

**THE GREATNESS  
OF CALVIN COOLIDGE**  
GEOFFREY NORMAN

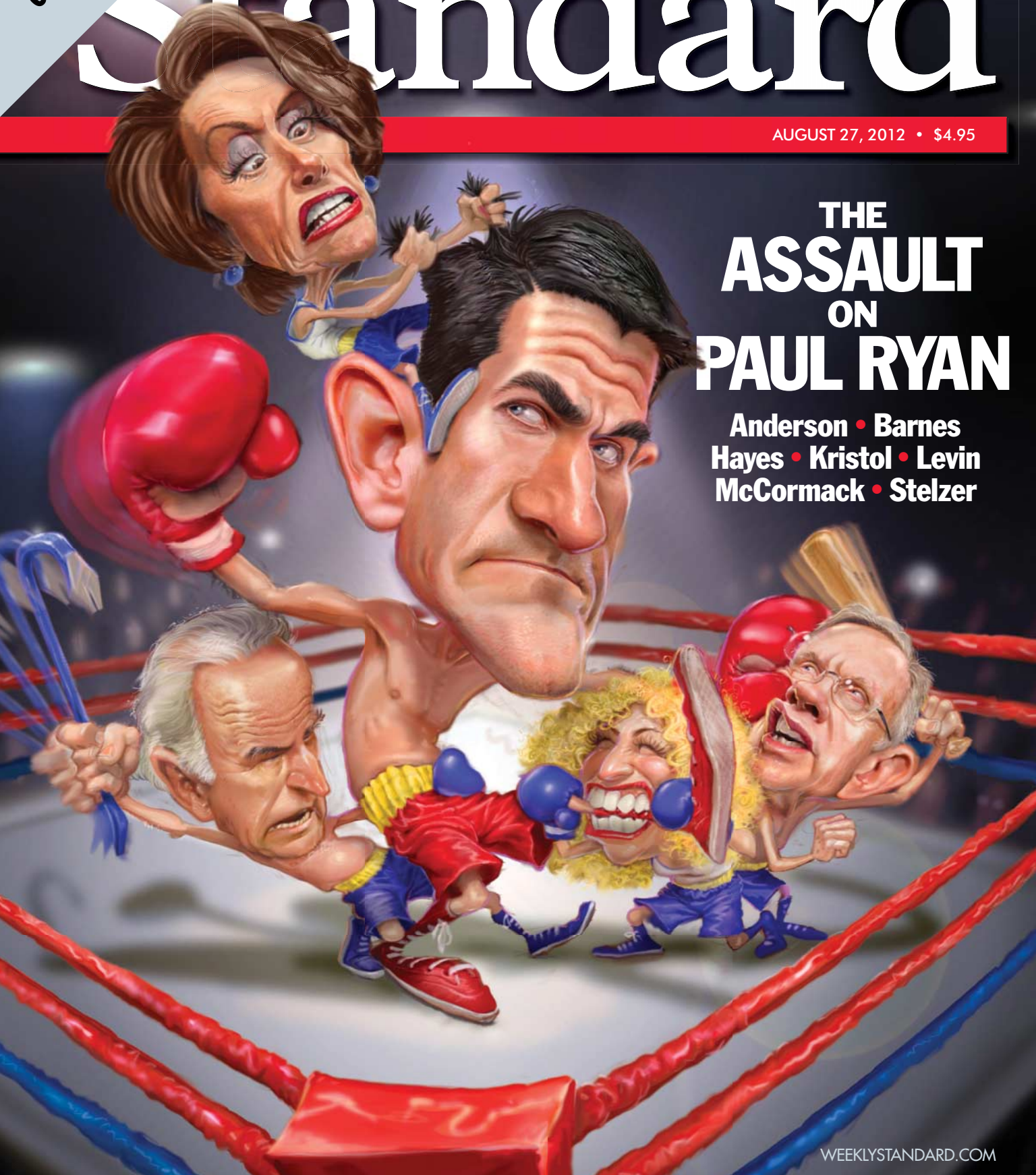
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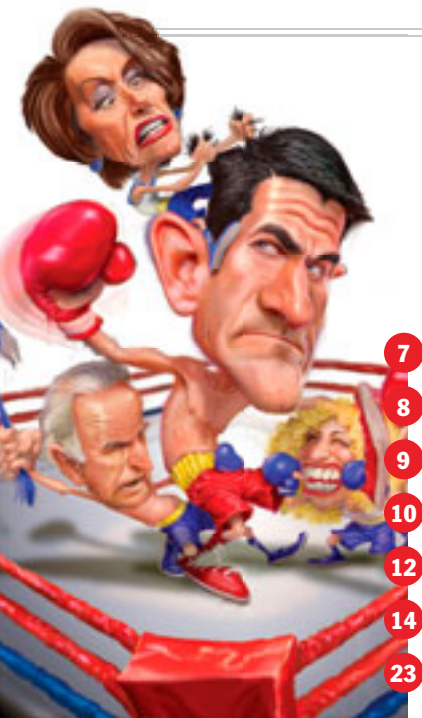
## THE ASSAULT ON PAUL RYAN

Anderson • Barnes  
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# Joey, We Should Have Known Ye

“Joe Biden,” wrote the editorialists of the *Salt Lake Tribune* four years ago, “is smart, articulate, and blunt.” Well, grant our Utah colleagues this much: One out of three is better than nothing. Joe Biden is blunt as a night stick, as he proved once more last week with his instantly infamous declaration that Mitt Romney hoped to enchain his fellow citizens (whom Biden articulately referred to as *y’all*). As for “smart” and “articulate,” the *Trib’s* editorialists were writing at a time, August 2008, when we were all required to marvel at what a formidable personage old Joe was. At least they didn’t use the word “gravitas”—an omission that could have gotten them run right out of the International Guild of Opinionmakers and Gasbags.

Remember? There was a period there, in the early days of the Obama Delusion, where *Biden* and *gravitas* were nearly synonymous. Why, if you looked up “gravitas” in the dictionary you’d see those pearly Biden choppers gleaming right back at you. The *New York Daily News* praised his “experience and gravitas.” The *Washington Post* said he “immediately added gravitas” to the Obama ticket. John Harwood on MSNBC said Biden’s “gravitas would enable him to take the fight to John McCain.” A *Philadelphia Inquirer* columnist went further: Biden was capable of “trumping the presumptive Republican nominee with gravitas.” Trumping John McCain with gravitas? Didn’t the North Vietnamese try that too?

And now the cliché makers say Biden has gone from gravitas to gaffe-prone.

But the reversal ignores the fact that the imputation of gravitas should have struck anyone familiar with Biden’s career as ludicrous. His gravitas, said 2008’s cliché makers, applied especially to his experience

in foreign policy. Having first come to the Senate in 1973, Biden did indeed face all the great issues of the second half of the Cold War—and came down on the wrong side on every one of them, from the abandonment of South Vietnam to the deployment of Pershing missiles to the arming of the Nicaraguan contras. His record was pristine—completely untouched by good judgment.



The same limitations could be seen in domestic matters, often to painful effect. Two decades before Obama picked him as a running mate, Biden presided over the confirmation hearings of the Supreme Court nominee Robert Bork. Biden made the cringe-making mistake of assuming he understood such issues as substantive due process and the role of natural law in judging. He was just smart enough not to know what he didn’t know—half-fluent with the words but utterly confused about their meaning. The televised hours in which Bork tried patiently to explain the law to him seemed to last for days.

Biden’s confusion and lack of

knowledge might be traced back to his law school career, when he imported several paragraphs from a law review article into a paper of his own. Accusations of plagiarism have dogged him ever since. Among other things, plagiarism is a crime of the intellectually insecure, and that same insecurity may account for his emphatic, and implausible, insistence on his own prodigious IQ.

In his revealing autobiography, published in 2007 to coincide with his second failed presidential campaign, he instructed his ghostwriter to include extended quotes from letters of recommendation he long ago received from various teachers, praising his “sharp and incisive intellect.” Indeed, one of the themes of Biden’s book is that with all that intellectual horsepower humming just beneath the hair plugs, life for him has been no day at the Delaware beach.

“I’ve made life difficult for myself,” the ghostwriter wrote for Biden, “by putting intellectual consistency and personal principle above expediency.” America should have understood such sentences as a cry for help. Instead, our opinion makers saw in them gravitas.

The Obama Delusion that gripped so much of the country was built on many assumptions that the last three years have proved to be false. The president was an intellectual, his countless admirers believed; he was a uniquely persuasive speaker, he was as eloquent off the cuff as he was on the stump, his deep thinking about politics transcended ideology, he understood both history and contemporary policy with rare penetration—and when it came time to choose his vice president, he “opted for gravitas.” This last false assumption was the most amusing of them all, and may yet prove to be the most dangerous. ♦

THOMAS FLUHARTY

## Fareed Blots His Copybook

Plagiarism is not a crime in any legal code, but among people who make their living with words, there is no deeper offense. The plagiarist has not just stolen the work of another writer; he has used it to disguise his own inadequacy. It is a symptom of laziness, to be sure; but above all, it's a crime of arrogance.

Here at THE SCRAPBOOK, we tend to think of plagiarism in biblical terms: a sin that must be punished. Famous plagiarists—Molly Ivins, Stephen Ambrose, Arianna Huffington, Doris Kearns Goodwin, among others—have claimed, as an excuse, that their plagiarism was inadvertent: So busy and absorbed were they in their important work that they forgot whether the words in question were their own, or something they had read or copied. Well, we're not buying it, and no one who has ever written an original sentence would believe it. Plagiarism is not just the theft of others' work, but the brazen, intentional, and premeditated theft of others' work.

Which brings us to Fareed Zakaria. THE SCRAPBOOK confesses to a certain fascination with Zakaria: A thoroughly predictable mind with an exotic background and gift for self-promotion, he has parlayed his act into a nifty little career. In the course of a decade or two he has jumped from *Foreign Affairs* to *Newsweek* to *Time* to ABC to CNN and the *Washington Post* on the strength of a confident demeanor and a near-magical instinct for the conventional wisdom: Thomas L. Friedman with an Indian accent.

Part of THE SCRAPBOOK's fascination lies in the obvious tension within the Zakaria format: He is just smug enough and sufficiently self-satisfied to repeat what he believes his audience wants to hear; and yet he remains afflicted with a cultural tin ear. No one at *Newsweek* or CNN or the *Post* seems to have informed him that assuring audiences that he is very smart is not in itself very smart, or that arguments aren't nec-



essarily clinched by mentioning one's Harvard doctorate.

So it was with a certain interest that THE SCRAPBOOK learned of Fareed Zakaria's plagiarism last week. As such cases go, it was a standard transgression: To produce a column about gun control he lifted several passages from an essay by Jill Lepore which had appeared in a recent issue of the *New Yorker*. And as such cases go, this revelation was swiftly followed by others. Author Jeffrey Goldberg came forward to complain that quotations from an interview he conducted with Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu had been lifted by Zakaria without credit. And others have

pointed out that Zakaria's Harvard commencement address, delivered in May, was largely indistinguishable from his Duke commencement address, delivered two weeks earlier. Self-plagiarism, if you will.

Once it was discovered that Zakaria had passed Lepore's work off as his own, he admitted to a "horrible mistake," and *Time*, CNN, and the *Washington Post* announced that he was being suspended for an indefinite period. Which, in the cases of CNN and *Time*, turned out to be not especially indefinite. Less than a week after Zakaria's suspension for his "journalistic lapse" (*Time's* term), he was reinstated—and will no doubt

proceed from strength to strength, a sadder but wiser pundit.

