- Andrew Johnson
- Ulysses S. Grant
- Rutherford B. Hayes
- James Garfield
- Chester A. Arthur
- Grover Cleveland
- Benjamin Harrison
- Cleveland Again
- William McKinley
- Theodore Roosevelt
- William Howard Taft
- Woodrow Wilson
- Warren G. Harding
- Cal
- Harry S. Truman
- Dwight D. Eisenhower
- John F. Kennedy

and died at Mount Vernon in 1799. The story of the young George Washington cutting down a cherry tree with his hatchet, and then refusing to lie about it to his father, is a fable invented by an early biographer. President Obama, however, pledged during his 2008 campaign to be always candid and truthful with the American people, and as he recently told his hostesses on “The View,” he has consistently lived up to that pledge.

JOHN ADAMS (1735-1826) served as George Washington’s vice president before succeeding Washington for a single term in 1797. Of the vice presidency, Adams complained that “my country has, in its wisdom, contrived for me the most insignificant office ever the invention of man contrived or his imagination conceived.” By contrast, President Obama recruited the respected veteran Sen. Joseph Biden of Delaware to serve as his vice president, and, as he explained last month to Jimmy Fallon on “Late Night with Jimmy Fallon,” the president has given Vice President Biden unprecedented responsibilities as the second-ranking constitutional officer in his historic administration.

THOMAS JEFFERSON (1743-1826) was a slaveholder and purported author of the Declaration of Independence. But as President Obama mentioned to the beloved Latino entertainer Ricky Martin in New York last week, at the age of 35 he wrote and published a widely praised memoir, *Dreams from My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance* (1995), and Chairman Rocco Landesman of the National Endowment for the Arts has hailed the president as the “most powerful writer since Julius Caesar.”

JAMES MADISON (1751-1836) was yet another Southern plantation owner in the White House, and one who used the charm of his wife

the weekly Standard

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