Well, THE SCRAPBOOK has three observations to offer about this sorry episode. First, if we had any authority in the matter, Zakaria's suspensions would not have been indefinite but conclusive. If there is any firing offense in the practice of journalism, surely it is plagiarism. Second, we have a suspicion—based on a lifetime's experience of the way things work—that it may not have been Fareed Zakaria who plagiarized Jill Lepore, but some poor 23-year-old assistant who probably drafts the columns that "Fareed Zakaria" churns out. It would have been convenient, of course, to throw the intern under the bus, but if such was the explanation, Zakaria chose to keep this embarrassing secret to himself.

As for THE SCRAPBOOK's third observation, it takes the form of a question: What were Harvard—and Oberlin and Bates and Brown and Johns Hopkins and the University of Miami—thinking when they conferred honorary degrees on Fareed Zakaria? ♦

## Profiles in Ducking and Covering

Last December, Senator Ron Wyden, an Oregon Democrat, co-authored a Medicare reform plan with none other than Paul Ryan. (Yes, the one you saw on TV throwing Grandma off a cliff.) Entitled "Guaranteed Choices to Strengthen Medicare and Health Security for All," the proposal called for Medicare to transition to a premium-support system, whereby seniors would receive a government subsidy with which they would purchase private health insurance. Enrolling in traditional Medicare would also remain an option. In other words, Wyden basically signed on to what is known as the Ryan plan.

When Wyden and Ryan released their proposal, the left was enraged. Democratic representative Pete Stark of California warned that the plan "ends Medicare as know it, plain and simple." Senator Sherrod Brown of

Ohio said that the plan amounted to putting "lipstick on a pig." The *New York Times's* Paul Krugman, channeling Lenin as usual, labeled Wyden a "useful idiot."

But Wyden, to his credit, was undeterred. "This doesn't end Medicare as we know it," he averred in a joint interview with Ryan. In fact, he went on to say, premium support offers a way for "progressives and conservatives to come together." The plan, he said, is "a model driven by choices and competition. . . . We believe it's going to work." In a later *Huffington Post* op-ed, Wyden further defended what he then called "Wyden-Ryan," saying that it was the best way to "preserve the Medicare guarantee."

So last weekend, when Mitt Romney selected Paul Ryan as his running mate (and even name-checked Wyden in his speech introducing Ryan), Ron Wyden was confronted with a choice. Would he stand steady, a veritable Stonewall Wyden, admirably defending premium support in the face of partisan scare-mongering? Or would he reduce himself to being just another partisan, standing by as his party trashes a policy that he knows is meritorious? The choice was made even starker when it became clear that the Democrats would put the Ryan Plan at the center of their campaign against Romney.

So what did Wyden do? Cue the tape: "Governor Romney needs to learn you don't protect seniors by making things up, and his comments sure won't help promote real bipartisanship," Wyden said in a statement full of similarly meaningless bromides.

It seems that Romney slipped up and referred to Wyden-Ryan as a piece of "legislation," and not as a "proposal," or "plan," which are Wyden's preferred terms. And, yes, it was hemming and hawing about this minimal semantic distinction that made up essentially the entirety of Wyden's response. As for the benefits of premium support—and the false attacks on the the model coming from the Democrats—it's been radio silence from Oregon's senior senator. ♦

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# The Great Apartment Hunt

I spent a good part of the last three weeks helping a young friend look for an apartment, and the experience was revealing. Among other things, it made me realize that so much has changed in the city where I grew up and have lived most of my life that I scarcely know it. The experience also showed the crucial role of computers even in such fundamental activities as finding shelter. And it revealed, finally, the pressure that the current economy has put on the stock of available rental property.

My friend is in her early twenties, attractive and intelligent, a visual artist by training. She has been renting an apartment on the twenty-third floor of a building overlooking Lake Michigan with a spectacular view of Chicago's downtown skyscrapers. Views, though, even magnificent ones, will take a person just so far. She has felt isolated in this apartment, and longed to live in a livelier neighborhood among her contemporaries.

Her demands were straightforward enough: She was looking for a one- or two-bedroom apartment, with hardwood floors, a secure parking space, a safe neighborhood, and decent light. Central air-conditioning and an in-unit washer and dryer would be nice, but not absolutely essential. She had between \$1,200 and \$1,500 a month to spend on rent, and five weeks in which to find a place.

Her first choice of neighborhood was one located in the north central part of the city called Wicker Park/Bucktown. I knew Wicker Park but had not been there for many years. My father's place of business, a one-floor factory manufacturing costume jewelry, was located in Wicker Park when I worked for him as a boy. The neighborhood then was drab and ethnically dominated by Poles. The novelist Nelson Algren, who was militantly unfashionable, lived there.

Were Algren alive he would be as repulsed by his old neighborhood as I was amazed by it. Wicker Park today is filled with galleries, vegan and other restaurants, yoga centers, bike and clothing shops, and no one walking its streets seems to be above 30. Much of the housing on its side streets has been handsomely rehabbed. A not uncommon sight as one drives through the neighborhood is that of a young



mother in spandex jogging behind a stroller containing her infant child or a man out walking his two pugs. At my age, I felt in this neighborhood like a visitor from another country, if not another planet.

One of the first things my friend and I learned is that there is not a great stock of rental property available. This is owing to the fact that relatively successful people in their late twenties and early thirties are not moving out of their rented apartments to buy condominiums and houses, as they normally would, because they feel that the drop in real-estate prices has not yet bottomed out. My friend, whose own career is just beginning, had no wish to buy an apartment, for she wanted the freedom of movement that renting allows. The problem was there

was not that much to choose from.

As once one went to the classified section of one's newspaper to look for an apartment, today one goes to craigslist or other real-estate websites. Along with descriptions of the apartments up for rent, there one often finds wildly deceptive photographs, which make rooms look larger, things generally brighter and newer. Telephone calls help to clear some of this up. The second bedroom of an oddly inexpensive two-bedroom apartment I inquired about was 7' x 10'—in other words, the late Wilt Chamberlain could not have lain down in it.

We saw six or seven apartments. Some were preposterously narrow, some had wretched and not easily altered paint jobs, a few had spooky landlords: One of these that we encountered was a powerlifter with a German accent who wore his black cap backwards and patent-leather slippers. We found a few excellent apartments, but in shaky neighborhoods. An elegant apartment in Logan Square, a neighborhood to the west of Wicker Park/Bucktown, met my friend's every criterion and had a lovely view off its fourth-floor balcony. But it was located in a neighborhood in which walking around seemed risky. (The reigning fear in Chicago at present is of youth gangs, black and Mexican gangs chiefly. "The nice thing about Jews," a witty acquaintance of mine remarked, "is that they don't form gangs until they get out of law school.") The rental agent's emphasis on the excellent security in the building only made things seem more frightening.

On her own, my friend found an apartment on the edge of Bucktown, one meeting her desiderata and within her price range. Out of her front-room windows her view is of one-story factories; from her ample patio and back porch, the leafy tranquility of a neighborhood on the rise prevails. As she showed me around the place, I thought it was nice to be rich but even better to be young.

JOSEPH EPSTEIN

# Why Ryan Matters

Vice presidential picks don't matter. Except when they do. If John Kerry had chosen Dick Gephardt instead of John Edwards in 2004, and had then parked Gephardt in Ohio during the general election campaign to make the Democratic case to working-class voters, Kerry might well have won the Buckeye State—and the presidency. In 1992, Bill Clinton's selection of Al Gore, a Southerner and hawkish, confirmed the notion that Clinton was a different kind of Democrat, and the successful Clinton-Gore bus tour following the convention helped lock in their huge post-convention bounce that put the Democratic ticket ahead for good. In 1980, Ronald Reagan's selection of George H. W. Bush helped unite the party, minimizing the damage the renegade liberal Republican John Anderson could do running as an independent in the general election. It also showed Reagan as a confident and strong leader, willing to pick his toughest opponent as his running mate.

Of course, Kerry might have lost anyway. And maybe Reagan and Clinton were fated to win. But maybe not.

And maybe Mitt Romney's selection of Paul Ryan won't end up making much difference. But we think it will. The selection has changed the nature of the 2012 presidential contest. It means we now have a big campaign, about big issues and big choices. During the summer months, the Romney campaign was fighting and losing a trench warfare battle. Now the Romney-Ryan ticket has a good chance to win a large-scale electoral war of maneuver.

Furthermore, Ryan will help in the Midwest—as Gephardt would have in 2004. The addition of a bold reforming conservative gives the GOP ticket a new character, even more than Clinton's addition of Gore helped confirm a changed Democratic image in 1992. And the selection of Ryan is a strong, self-confident pick, reflecting well on Romney, as the pick of Bush in 1980 spoke well in a somewhat different way of Reagan.

But perhaps the most important effect of the Ryan pick

is this: It turns the GOP effort from a campaign into a movement. It transforms a mere electoral effort into a political cause. The Romney 2012 campaign no longer brings to mind its Republican predecessor, the McCain campaign of 2008. Instead, Romney-Ryan could end up more closely resembling Obama 2008.

In 2008, Obama was the young forward-looking reformer, running on a big (if gauzy) message. He was able to capitalize on opposition to the Bush administration without seeming merely oppositional. He was able to enliven his campaign by his own presence and skills. Now it's the Republicans who are running on a newly bold conservative message, presenting a hopeful choice for change rather than mere opposition to the status quo, and on a ticket enlivened by Ryan's presence and skills.

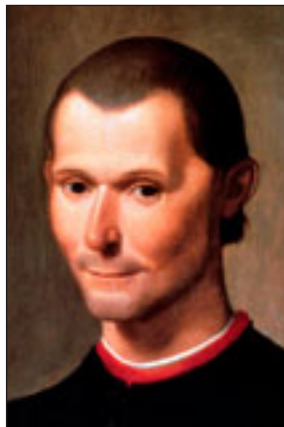
Until last week, the Romney campaign was a few hundred operatives working hard in Boston trying to win a presidential election. Now Romney-Ryan is a groundswell of citizens spontaneously writing, volunteering, and proselytizing on behalf of a cause. The first was going to be a grueling uphill climb. The second could be more like running downhill with the wind at your back. Even in the second instance, of course, the candidate still has to jump the hurdles and avoid the obstacles. But it's a lot easier to prevail when you stand for a cause citizens are eager to join than when you're engaged in a campaign voters may diffidently support.

The best Republican electoral years in modern history were 1980, 1994, and 2010. Until last week, 2012 didn't feel like any of them. Now it does. With the addition of Paul Ryan, we have a bold and forward-looking Republican ticket that seems to match the moment. Perhaps Romney knew all along that "he is prosperous who adapts his mode of proceeding to the qualities of the times." Or did he spend time, while contemplating his vice presidential pick, surreptitiously studying the works of the wily Florentine?

—William Kristol



Mitt Romney



Niccolò Machiavelli

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# Obamacare at Center Stage

In the summer of 2009, President Obama and congressional Democrats faced a dilemma. In the midst of a severe economic downturn, and less than a year after the national debt had reached the 14-figure mark for the first time in American history, they wanted to launch a brand-new federal health care entitlement—and they needed a way (at least on paper) to pay for it. They were only willing to fund about half of it with tax hikes, so they needed to come up with a lot of additional money. Their chosen funding source is now coming back to haunt them.

It is doing so as Democrats try to ride to victory by demagoguing Paul Ryan's (and Mitt Romney's) proposed Medicare reforms—which would help keep Medicare (and the nation) solvent by giving future seniors more freedom, more choice, and more opportunity to pursue value. But raising the Medicare issue also brings to light this inconvenient fact: Medicare is where the Democrats decided to get the rest of the money to fund Obamacare.

There is of course no shortage of problems with Obamacare. Unless it is repealed, it will raise health costs and premiums, reduce the quality of care, and funnel unprecedented amounts of power and money to Washington at the expense of Americans' liberty. It will, for the first time in American history, compel citizens to buy a product or service of the federal government's choosing. It will make it illegal for Americans to choose most low-premium, high-deductible health plans, to choose plans that require co-pays for contraception or sterilization, and to choose plans that don't cover the abortion drug ella free of charge. It will cause millions of Americans to lose their employer-sponsored plans. It will be a medical and fiscal nightmare, and a disaster for our republic. But perhaps its biggest political vulnerability is one that a compliant press corps has so far largely kept under wraps: It is funded through a roughly even mix of tax increases and Medicare cuts.

Romney and Ryan are already capitalizing on this. The campaign has released a new ad:

You paid into Medicare for years, every paycheck. Now, when you need it, Obama has cut \$716 billion from Medicare. Why? To pay for Obamacare. So now the money you paid for your guaranteed health care is going to a massive new government program that's not for you.

Such simple, straightforward, factual messaging can cut through the Obama smokescreen. And what a smoke-

screen it is. Obama and his allies disingenuously claim that this \$716 billion (over Obamacare's first nine years—more like \$850 billion over its first decade) will be used to fund Obamacare while also, simultaneously, being put back into Medicare. But as most everyone outside the Beltway knows, you can't spend the same dollar twice.

No, every dollar that Obamacare siphons out of Medicare will be spent just once—on Obamacare. It won't go to making Medicare, or the country, more solvent—or to extending the life of Medicare. Instead, Obama's raid of Medicare will go to fund Obama's favorite legislation.

The Medicare chief actuary has made this plain. He has also made plain that Obama's Medicare cuts will cause Medicare providers to be paid even less than Medicaid providers by the end of this decade. In other words, Obama's cuts will affect *current* seniors, for whom it will be increasingly hard to find health care professionals willing to see them. The proposed Romney-Ryan reforms, in contrast, wouldn't affect anyone who's 55 or older, let alone current seniors.

What's more, the Congressional Budget Office notes that Obamacare's Medicare cuts will cause millions of seniors to lose their Medicare Advantage plans. Obama knows this, which is why he recently initiated the \$8.35 billion Senior Swindle—an unscrupulous and probably illegal use of taxpayer money to try to hide the effects of these Medicare Advantage cuts from seniors until after November. As of yet, the mainstream press has shown little interest in covering this ploy, despite the Government Accountability Office's published misgivings, but Romney and Ryan are free to highlight it.

They can also point out that no one really knows exactly how much Obamacare will cut from Medicare. Some cuts are left to the discretion of the Independent Payment Advisory Board, a creation of Obamacare. The IPAB will be made up of 15 unelected and largely unaccountable bureaucrats whom the law empowers to cut payments to Medicare providers. Under Obamacare, even Congress cannot overrule the IPAB's decisions with a simple majority vote, thereby making the IPAB constitutionally dubious as well.

Moreover, Obama has doubled-down on the IPAB. Not content with the largely unchecked powers that Obamacare grants it, he has called for "strengthening" it—for giving it more power to cut Medicare spending. He has referred to this as "further improving Medicare."

Needless to say, there's a great deal here for Romney and Ryan to expose. Every time Obama attacks them for the alleged evil of seeking to give future seniors more choice and letting them shop for value with premium support provided by the government, they can talk about the statist IPAB, Obama's method of controlling costs. Every time Obama attacks them for their desire to reform Medicare, they can talk about how his health law raids it. Every time Obama attacks them for wanting to "end Medicare as we know it," they can talk about how Obama already did that—and gave the loot to Obamacare.

These arguments aren't novel. Ryan has been making them for two years. But he now has a bigger megaphone, and Romney has an even more powerful one.

The beauty of these counterattacks is that they will focus this election on Obamacare, the symbol and centerpiece of this presidency. Like his congressional Democratic cohorts in 2010, Obama can't survive an election that's focused on his signature legislation. Yet by attacking Romney and Ryan on Medicare, he has unwittingly helped bring Obamacare back to center stage. All Romney and Ryan need to do is keep it there.

—Jeffrey H. Anderson

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# Out of Money

The end of Medicare and Medicaid as we know them—through reform, the Ryan way, or bankruptcy, the Obama way. The direction of the country—via the Romney-Ryan right track, or the Obama-Biden wrong track. Those are the choices, made stark by the addition of Paul Ryan to the Republican ticket.

Anyone who thought that the selection of Paul Ryan would force the president and his team to abandon purely negative campaigning had better think again. The presence of Ryan on the ticket has merely changed the target of Obama's negative campaign from Mitt Romney's performance at Bain Capital to Paul Ryan's plans to make sense of our fiscal condition and preserve Medicare, unchanged for those 55 years old and over, reformed for other Americans. The Obama campaign remains stuck on negative, claiming that Ryan would destroy Medicare and Medicaid "as we know them." How Obama would preserve these programs "as we know them" remains a deeper secret than his well-publicized cyberattacks on Iran. The simple fact is that existing entitlements, gobbling ever-larger portions of our GDP, cannot survive "as we know them."

I am reminded of a wonderful scene in an Elaine May movie (*A New Leaf*) in which Walter Matthau's attorney is trying to explain to him that he has squandered his entire huge inheritance. To which an uncomprehending Matthau, waving a check that has bounced, replies that his check must be honored, a position he maintains despite his lawyer's repeated explanation that, having spent more than the income from his inheritance for many years, he has no more capital: "You don't have any money."

President Obama certainly cuts a more elegant figure than the late, rumpled Walter Matthau, but he, too, has no money to back his spending plans. Which is why the Democrats are sticking to their negative campaign rather than saying just how they propose to save these entitlements as we know them. Matthau solved his problem by marrying

an extraordinarily wealthy heiress; Obama has solved his problem—our problem—by borrowing almost 40 cents to cover every dollar he spends. That can't go on, and won't be solved by soaking the rich: Squeeze them dry and he won't affect the rounding error in his deficits.

We have already lost our triple-A rating and are on notice that the world's investors will charge a lot more for their money if we don't get off this wrong track. The burden of the debt Obama has already incurred in record-breaking amounts, the burden hanging over the next generation, will increase when mounting debt drives interest rates up. Entitlements will not be the only things surrendered: Doubt that and ask overly indebted cities around the country how they are faring with reduced budgets for education, police, firemen, and the parks and other amenities that their citizens assumed were theirs by right.

So the choices on offer are continuing full speed ahead towards the fiscal cliff—the Obama plan—or adopting some version of the Ryan reforms. It is not between some viable Obama plan, nowhere in sight, and the Ryan plan; it is between denial and a willingness to face hard facts. That is not to say that all of those reforms are perfect, or that Mitt Romney has not been vague about just which loopholes he plans to close in order to finance his proposed tax cuts and Ryan's proposed reforms. That is less important than the differences between Obama and Romney-Ryan on the direction in which they wish to take the country. Voters generally agree that Obama has us on the wrong track—even those who like some of what the president has done by and large concede that an economy with prolonged high unemployment and eye-watering deficits approaching a financial cliff, is headed in the wrong direction. The Romney-Ryan details matter less than that they have committed themselves to changing that direction by, among other things, preserving entitlements as we will come to know them, entitlements we can afford.

There you have it: Obama, bankruptcy, and an unpleasant, forced end to entitlements as we know them, or Romney-Ryan and the preservation of entitlements that protect the elderly and disadvantaged, and that are sustainable for generations to come. Like Walter Matthau, Barack Obama is out of money, and has no plan to cut spending or to raise more without throwing us into another recession or worse. Unless he plans to find the equivalent of a rich widow, he should leash his attack dogs and offer some positive alternative to what Romney and Ryan are offering, rather than more of the policies that have brought us so close to financial disaster. Negative ads and squabbles over details are diversions from a debate over how to enable entitlements to accommodate our changing demographics and straitened finances, and a discussion of who would take the nation in the right direction. That is our real entitlement: to a debate on the relative merits of Obama's "plan" to do nothing and Paul Ryan's plan for reform.

—Irwin M. Stelzer



# Fighting to Win

The Romney-Ryan ticket welcomes a battle over entitlements.

BY STEPHEN F. HAYES

*Waukesha, Wis.*  
So much for conventional wisdom. These things were considered either highly unlikely or impossible before August 10: Mitt Romney picking Paul Ryan as his running mate; the Republican presidential ticket choosing to campaign on Medicare reform; and Republicans actually winning that political fight.

But Mitt Romney did pick Paul Ryan as his running mate. And the new Romney-Ryan ticket is, in fact, choosing to fight on Medicare reform. “Usually Republicans are talking about a lot of other things, but Medicare’s one of those that’s very important to talk about,” said Romney at a fundraiser Thursday in Greer, South Carolina. “We want this debate,” said Ryan, in an appearance the night before at his alma mater, Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. “We need this debate. And we will win this debate.”

It’s early, but so far Ryan is right.

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

Republicans, for the moment anyway, are winning the debate about Medicare reform.

One thing is clear: The campaign today is not the campaign it was before Paul Ryan was chosen. The 2012 presidential election will not be a narrow referendum on President Obama and the economy. Instead, it’ll be a bigger debate—about the short-term economy, to be sure, but also about the future of the country and about presidential leadership.

The Romney case is a simple one: On the economy, President Obama led and failed. On foreign policy, he led from behind (some might say “followed”). And on deficits, debt, and entitlement reform, he didn’t lead at all.

After Romney won the Wisconsin primary on April 3, effectively winning the Republican nomination, his campaign focused on the unemployment rate and the near-term economy, making the case that “Obama Isn’t Working.” When Gallup started its daily presidential tracking poll on April 15,

Romney was leading Obama 47-45 percent. On August 10, the day before Romney formally announced Paul Ryan as his running mate, the race was tied, 46-46 percent. The RealClearPolitics average over that same timeframe had Obama growing his lead slightly, from 46.8-44.2 percent (+2.6 points) on April 15 to 48.3-44.1 percent (+4.2 points) on August 11. In the 10 polls taken by media organizations over the month before Ryan was picked, Romney was up in just 1, and in others he was behind by as much as 10 points. The day before Ryan was announced, NBC’s *First Read* declared: “It’s not even a race—Obama’s ahead.”

On its own, that’s not surprising; leads in presidential races come and go. But what made it remarkable, and worrisome for the Romney campaign, was that Obama grew his lead as the country’s already poor economic condition deteriorated further. Over those four months, Americans saw disastrous unemployment reports—with average jobs gains of less than 100,000 per month—and virtually every discussion

NEWS.COM

of the economy included the possibility that the United States would slip back into recession. Whatever the appeal of running safe, of running as the default alternative to an ineffective president, it plainly wasn't working.

If the change in course was clear the moment the world learned that Paul Ryan would be Romney's running mate, it was dramatically underscored at a homecoming rally here in Ryan's native Wisconsin the following day.

The event itself was just what the Romney campaign hoped it would be—a raucous affair that energized both the crowd and the candidates. An emotional Paul Ryan spoke warmly of his upbringing in Janesville and implored the audience to work hard to defeat President Obama. The crowd was filled with the kind of giddy excitement that results in awkward hugs and high-fiving with strangers. Romney, in what was perhaps the best speech of his campaign, told the audience why he'd chosen Ryan and touched on the themes of the big campaign to come.

But the crowd in Waukesha was oblivious to the real news, which was delivered quietly to the Blackberys and iPhones of the reporters covering the campaign. "I wanted to advise you that Congressman Ryan will be visiting central Florida next weekend," wrote Brendan Buck, a Romney campaign communications adviser assigned to Ryan. "There, he will highlight President Obama's record of slashing Medicare for current Florida seniors to fund Obamacare. He will also note that the Romney-Ryan ticket is the only one with a bipartisan plan to strengthen Medicare for today and tomorrow's seniors."

The brief email included an excerpt from an interview that Romney and Ryan had given to *60 Minutes*. Said Ryan:

My mom is a Medicare senior in Florida. Our point is we need to preserve their benefits, because government made promises to them that they've organized their retirements around. In order to make sure we can do that, you must reform it for those of us who are younger. And we think

these reforms are good reforms. They have bipartisan origins. They started from the Clinton commission in the late '90s.

The email was notable for two reasons. First, it signaled that the Republican ticket, contrary to early speculation, planned to go on offense on the issue that was supposed to bury them. Second, it demonstrated the challenges they would face in making their case through a skeptical media. Ryan's words about his mother, meant to reassure seniors, were edited out of the interview that aired on television.

Perhaps the show couldn't spare an additional 30 seconds of its 60 min-

**Why is the Romney campaign so confident about its ability to win the argument on Medicare? Because they have reframed the debate. The reality is that Medicare changes are coming. It's no longer possible for Democrats to pretend that the debate is over maintaining Medicare in its current form or reforming it.**

utes to include what were arguably the most important words uttered over the course of the interview—a case that demonstrates the bipartisan roots of Ryan's "premium support" plans and his personal investment in preserving Medicare for seniors. Time constraints, you know.

No matter, later in the week the campaign announced that Ryan would be taking his mother, Betty Douglas, to Florida with him. And Ryan wasn't going just anywhere in Florida, he was going to The Villages, "Florida's Friendliest Retirement Hometown."

Why is the Romney campaign so confident about its ability to win the argument on Medicare—or at least neutralize attacks from Democrats? For one thing, they have successfully reframed the debate. The reality, of

course, is that Medicare changes are coming. It's no longer possible for Democrats to pretend that the debate is over maintaining Medicare in its current form or reforming it. Everyone understands that changes are necessary—including Obama, who has acknowledged that Medicare will go "broke" without reform even as he's steadfastly refused to pursue the kind of long-term structural reform required. Still, Obama included some short-term changes to Medicare in his health care overhaul, including reductions in payments to providers and cuts to funding for Medicare Advantage.

There has been some awful reporting on Medicare and Ryan's reforms. But pretty much every piece includes at least some mention of these Obamacare cuts, often prominently. This was the lead of a *Wall Street Journal* that ran Wednesday: "With Medicare now at the center of the presidential campaign, an emerging point of contention is the \$716 billion reduction over 10 years in the program's growth enacted as part of President Barack Obama's health-care law." So the debate, at least for political purposes, is no longer Current Medicare vs. Risky Republican Reforms; it's now Obamacare vs. the Ryan-Romney Reforms.

There's another reason for the campaign's confidence: Republicans have won such a debate before, in Florida. Marco Rubio did it two years ago. Running for the Senate, he campaigned unapologetically on many of the reforms in Paul Ryan's Roadmap. "You have to start by defining the goal," Rubio tells me. "We want to keep the program for those who are current beneficiaries, and we want to save it for future generations."

As a candidate, Rubio did this in a direct and forthright way. "Tackling the issue of the federal debt is going to require significant entitlement reforms," he said in a debate on *Fox News Sunday* on March 28, 2010. "That means programs like Medicare, Social Security, and Medicaid have to be reformed if we hope to save them so that they exist for my generation. That means we are going to call upon people

my age—I turn 39 in May—and people that are far from retirement to make difficult but important and necessary choices to ensure that the runaway growth in entitlement programs and federal spending does not diminish our future or bankrupt America.”

Said Rubio: “A great starting point for this conversation is the Ryan Roadmap.” He added: “I’m proud to have Representative Ryan’s endorsement in this campaign.” Rubio made clear that the reforms would not affect current seniors. “If you’re 55 years of age or older, or close enough to retirement—55 is the number that the Ryan plan uses—I think this is off the table. We’re not talking about you.”

Seven months later, one of Rubio’s two opponents, Florida governor Charlie Crist, used Rubio’s words from this interview in a television ad that was part of a relentless campaign of demagoguery. Most of Crist’s attack focused on Social Security rather than Medicare, but the arguments are similar. “Work longer, get by on less,” intoned a scary voice. “That’s the Marco Rubio retirement plan. Rubio wants to raise the Social Security retirement age. That means you’ll work harder and longer for your money.” Rubio, the ad continued, wants to “cut benefits” and “balance the budget on the backs of seniors.”

Rubio responded with a substantive refutation of the misleading claims in the ad. But he didn’t stop there. As he did almost every time he talked about entitlement reform, Rubio personalized the issue—talking about his own mother and explaining that he wouldn’t do anything that would affect the benefits she’d earned. “Anytime you can take a theoretical argument and apply it to someone, that’s better, particularly if it’s someone in your own life,” Rubio says. “The truth is it makes me care about the issue on a personal level, not just a political level. It’s important to show that. We all have someone we know on Medicare or Social Security.”

This worked for Rubio. As Crist’s demagoguery intensified, Rubio’s internal tracking polls showed him maintaining his leads among key demographic groups that he would

win on Election Day. On the specific question of who would better protect Social Security, which Rubio’s pollster tested for the final two weeks of the campaign, when Crist focused on the issue to the exclusion of virtually everything else, Rubio’s position eroded only slightly—from 32 percent to 28 percent—and he still ended up higher than either of his opponents. Those same internal polls showed Rubio with 35 percent of the 65-and-older vote at the beginning of October and 34 percent at the end of the month. Over that timeframe, Rubio increased his support among voters age 18-34, from 30 percent to 45 percent. Exit polls taken on Election Day affirm this trajectory, showing Rubio ultimately won seniors with 50 percent of the vote and 18-29-year-olds (a slightly different cohort) with 36 percent of the vote.

It’s early, again, but it may be working for Romney and Ryan. The glee Democrats expressed in the immediate aftermath of the Ryan announcement

has given way to a slightly more circumspect view. Matt Miller, a veteran of the Clinton White House, used his *Washington Post* column to urge Democrats to attack Romney and Ryan broadly, and to warn them about the fight over entitlement reform: “But if Democrats spend all their energy on Medicare—and don’t knock out the GOP ticket’s undeserved reputation for fiscal responsibility—they’ll find themselves in unexpected peril as the race heads to the fall.”

Ezra Klein, a liberal columnist at the same paper, worried that the Obama plan to elevate Ryan could “backfire more disastrously than they have ever imagined” if Ryan helps Mitt Romney get elected and then implements his reforms.

Too much focus on Medicare for Democrats? Republicans could campaign on entitlement reform and win? A running mate who actually will affect the outcome of a presidential race? So much for conventional wisdom. ♦

## Ryan’s Raiders

The GOP class of 2010 is the key to his influence.

BY FRED BARNES

**P**aul Ryan has an army. It’s also known as the House Republican freshmen, 87 strong and dedicated to the proposition that conservative reform is not only possible but achievable, so long as Mitt Romney is elected president.

Without his army, Ryan would still be an influential House member, but not Romney’s running mate. His budget and plan for saving Medicare would be languishing. The 2010 election changed everything. It sent 87 recruits to Ryan, while moving the ideological balance in Washington to the right. Ryan transformed them into an army of followers. They elevated

him and made him a political star.

Now, for Ryan’s reforms (as revised by Romney) to be enacted, his army must be reelected in November—most of it, anyway. The prospects look good. Six freshmen have no Democratic opponent. The Democrat facing Steve Womack of Arkansas dropped out in June after admitting he’d lied about serving in a Green Beret unit in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Democrats in Arkansas may have a death wish. Tim Griffin, a freshman Republican from Little Rock who was already favored, got further help when his Democratic challenger, Herb Rule, was arrested on a drunk driving charge in mid-August. Rule says he’s not dropping out.

Here’s how two experts see things.

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THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

David Wasserman of the Cook Political Report, the premier analyst of House races, lists at least 70 of the freshmen as favored to win. Of the others, 2 are likely to lose, 2 are in districts that lean Democratic, and 10 are in tossup seats. One freshman lost in a primary, another will lose in a merged district in Arizona that pits 2 members of the class of 2010 against one another, and a third might.

If all 17 lose in November, that will be a serious setback, but not a total calamity. It would be par for the course. A dozen freshmen elected in the 1994 Republican landslide lost their seats in 1996. Short of a tectonic shift in the political landscape, not all 17 will lose. They include a number of exceptional candidates—Allen West in Florida and Chris Gibson and Nan Hayworth in New York, to name three—in marginal districts.

Brian Walsh of the American Action Network (AAN), a pro-Republican super-PAC, puts the freshmen in three groups. Roughly one-third of their districts have become more Republican through clever reapportionment by GOP state legislatures.

Robert Hurt of Virginia is an example. He defeated an incumbent Democrat, 51 percent to 47 percent, in 2010. But his redrawn district is rated “solid R” by Wasserman. So he’s a shoo-in. Renee Ellmers of North Carolina would have been vulnerable after winning by 1,483 votes in 2010. Her district is safely Republican now.

Another one-third consists of first-termers in red states where the Romney-Ryan ticket should win overwhelmingly. Even those who won narrowly two years ago, like Martha Roby of Alabama and Kristi Noem of South Dakota, are out of reach for Democrats in 2012 in red states.

Walsh’s third group is the problem: freshmen in blue or purple

states. Orphan states where President Obama will run strongly and Republicans won’t mount a challenge are the most worrisome. House GOP whip Kevin McCarthy is raising funds to aid candidates in California and Illinois. They’ll need the help.

New York was a bonanza for Republicans in 2010 with six freshmen elected. Now it’s an orphan state. AAN, well financed and nimble, is concentrating on tight House races, most involving freshmen. “They won with the wind at their back [in 2010],” he says. To win reelection,



*Budget Chairman Ryan assembles his troops.*

“they are going to have to run very good campaigns.”

Most are capable of that. The 2010 class is different from its media caricature. They aren’t Tea Party dominated. Only 15 joined the Tea Party Caucus in the House. Thirty-five never held elective office before, thus aren’t career hacks. Their election had an enormous impact. “It made the whole [Republican] conference more conservative,” a GOP official says.

Some were instantly ready to line up with Ryan. “I ran on the Roadmap,” the first version of Ryan’s reform budget, says Hayworth. “One of the biggest thrills I had was sitting next to Ryan at a meeting,” she says. Hayworth, whose district extends to Albany from the suburbs of New York City, describes herself as a “libertarian Republican.”

Months before the 2010 election,

Ryan, McCarthy, and Majority Leader Eric Cantor made plans to brief the newcomers on the conservative reform agenda. Republican candidates had been warned off it during the 2010 campaign by Republican strategists in Washington. “I was aghast,” Hayworth says, when she heard that advice. She ignored it.

Beginning in early 2011, 30 meetings were held in the conference room of McCarthy’s Capitol office, chiefly for the freshmen but also for other House Republicans. These were hour-long “listening sessions”: They listened to

Ryan. Robert Costa of *National Review* dubbed the attendees “students of Paul Ryan.”

Ryan has an unusual teaching style. He suffers fools gladly. Peter Roskam, the deputy Republican whip, told me Ryan reminds him of what St. Ambrose, the 4th-century bishop of Milan, said about proposing rather than imposing. He presents an idea, not an argument. It works.

In those sessions, Ryan’s army was born. His budget had been

poorly received by Republican veterans in 2009 and 2010. It had only a handful of cosponsors. The freshmen changed that. In 2011, when the budget, including the reform of Medicare, passed the House, only one freshman, David McKinley of West Virginia, voted no. This year, when it was approved again, four did. House Speaker John Boehner, quietly allied with Ryan, was fully behind it. Better yet, Romney embraced it.

Ryan, his army, and conservative reform—less government, reduced spending, lower taxes, entitlements rescued from bankruptcy—are now embedded in the political culture. Ryan is running in two elections. If he and Romney lose, Ryan is likely to be reelected to his House seat. And most of his army will return. Washington has changed. ♦

# He Does Retail, Too

Paul Ryan's a more experienced pol than people realize. **BY JOHN McCORMACK**

*Oxford, Ohio*

**P**aul Ryan stepped onto the stage at a rally in Waukesha, Wisconsin, on August 11, the day Mitt Romney named him his running mate, and wiped away a few tears. “Hi, Mom!” Ryan said, his voice slightly choked up as he looked out into a sea of 10,000 faces, including hundreds of family members and friends.

With Mitt and Ann Romney standing behind him, the 42-year-old Ryan regained his composure and erased any doubt that a man who'd never won statewide office was ready for a national campaign. “Here's our choice: Do we want that opportunity society with a safety net?” Ryan asked, holding a microphone but no notes. “Or do we want to go down the path of debt, doubt, and despair? Do we want to copy Europe?”

“No!” the crowd yelled in unison with Ryan. “It's going to take leadership. It's going to take courage. It's going to take another election just like we had in 2010 to get this right,” Ryan said. “And when we do, we will look back at this moment . . . as the day when our generation turned it around so our children could have a better future.”

The seven-term Wisconsin congressman has a reputation as a budget expert lost in the policy weeds. But during his nationally televised speech in Waukesha, Ryan revealed to the country that he's also a good retail politician who is capable of making a big-picture—and moral—case against debt, deficits, and President Obama's willful neglect of this looming crisis.

*John McCormack is a staff writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.*

Mitt Romney knew that this was exactly the candidate he was getting when he tapped Ryan to be his running mate. The two men developed a rapport while campaigning together at town hall meetings, a setting in which Ryan thrives, during the run-up to the April 3 Wisconsin GOP presidential primary.

Since unveiling his Medicare-reforming budget, Ryan has fielded just about every hostile question imaginable about it at two dozen hour-long meetings with voters in Wisconsin. The sessions were recorded on video by Democratic trackers, but the operatives never captured a single clip of Ryan rattled or stumped.

Ryan was able to effortlessly transition to the presidential campaign because he's been running a national campaign promoting his budget for the past two years. When two protesters charged the stage at the Iowa State Fair the day after the Waukesha event, Ryan was unfazed. “It's funny, because Iowans and Wisconsinites, we like to be respectful of one another,” Ryan said with a smile. “These ladies must not be from Iowa or Wisconsin.”

Ryan's swing state vice presidential tour brought him to many places where he had a personal connection. On August 14 in Colorado, where Ryan has hiked and fished with his family for two decades, he told the crowd of all the “brookies and rainbow” he's caught and the “fourteeners”—mountains of 14,000 feet or more—he's been climbing for 20 years. On August 15 at Miami University of Ohio, Ryan's alma mater, he talked about his favorite local food and the time he was hurt at the ice rink down the street. “That's why I have a cleft chin—14 stitches playing

hockey right over there.” And then Ryan started landing punches against President Obama.

“The president, I'm told, is talking about Medicare today,” Ryan told the crowd in Oxford, Ohio. “We want this debate. We need this debate. And we will win this debate.” Ryan hit Obama for “raiding” \$716 billion from Medicare to pay for Obamacare. “Take a look at your paycheck next time. Look at that line on your paycheck that [reads] payroll taxes,” Ryan said. “You see, our payroll taxes from our paychecks are supposed to go to two programs—Social Security and Medicare, period. Now, because of Obamacare, they're also going to pay for Obamacare.” The crowd booed. “It's not right. He knows it. He can't defend it.”

The Medicare issue was supposed to be the downfall of the Romney-Ryan campaign but, for now, Republicans seem to be successfully turning the issue against Obama. The Obama campaign is on defense—it certainly didn't want the words “Obama's Medicare cuts” and “Obamacare” to be the center of the debate. And the Romney-Ryan Medicare message already seems to be penetrating.

While Ryan was placing an order at the Original Hot Dog Shoppe in Warren, Ohio, on Thursday, an elderly woman yelled to get Ryan's attention.

“Hey, Paul!” she shouted. “Good luck! Kick ass!”

Erma, from Howland, Ohio, the senior citizen urging on Ryan, said she wasn't concerned Ryan and Romney would end Medicare as we know it. “I don't believe it,” she told me. “Because Obama has a bigger plan to rob Medicare of \$617 billion.”

“Oh, don't believe none of that stuff,” Eleanor Costantino, another senior citizen at the hot dog shop, told me when I asked her if she was worried about Romney-Ryan taking away Medicare. “It's all nothing but a bunch of lies!”

“He's going to save Medicare,” chimed in Eleanor's friend Karen Combs from Cortland, Ohio. “There's \$700 billion under Obamacare coming out of Medicare, and seniors should be more frightened over that.” ♦

# Can Romney Take Richmond?

A close campaign in Virginia.

BY MICHAEL WARREN

*Manassas, Va.*

August 11 had been a long day. By about 5 P.M., when the Romney for President bus reached this Washington suburb, Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan had traveled over 200 miles throughout Virginia. The new Republican ticket had held big rallies in Norfolk and Ashland, north of Richmond, ensuring plenty of coverage in the state's three largest media markets. For the final rally, Ryan walked onstage to big cheers and took the microphone. His shoulders slumped a little. His voice was hoarse. He stumbled through his closing lines.

"When we do this, we're going to get this done, and we're going to do it because we have a man who's running for president who has the courage, the integrity, the honesty, the experience," Ryan said. Even for

a guy who sleeps only a few hours in his congressional office at night and works out daily, the breakneck schedule was exhausting.

But if Romney and Ryan expect to defeat Barack Obama and Joe Biden in November, they will almost certainly have to carry Virginia's 13 electoral votes, and that will almost certainly mean more long days campaigning across the Old Dominion. The RealClearPolitics average of polls shows Obama leading Romney in Virginia by 0.7 percentage points, markedly down from the 7-point margin in

which Obama defeated John McCain there in 2008. Most observers agree Virginia will remain tight. In other words, Romney and Ryan have a lot of work to do here in the final three months of the race.

It wasn't always this hard for Republicans in Virginia, at least at the presidential level. Between 1952 and



*At the Romney rally in Manassas*

2004, the state voted for the Republican ticket every time but once, in 1964. But the state has become less conservative and less rural, and Obama won it in 2008, thanks to big gains in Northern Virginia and increased voter participation among blacks and young people. Now, Virginia looks more like Ohio or Florida—a battleground state where campaigns have to fight for every independent vote.

Larry Sabato, director of the University of Virginia Center for Politics, says the task for Romney is to put the "pieces of the puzzle" together: the Hampton Roads, Richmond, and Washington suburbs and exurbs,

along with the rural regions of southwest Virginia, the Shenandoah Valley, and Southside. "The rural areas are still 20 percent of the vote in Virginia," Sabato says, and the people there are conservative. The difference this year is that Republicans in these parts of the state are more motivated than they were in 2008. Maximum turnout among rural Virginians could make all the difference.

What about gaining support from independents in the suburban and exurban areas? The Romney campaign is finding inspiration in Bob McDonnell, Virginia's popular Republican governor, who won in 2009 by 18 points. McDonnell won 53 percent of Northern Virginia voters just one year after Obama won the region with 59 percent. That doesn't

mean Virginia's guaranteed to go Republican again; voter participation is much higher in presidential elections among groups that tend to vote Democratic. Still, Romneypworld sees a lesson.

"Bob McDonnell ran the model campaign," says Ed Gillespie, a Romney adviser and veteran of Virginia politics who chaired McDonnell's campaign. McDonnell focused on kitchen table issues like jobs and the economy to appeal to independents

in Northern Virginia and elsewhere. Gillespie says Romney can win those independents with economic issues, too. A recent poll from WTOP radio in Washington shows Romney trailing Obama by only 2 points—48 percent to 46 percent—in Northern Virginia. Romney's jobs-centric message, that "Obama isn't working," could be keeping the region competitive.

Not surprisingly, Democrats still believe the overall environment gives Obama an edge in Virginia. "The president is marginally in the driver's seat," says one Virginia Democratic operative. Demographics, he says, are one factor. Hispanics are a growing share of Virginia's population,

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as are young people, particularly in Northern Virginia. And in regions like Northern Virginia and Hampton Roads, where the local economy is tied closely to the federal government, Ryan, the symbol of budget-cutting Republicans in Congress, could scare away voters.

That all may be true, but the Obama campaign's plan for Virginia mostly mirrors its national strategy: Turn out the Democratic base. One Obama advertisement found in Washington Metro stations in Northern Virginia illustrates this goal. "Do I believe the Supreme Court should overturn *Roe v. Wade*? Yes, I do," the sign quotes an ominous-looking Romney. Below that reads, "Mitt Romney: Too extreme for Virginia."

Furthermore, the Obama campaign has 27 field offices throughout the state, including 9 in Northern Virginia, 8 in Hampton Roads, and 3 around the college town of Charlottesville. Says the Democratic operative, "I think the Republican base is more energized than they were before, but Democrats are more organized."

But it's hard to look at the crowd in Manassas and think Republicans don't have a good chance. Thousands stood out in the hot August sun, waiting in lines wrapped around several blocks, to get a chance to see Romney and Ryan. Supporters spilled out of the expansive pavilion and into the streets. Those who couldn't get close enough to see the stage could watch the rally on a big screen erected on one corner. Governor McDonnell took to the stage to introduce Romney and Ryan, and the audience hailed in excitement. Folks in the back craned their necks to get a look. McDonnell quoted a pledge President Obama made at a recent campaign stop nearby.

"He said, 'If we don't win Virginia, I'm not going to be president again,'" McDonnell recounted. "Let's make that a promise he can keep." The cheers grew into a roar and the folks in the bleachers stamped their feet. To these Virginians, at least—and to a tired Paul Ryan—that sounded pretty good. ♦

# Obama's Labor Problem

The unions are unhappy campers.

BY MARK HEMINGWAY



*The Workers Stand for America rally: one Bill of Rights is not enough.*

**O**n Saturday, August 11, some 40,000 union members descended on the City of Brotherly Love for what was billed as the first-ever "Workers Stand for America" rally. The ostensible purpose of the rally—organized by the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and AFL-CIO—was to gather support for a "Second Bill of Rights," defined by IBEW president Ed Hill as "full employment and a living wage; full participation in the electoral process; a voice in the workplace; a high-quality education; a secure, healthy future."

These familiar liberal shibboleths sound rather anodyne and toothless

for a union rallying cry. Indeed, labor leaders at the rally were quick to clarify that these were broad policy sentiments, not specific demands. The Second Bill of Rights is a ginned-up excuse for the gathering's real purpose: firing a shot across the bow of the Democratic party.

Unions are very unhappy that the Democratic party decided to hold its convention in Charlotte, North Carolina—a right-to-work state that forbids compulsory unionism. Indeed, organizers in Philadelphia not so subtly included two news articles in the press kit. The first was a *National Journal* piece headlined "Unions Divert Democratic Convention Money to Rally for Worker Rights: The sour relations could cost convention fundraisers millions in lost contributions." The other was

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AP / JOSEPH KACZMAREK

a CBS News story: “Unions shifting money, resources away from Democratic convention.”

Which is not to say that relations between Democrats and their biggest supplier of campaign cash are openly hostile—at least not yet. The rally at Eakins Oval, about 200 yards from the famous “Rocky” steps, opened with a video montage that included Pat Gillespie of the Philadelphia Building and Construction Trades union condemning “teabaggers and Republican manipulators.”

Also speaking at the rally was Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, head of the Democratic National Committee, who was happy to regurgitate the obligatory platitudes: “The Second Bill of Rights is so incredibly important so that we make sure that we can reinforce our focus on fighting for the middle class,” she told the crowd. But much of her speech was a predictable Medicare jeremiad against her fellow House Budget Committee member, Rep. Paul Ryan, who had been announced that morning as Mitt Romney’s running mate.

Offstage, Wasserman Schultz’s support for the union agenda was less than full-throated. Mike Elk, a reporter for the left-wing *In These Times*, asked whether she supported the mayor of Charlotte’s position that public employees should have the right to opt out of paying union dues. “What I know is that Democrats are thrilled and excited about making sure that we put on the most open and accessible . . . political convention ever,” she said, dodging the question.

Aside from Wasserman Schultz, the other big-name speaker at the rally was AFL-CIO head Richard Trumka. Trumka is straining at the bit these days, having to constantly offer half-hearted defenses of the White House to his union brethren. One flashpoint between unions and Democrats is the Keystone XL pipeline, which would transport oil from Canada to refineries in Texas. The construction of the pipeline would provide lots of good union jobs and is also supported by Republicans. However, the Obama

administration’s fealty to progressive environmental groups has thus far prevented the pipeline from being built, angering unions and upsetting relations with Canada.

Asked by THE WEEKLY STANDARD about the Obama administration’s decision to hold up the pipeline, Trumka deflected the question. “Yeah, I think we can get it done in the second term,” he said, adding that building the pipeline and minimizing its environmental impact is not an “either-or” proposition.

The Keystone pipeline is just the latest example of how labor leaders’ lining up behind left-leaning politicians can put them at odds with the workers they supposedly represent. Union affiliation still tends to be tribal rather than political—many union members are socially conservative, and a nontrivial percentage vote Republican. You would never see the hundreds of American flags at an upscale progressive rally that you saw at Workers Stand for America.

When I asked Trumka whether union members’ support for Obama is waning because of the White House’s hostility to gun rights and the recent conflicts with the Catholic church, his nostrils started flaring so fast his trademark mustache was practically flapping in the wind.

“You know who Bryce Harper is? I’m tempted to say, ‘That’s a clown question, bro,’ but I won’t. In every election there’s a union difference. . . . I can go down gun owners, veterans, the elderly—anything you want to call, there was a major union difference” in determining the outcome.

No one doubts that union support for Democrats makes a difference in elections. The question is, in 2012 will the union difference be enough? The 2008 election was the biggest all-out political effort by unions in decades. Organized labor spent \$400 million, and the result, while convincing, was not a landslide. Union support for Obama wouldn’t have to go down much for Romney to win.

How’s this for an indicator? The week prior to Trumka’s trumpeting the “union difference,” the United

Mine Workers of America—which Trumka himself used to head—announced it was declining to endorse Obama thanks to the administration’s job-killing EPA regulations. The same union had enthusiastically endorsed him in 2008.

For their part, there are signs that Democrats are worried about the level of union support in this election. The day before the Workers Stand for America rally, the DNC quietly announced in a Friday afternoon news dump that it was moving all its money and banking business to Amalgamated Bank, a labor-owned institution with a troubled history.

Last year, the bank was subject to an FDIC enforcement action, owing to varieties of accounting chicanery designed to make the bank’s balance sheet appear stronger than it was. The bank’s low liquidity levels were resolved in part when two private equity companies, W.L. Ross & Company and The Yucaipa Companies, each took a 20 percent stake in Amalgamated. (The Yucaipa Companies is chaired by billionaire Ron Burkle, whose close friendship with Bill Clinton has consumed much tabloid ink over the years.)

Still, there are many indications that such sops to unions may be too little, too late, and that the Obama campaign won’t be able to amp up union enthusiasm to the levels it needs. “If you doubt that Republicans and labor can find common ground, consider the record of a governor named Romney—not Mitt, but his father, George,” the IBEW’s Ed Hill wrote in a *Philadelphia Inquirer* op-ed published the same day as the rally. “As governor of Michigan during the 1960s, he signed that state’s Public Employee Relations Act, guaranteeing government workers the right to organize and bargain collectively.”

It seems unlikely that Mitt Romney will adopt his father’s positions on organized labor, but labor leaders appear braced for the possibility that, come January, they’ll have to work with him whether they like it or not. ♦

# Sex and the City

Ten years of counseling at a crisis pregnancy center. BY EVE TUSHNET

For the past 10 years I've volunteered at the Capitol Hill Pregnancy Center, a pro-life Christian ministry in the troubled heart of Washington, D.C. Over this decade of listening to women in crisis, talking with them, helping them find the resources they need, praying with them, hugging them, sometimes inviting them into my home when they had no safe place to go, I've seen shifts in the culture of poor D.C. women. My own perspective has shifted as well. I wrote about my early experiences for *THE WEEKLY STANDARD* in 2003, after a year at the center; here is how I see the work today.

One of the first surprises I had, as a new counselor, was how often our clients were *not* considering abortion. Although we have recently noticed an increase in clients who are considering abortion, many of the women we see are willing to accept a child if one comes, and some are eager. (Their own mothers are much more likely to push, or even try to coerce, them into abortions.) Many have had abortions in the past and are adamant that they don't want to do that again.

At first I thought this meant we should focus our conversations on abstinence. And there are still many clients, for example the teenagers, for whom this is the best approach. But abstinence isn't a life goal. It's not a destination or a vocation. Motherhood is—it's a way to give and receive love, and to gain a sense of meaning and purpose beyond oneself. Something always beats nothing; unwed motherhood *now* beats possible marriage in the unimaginable future. You can tell a girl, in the evangelical

cliché, that she's "worth waiting for," but to many of our clients, waiting for marriage feels about as useful as waiting for Godot.

So now I try to concentrate on identifying people in our clients' lives who can help them view marriage to a good man as an imaginable, even achievable, goal. I try to offer them small concrete steps they can take toward the goal of creating a loving, stable family based on marriage.

What this involves differs from client to client. Again, with teens it really is mostly about abstinence, focusing on their schoolwork rather than on drama with boys, strengthening their relationships with people they know whose lives they admire (often grandmothers), and cultivating a spirit of prayer.

Other women really love and trust the guy they're with, but are fearful or negative about marriage for reasons even they often find hard to articulate. Poor women, just like rich women, believe that you shouldn't get married until you're "stable," until you're financially settled and emotionally "ready." But in the chaos of life in poverty, stability and readiness are a long time coming—and even longer if you've begun having children out of wedlock. Delayed marriage becomes no marriage at all.

Women who are in good relationships I try to connect with premarital counseling. This is an area where the churches have stepped up, but there is definitely room for improvement: Almost all the women I speak with who attend church regularly say that they "think" there's a marriage-preparation program at their church, but they're not sure. When I suggest premarital counseling as a possible first step, even women who were initially resistant to marriage often find

it extremely attractive. It's a way of making marriage real, something for normal people, not something for fairy tales and celebrities.

One fear many of our clients have is that marriage means giving up too much control to a man. These are women who have needed to be self-reliant all their lives, and who have only rarely seen men keep their promises. Their strength has become defensiveness and instinctive mistrust. The decision to seek marriage counseling is a way for them to assert themselves, guide the relationship, and move toward marriage with self-determination rather than simply capitulating to the man's wishes.

That's assuming the man wants to marry, which he often does. Many times, the baby's father wants the child and wants a wedding much more than the pregnant woman. Men, too, long for purpose and meaning in their lives; like women, they long to sacrifice and to love. But unlike women, they don't control who gets to care for the babies. A poor, unwed father is almost entirely dependent on the woman if he wants to see his child. His power to break his promises, to walk away from his kids in a way women simply can't and won't, is matched by his powerlessness if he wants to keep those promises against the will of a mistrustful mother.

Men were hit hard by the tanking economy, making them less attractive marriage prospects; the women we see are more likely to be working than their children's fathers. Many men are locked up (as of 2008, one out of every nine black men between the ages of 20 and 34 was incarcerated) or have a prison record. They're taken away from their kids and returned, years later, broken and unable to get legal work. In my opinion, one of the biggest pro-family policies we could institute in America would be to lock up fewer nonviolent offenders and switch to forms of punishment short of incarceration. For many lower-level drug offenses, the emphasis should be on treatment and rehabilitation, not on imprisonment. While some changes may be forced by budget

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crises, just dumping ex-cons on street corners isn't a long-term solution either. Reintegration of ex-offenders is essential if we want to strengthen marriage in low-income communities.

Often when I ask our clients to talk about married people whose lives they admire, they name grandparents—or pastors. The black church, though often led by women, is also a place where black men are found—Christ-centered, married men—in positions of leadership. But church attendance for lower-class white adults has been dropping. One recent study found that only 23 percent of the least-educated whites went to church at least once a month, while 46 percent of college-educated whites did. Though little is known about class-based trends for African Americans, I think I've noticed a parallel drift in our clients. Ten years ago we did see women who no longer went to church, but they usually had some reason for it—often a somewhat cagey reason (“Everyone there was a hypocrite,” for instance) or a very practical reason (long hours at work or a new baby). Now I see many young women who are unchurched and without apparent guilt or defensiveness about it. But trust and hope in God have not been replaced by trust or hope in

anything else. These women are even more alone in the world than those who do believe that their lives, however rocky or misspent, are ultimately in God's hands.

There have been other shifts. The influx of African immigrants to the District brought us a client base with relatively straightforward needs: They're mostly married, just really poor.

There's been a noticeable increase in openness about mental illness. Ten years ago I almost never heard a client say that she took medication for depression or ask me about mental-health resources. Now I speak with a client about mental illness once or twice a month. This is the result of continuing attempts to make mental-health services culturally sensitive and available to poor and minority sufferers; yet increased mental illness may also, as Andrew Solomon has speculated in *The Noonday Demon: An Atlas of Depression*, be another consequence of the contemporary crisis of meaning.

In my own practice I've become more aware of the desire our clients have to give back. We encourage clients to bring in their own gently used baby clothes and equipment to donate to others. Some of the best counseling I've seen has been done in the waiting

room, as clients reassured one another and shared tips on finding everything from housing to a good church.

At least two clients have given back in the most dramatic way possible: Janet Durig, the center's director, told me, “Twelve years ago a girl came for a pregnancy test and it was positive. After changing her mind about aborting her baby, she became a regular client of the CHPC for many years to follow.” This young woman eventually married a man who adopted her son—and returned to the center saying, “It is time to give back.” Today she counsels other women in similar situations. Another woman came in planning an abortion. She didn't change her mind. But she remembered the center later, when she began to seek spiritual healing from the abortion. Today she is one of the facilitators of the center's post-abortion program.

Janet has met several kids born to women who initially came to the center planning to abort if their tests were positive. Both of us have watched families progress and couples come together in marriage—sometimes with a lot of bumps along the road, and not always to the tune of “first comes love, then comes marriage, then comes the baby in the baby carriage.” We've seen grandchildren reconnect with grandparents, pastors mentor struggling couples, and relatives and godsisters step in where parents were unwilling to help.

When I started counseling I saw our work as serving the mother-child dyad. I wanted to help the woman and save her unborn baby. Over time I began to see more and more the frayed communal fabric in which these women and children are wrapped. I began to appreciate the connections they lacked—to their own fathers, to their children's fathers, to happily married couples who could serve as models, to churches where they were nurtured and shown God's love. Now I see my job primarily as helping women find people in their own communities who can give them support, advice, and most of all the hope that married love is possible. ♦

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# Medicare Jujitsu

*How Romney and Ryan are turning  
the Democrats' favorite campaign attack against Obama*

BY YUVAL LEVIN

In the wake of Mitt Romney's selection of Paul Ryan as his running mate, conservatives and liberals seemed almost equally happy. To the right, the pick represented a bold decision to make a forthright case against President Obama's vision for the country and to champion solutions to the problems that the president has only made worse. Romney had put his party's best policy thinker and one of its best communicators on his ticket and was raring to make his case to voters. To the left, it seemed like a sop to conservatives that would force Romney to defend a policy vision the public would not buy. Romney had put his party's most controversial budget cutter on his ticket and ran the risk of being tagged with Ryan's parsimony.

They cannot both be right. But they do both think they are right, and look likely to act on that conviction. That very fact will tend to counteract the chief weakness of the Romney campaign thus far and to reinforce the chief weakness of the Obama campaign.

Romney now looks set to run a campaign built around a stark and specific critique of Obama's economic failures hitched to a relatively vague but distinctly conservative alternative vision focused on enabling growth in the near term and reforming entitlements in the long term. Obama looks set to run a campaign built around a highly detailed critique of a few conservative ideas (not

all of which his opponent has actually championed) and a slash-and-burn offensive against Romney and Ryan as individuals.

If the first week of the Romney-Ryan ticket was any indication, this is not going to work very well for the Democrats. The Ryan pick, and the ensuing liberal glee, almost immediately set off a debate about Medicare for which it soon became apparent that the Democrats were woefully unprepared.

Medicare has been a favorite issue of the left for decades. As the program's spending has ballooned out of control, Democrats have used every Republican attempt to rein it in as an opportunity to paint the GOP as the enemy of the elderly—telling seniors that their benefits were threatened, and scaring Republicans away from reforms. But Democrats have grown so comfortable with Medicare demagoguery that they have neglected to actually keep themselves on the safe side of the issue. And in their desperate effort to mask the immense cost of Obamacare

in 2010, they took more than half a trillion dollars out of Medicare over the coming decade to pay for their new health entitlement for younger Americans.

Republicans, with Ryan first among them, saw in this an opportunity to transform the Medicare debate, and starting with the FY 2012 House budget proposal in the spring of 2011, they have pursued a course that would leave all current seniors and near-retirees untouched while transforming Medicare for younger Americans into a premium-support system that would reduce costs through intense competition among insurers.

The reactions to Ryan's first Medicare proposal, and the course of a few subsequent special elections for House



*Who's afraid of the GOP? Not Grandma.*

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seats, gave Republicans an opportunity to hone their idea and their case for it in ways that mostly went unnoticed by the Democrats.

The only liberal charge against the plan that seemed to stick was that the premium-support benefit might not grow quickly enough to keep up with premium costs, potentially shifting costs to seniors. So proponents of premium support tweaked the idea to enable the benefit to be determined through an annual competitive bidding process among insurers, so that it would automatically keep up with premium costs. If competition succeeded in lowering costs, the government's budget outlook would improve, if not then it would not, but either way future seniors would be guaranteed a comprehensive benefit at no greater out-of-pocket costs than those incurred today.

Mitt Romney was actually the first to propose a version of this reform, in the course of the primary campaign, and a few weeks later Paul Ryan offered an essentially identical proposal together with Democratic senator Ron Wyden of Oregon—a liberal who has always been

open to pro-market health reforms. That Ryan-Wyden proposal, slightly tweaked, was also in the FY 2013 Republican budget passed this spring by the House.

Meanwhile, in the race to fill an open seat in Nevada's second congressional district in September 2011, Republicans had a perfect test case for their Medicare argument. Democrat Kate Marshall attacked Republican Mark Amodei for his support of the Ryan reforms, and Amodei answered with a series of ads pressing home two points that Republican polling had discovered to be powerfully effective: The Republican proposal would never affect any current seniors, and the Democrats had actually cut half a trillion dollars from Medicare. Amodei not only won the election, he won the senior vote comfortably and was deemed a more reliable protector of Medicare than Marshall in the final pre-election polls. His standing on Medicare was better after the campaign than it had been before his opponent ever told voters about the Ryan plan in the first place.

Obamacare on the one hand and the Romney/Ryan-Wyden proposal on the other stood to dramatically alter the political terrain of the Medicare debate. It is the

Democrats who now propose to cut current seniors' benefits and access to care while still failing to avert the program's (and the nation's) fiscal collapse, and it is the Republicans who would protect current seniors' benefits and make them available to future seniors while saving the program from collapse through market reforms.

Most Democrats missed all of this and assumed that their old bag of tricks would make for a powerful attack against Romney on the issue in the fall. And when Romney chose Ryan—a leading voice for Medicare reform—they thought they

saw their chance to strike an early blow. They unleashed the usual nonsense: Romney-Ryan would end Medicare and increase seniors' costs. But they soon found themselves forcefully criticized in response. The Romney campaign unleashed a series of attacks, including a widely aired television ad, pointing out that Obama had cut Medicare to pay for his unpopular health

reform, and that the Romney-Ryan approach would not only leave today's seniors alone, it would save the program for future retirees.

Soon, the two sides were engaged in a debate regarding the minutiae of Obamacare's raid on Medicare. Having just called Paul Ryan the enemy of seniors, Democrats defended their cuts by saying Ryan had retained them in his budget (he didn't—he put the money toward the Medicare trust fund, while Romney would put it back into Medicare's operating budget; both would undo Obamacare's raid of Medicare). And once forced to acknowledge the cuts, they insisted that they were only cuts in fees to health care providers, not in benefits to seniors—though of course in a fee-for-service system, cuts to fees are cuts to services, which is the point of Romney and Ryan's larger reform away from fee-for-service insurance. By week's end, Democrats were struggling to demonstrate that they were no worse than Republicans when it came to protecting Medicare—hardly where they imagined their attacks on Ryan would take them.

They were unprepared in part because many on the



*Just whose hands are you talking about?*

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left almost certainly didn't realize until last week that Obamacare depended on such large Medicare cuts, and in part because they assumed they could get away with it since voters simply associated them with the popular program. Asked by George Stephanopoulos on August 12 whether the Obamacare cuts would harm Democrats' standing with seniors, former Democratic National Committee chairman Howard Dean said the cuts were real, but Romney couldn't make an issue of them because "nobody believes it. You can't convince people that a Democrat's going to cut Medicare. They don't believe that."

We shall see. But a fight over whether they would cut seniors' benefits is not the fight Democrats hoped for, and they now look likely to be denied what they imagined would be their most powerful issue of the election. Earlier this year, when she was asked what the Democrats' top three issues would be in the coming campaign year, Nancy Pelosi responded: "Medicare, Medicare, Medicare." So what's left?

Not much, it seems, because the other specific proposals on which the left imagines Romney will be vulnerable because of Ryan probably do not offer them friendlier terrain. On Social Security, Romney again follows the clever new Republican entitlement-reform recipe: Leave current seniors and those now over 55 entirely untouched and save the program for future retirees. In the case of Social Security, the retirement age would be gradually increased and cost-of-living increases for the wealthiest seniors slowed. Those two modest steps would be enough to save the program's finances, and no current seniors would have any reason to object since they're exempt.

On Medicaid, Romney would block-grant the federal portion of the program to the states and allow them far greater flexibility to alter the program's design. Ryan proposed a similar approach in his budget, with a particular spending trajectory that would grow with inflation and the population. He has also backed a higher growth rate in a separate proposal offered jointly with Democratic budget guru Alice Rivlin. Romney does not specify how the level or rate of the block grant would be set, but the key for both is the flexibility and efficiency made possible by block granting—a point easily made by analogy to the successful welfare reform of the '90s.

Beyond these, the Democrats will surely try to argue that Romney's and Ryan's general tax outlines (to broaden the base and lower rates) would benefit the rich, though Romney has plainly said he would not reduce the share of the tax burden borne by the rich. And they will surely try to argue that the long-term spending trajectory of the Ryan budget—with its fairly steep decline

in domestic discretionary spending as a share of the economy—is implausible, generally making the point with their own quite implausible assumption that cuts would be evenly distributed across all programs. But Romney has not offered long-range spending proposals of that sort, and he is after all President Obama's opponent in this race. Does Obama expect to win reelection by debating whether House Republicans would spend too little on the National Weather Service in 2034?

It is not easy to see how any of this offers much fruitful ground for Democratic attacks. In each case, an attack would require a great deal of conjecture and assorted unflattering assumptions, yet would invite a fairly specific and obvious question in response: Compared to what?

Their peculiar decision to focus on the minutiae of Republican policy proposals for addressing the country's economic and fiscal problems puts the Democrats in the position of highlighting the astonishing irresponsibility of their own plans for the future. President Obama has not only presided over the weakest economic recovery in decades, he is also willing to abide unprecedented deficits going forward, Medicare's rush toward insolvency and collapse, and an explosion of debt unlike anything America has ever seen, all of which threaten the fiscal future of the government and the economic future of the nation. He offers to do essentially nothing to address any of this, focusing instead on increases in the top two income-tax rates that would barely make a dent in the debt. He has ignored the recommendations of his own fiscal commission, refused to consider any structural reforms of entitlements, and pushed through the creation of yet another health entitlement that looks to be as unsustainable as those we have already.

In essence, Barack Obama is saying to Mitt Romney what Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner said to Paul Ryan in a budget committee hearing last winter: "We're not coming before you today to say we have a definitive solution to that long-term problem. What we do know is we don't like yours." Geithner's declaration of delinquency and failure was not well received, and it is hard to imagine that Obama's will fare much better.

By choosing Paul Ryan for his running mate, Mitt Romney has moved to sharpen this point for the public: The president has failed and has no plan for doing better. This election will not be a referendum on Paul Ryan or Mitt Romney, despite the Democrats' best efforts. It will be a referendum on a failed incumbent president. And Romney's choice of Ryan increasingly seems likely to lull the president into a misguided campaign of flailing counterpunches. Obama now seems set to spend the next three months merely telling voters what he is not. But they know what he is not. He is not serious. ♦

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# Unto the Hills

*The sober wisdom of Calvin Coolidge*

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BY GEOFFREY NORMAN

*Plymouth Notch, Vt.*

As historic sites go, the one at Plymouth Notch is decidedly low key, downmarket, and not much to look at. You could be forgiven for driving right on by if you were on your way to, say, Woodstock, one of the designer villages of contemporary Vermont, stylishly done over with Rockefeller money. Plymouth Notch belongs to a leaner time when, if there was money, there wasn't enough, certainly, to appease boutique tastes.

But Plymouth Notch is where President Calvin Coolidge was born and is buried. It has been preserved in its essentials so that when you visit, you hardly notice the very modest and inevitable commercialism of the place and admire, instead, the simple clapboard buildings, the sturdy barns, and the tidy cemetery where the 30th president is buried, in a grave marked by an austere granite stone no different from the one that would have been used if he had been a mere tradesman or farmer.

The grounds are restful and the view of the surrounding hills is serene and the overall mood is one of humility. Which makes it, of course, totally out of step with the times and our compulsion to elevate presidents into superstars or something, anyway, other than public officials from whom we expect prudent stewardship and sober leadership.

That was what Calvin Coolidge delivered, and so he was mocked in his own time and has been disparaged ever since as a president whose most notable achievement in the White House was the taking of daily naps, as when H.L. Mencken wrote that, "He slept more than any other President, whether by day or by night. Nero fiddled, but Coolidge only snored."

Dorothy Parker famously asked, when she heard Coolidge had died, "How could they tell?"

In the universe where Parker and Mencken toiled—along with a multitude of others who lacked their talent—Coolidge was the punch line to an endless joke about Babbitty. Even the Marx Brothers got in on the act when,

with Coolidge in the audience for a performance of *Animal Crackers*, Groucho yelled, "Isn't it past your bedtime, Calvin?"

This is the received history—the conventional wisdom—regarding Calvin Coolidge. What chopping down the cherry tree is for Washington and splitting rails is for Abraham Lincoln, so long naps and early bedtimes are for Coolidge.

And then there is his famously laconic personality. Among people who make a living and a reputation off their verbal skills, what could be more alien than a stinginess with words? To those who equate fluency with intelligence, Coolidge was, demonstrably, a man of meager brain, wit, and imagination.

The best that could be said of him was that he was a dull man perfectly suited to dull times. So, of course, a pompous columnist (namely Walter Lippmann) did say it: "[Coolidge's] active inactivity suits the mood and certain of the needs of the country admirably. It suits all the business interests which want to be let alone. . . . And it suits all those who have become convinced that government in this country has become dangerously complicated and top-heavy."

A professional wit, Will Rogers, said it better: "As president, Calvin Coolidge didn't do much of anything, but at the time, that's what we needed to have done."

The regime of boredom that was the Coolidge administration began in 1921 with the swearing-in of Warren G. Harding as president. Coolidge was his vice president, having risen to national prominence as governor of Massachusetts. Harding died after 28 months in office with his administration deep in scandal. Coolidge quickly cleaned up the mess left to him, and when he ran in 1924 he was elected overwhelmingly.

Coolidge was the antithesis of his true predecessor in the White House—Woodrow Wilson—who was an academic, an intellectual, and an idealist. Wilson was as profligate with grand words as Coolidge was sparing. In the opinion of people like Walter Lippmann, Wilson was the kind of man who ought to be president and would, in office, deliver America to its destiny.

By the end of his second term, Wilson had taken the nation into a European war that had cost it more than 100,000 dead. The inevitable fevers of war had spawned

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political witchhunts and prosecutions conducted by his attorney general, A. Mitchell Palmer. Among those prosecuted was Eugene Debs, who had run for president as candidate of the Socialist party in 1900, 1904, 1908, and 1912. A Debs speech opposing U.S. participation in what was eventually called World War I (we didn't know, yet, there would be another) got him charged under the Espionage Act of 1917, convicted, and sentenced to 10 years in prison.

Wilson still refused a request for Debs's pardon more than two years after the war ended. Warren Harding commuted Debs's sentence on December 23, 1921, saying that he wanted "that man to spend Christmas with his family."

If the nation was weary of war and its passions, it was also sick of the economic aftermath, which took the form of an especially severe recession. The voters wanted peace and prosperity—which Harding called a "return to normalcy"—and first he, and then Coolidge, gave it to them, chiefly by cutting spending and adopting broadly laissez-faire economic policies.

For which those who believed government's mission is to change the world (as, for instance, by making it "safe for democracy") would never forgive them.

Coolidge was the anti-Wilson in all things. This was not simply political calculation on his part. It went to the nature of the man, and you can get a feel for that nature when you walk the streets of Plymouth Notch. They are paved, now; one of the very few ways in which the place has changed since Coolidge was born here on July 4, 1872.

This is not a place where you are likely to grow up dreaming big dreams and nurturing visions of how you will one day go off and change the world. The land is tough and the climate is harsh. The soil is rocky and unyielding. Crops come hard and you water them with sweat. Winter arrives early and settles in. The thaw, when it appears, brings a sea of mud. The virtues this place teaches are hard work, thrift, and prudence.

When Coolidge left Plymouth Notch for schooling that was unavailable there, he was 13 years old, and he had absorbed thoroughly the lessons the place had to teach. He was an industrious, sober lad, schooled in hardship and

sorrow. When he was still a boy, his mother, who had been long ill with tuberculosis, called Calvin and his siblings to her bedside, "where we knelt down to receive her final parting blessing.

"In an hour she was gone. It was her 39th birthday. I was 12 years old. We laid her away in the blustering snows of March. The greatest grief that can come to a boy came to me. Life was never to seem the same again."

The passage is from Coolidge's autobiography, which is available in the gift shop at Plymouth Notch but probably not in most local bookstores. And more is the pity since the book is modest and, in places, laconically poetic. Coolidge may have been stingy with words but he could

use the few at hand with real feeling. On looking back at his childhood in Plymouth Notch, he wrote:

It was all a fine atmosphere in which to raise a boy. As I look back on it, I constantly think how clean it was. There was little about it that was artificial. It was all close to nature and in accordance with the ways of nature. The streams ran clear. The roads, the woods, the fields, the people—all were clean. Even when I try to divest it of the halo which I know always surrounds the past, I am unable to create any other impression than that it was fresh and clean.

And of his departure, he wrote this:

I was going where I would be mostly my own master. I was casting off what I thought was the drudgery of farm life, symbolized by the cowhide boots and every-day clothing which I was leaving behind, not realizing what a relief it would be to return to them in future years. . . .

I did not know that there were mental and moral atmospheres more monotonous and more contaminating than anything in the physical atmosphere of country life. No one could have made me believe that I should never be so innocent or so happy again.

Leaving that childhood behind, he made his way to Amherst, where he read the classics. After graduating he read the law, which was still possible in those days, before going into practice and, also, into politics. He plainly had a knack for it, getting himself elected to the state legislature, as mayor of Northampton, and to a chair in the state senate, which made him its leader. Upon assuming office, he advised other senators, "Be brief. Above all, be brief."

He was elected lieutenant governor of Massachusetts.



*Coolidge's official White House portrait*

A glorified no-show job. Then governor. It was in that office that he made his national reputation, calling out the National Guard to break a strike by the Boston police in September 1919.

In a letter to Samuel Gompers, the lion of the labor movement, Coolidge made himself abundantly plain: “There is no right to strike against the public safety by anybody, anywhere, anytime.”

In 1920, he was on the Republican ticket with Harding. His feelings about the vice presidency were, at best, equivocal. He was in Boston, getting ready for dinner, when he received a phone call informing him that he had been nominated, on the tenth ballot, at the Republican convention in Chicago.

He told his wife, who said, “You’re not going to take it, are you?”

“Well,” Coolidge said, “I suppose I’ll have to.”

His duties as vice president consisted mainly of presiding over the Senate and attending various ceremonial and official dinners around Washington, which he did cheerfully enough.

“Got to eat somewhere,” he said.

Coolidge was back home in Plymouth Notch on August 2, 1923, when President Harding died of a heart attack in California. The news arrived in the early morning, and Coolidge was sworn in before sunrise in the light of a kerosene lamp by his father who was a notary. After taking the oath, Coolidge went back to bed.

Coolidge finished Harding’s term, after which he first refused, then accepted, his party’s nomination for president and won handily in the 1924 election. But it was a time more of sorrow than celebration. In July, Calvin Coolidge Jr. died of sepsis after a blister he’d raised while playing lawn tennis on the White House grounds became infected.

In his father’s autobiography, there is this:

He was a boy of much promise, proficient in his studies, with a scholarly mind, who had just turned sixteen.

He had a remarkable insight into things.

The day I became President he had just started to work in a tobacco field. When one of his fellow laborers said to him, “If my father was President I would not work in a tobacco field,” Calvin replied, “If my father were your father, you would.” . . .

When he went, the power and the glory of the Presidency went with him.

Coolidge’s grief may have led him into a state of what would today be called depression. And Dorothy Parker might have wondered, “How could they tell?” But it does seem possible. Coolidge was less vital during his own term of office than he had been while finishing out Harding’s, and while he could have been renominated by his party and reelected by the voters, he declined to run and handed things off to Herbert Hoover, a man of far more activist inclinations, whom Coolidge held in fairly low regard, referring to him as “Wonder Boy,” and saying that Hoover “has offered me unsolicited advice for six years, all of it bad.”



*Plymouth Notch’s historic district today*

The debates over Coolidge’s place in history continue in some specialized arenas. He has, certainly, his advocates—among them Paul Johnson, who writes in *Modern Times* that he was “the most internally consistent and single-minded of modern American presidents.” According to Johnson, it was a Coolidge tactic “to mislead people into believing he was less sophisticated and active than he

was (a ploy later imitated by Dwight Eisenhower).” And in the Coolidge years, “the USA enjoyed a general prosperity which was historically unique in its experience or that of any other society.”

But . . . but . . . but. The prosperity was false, according to . . . oh, take your pick. The economic boom of the Roaring Twenties, according to the conventional wisdom, was a fiction that collapsed in the Great Crash and led to the poisoned decade of the Great Depression. And it was not entirely Hoover’s fault. Coolidge was around for the setup and did nothing to prevent it and may, in fact, have seen it coming. It was shrewdness, not wisdom or sorrow, that motivated him not to run for another term. He wanted to get out while the getting was still good.

Still, it was an era of peace and prosperity—the last such period in American memory. It was a time when seven murders in Chicago was big news and not simply another day at the office. When almost 90 percent of the world’s automobiles were owned by Americans. When the country was becoming electrified. Radio was becoming ubiquitous. People were beginning to travel by air, and the movies were beginning to talk. When, in America, just about anything seemed possible except the legal consumption of whiskey. Taxes were low, profits were high, and life

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was good. The president's contribution was to run an efficient, honest, frugal government, which Coolidge did.

When you visit Plymouth Notch, it is easy to imagine that Coolidge himself may have believed it could not last. Not because he had any special insight into stock market crashes and the economic effects of tariff wars and monetary contractions; though he may have.

More likely, because his roots were here, he understood in his bones that life is more hard work and sorrow than it is good times and plenty. And that nothing good lasts.

So while scholarly debate over his leadership is still possible, the popular verdict is pretty much sealed, and he is remembered for the naps and as someone who seldom said much, none of which was worth remembering since it comes down to the one quotation many people recognize, even if they don't recall it as coming from Coolidge.

"The business of America is business," he is supposed to have said, and that is considered the final proof that he was a philistine of the George Babbitt school.

Well, Coolidge did say it. Sort of. His actual statement was: "After all, the chief business of the American people is business." To which he added, "Of course the

accumulation of wealth cannot be justified as the chief end of existence." And then, in the last paragraph of the speech, Coolidge nailed it:

We make no concealment of the fact that we want wealth, but there are many other things that we want very much more. We want peace and honor, and that charity which is so strong an element of all civilization. The chief ideal of the American people is idealism. I cannot repeat too often that America is a nation of idealists. That is the only motive to which they ever give any strong and lasting reaction.

His own idealism was made of sterner stuff than the pabulum dispensed by present-day leaders. It celebrated the old virtues and was not calculated to make people necessarily feel good about themselves. As when he said: "The people cannot look to legislation generally for success. Industry, thrift, character, are not conferred by act of resolve. Government cannot relieve from toil."

But then, because he came from these hills, he did not spare himself. He had learned their lessons well, among them the virtue of humility, as when he appraised his time in office this way: "It is a great advantage to a president, and a major source of safety to the country, for him to know that he is not a great man."

Call that the last word. ♦

## Entrepreneurship: An Education Essential

By **Thomas J. Donohue**

President and CEO  
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

As we gear up for a new school year, it's worth highlighting a subject as essential to many young Americans' education and our collective future as reading, writing, and arithmetic—*entrepreneurship*. Unfortunately, it's often overlooked.

Facing slow economic growth and chronic joblessness, it's vital that we teach our students about enterprise and encourage them to pursue entrepreneurial career paths. Students are often told to forgo a business career in favor of something that advances the common good. What better way to contribute to the good of this nation than by creating employment and opportunity? American startups collectively add an average of 3 million jobs to the U.S. economy. Business and entrepreneurship are noble livelihoods, and it's time we build that mind-set into our education system.

The good news is that American

students seem to have a sense of the power and importance of enterprise—and an appetite for it. According to a nationwide survey of high school students conducted by the National Chamber Foundation and the Junior Achievement youth business organization, many of our nation's teenagers have a sophisticated understanding of how free enterprise functions in our society. These teens get that we need the energy of enterprise to fuel our prosperity.

Moreover, they want to be the ones driving it. Sixty-four percent say that they are interested in starting their own businesses some day. And many of them already have. Through ventures both simple and ambitious, more students are starting businesses. This initiative and self-sufficiency will serve them well as they continue their education, enter the workforce, and build the enterprises of tomorrow.

But the fact that some are already taking proactive steps reflects the concern of young people entering higher education or the workforce. Many high school students

are troubled about whether they'll find jobs when they need them. Nearly 90% are worried about their future prospects in this economy.

We need to match the ambitions and aspirations of our students with concrete opportunities to explore entrepreneurship throughout their education. We need to ease the worries of many young Americans by showing them they can take charge of their lives and careers through their own ideas and hard work. The U.S. Chamber's *Campaign for Free Enterprise* is partnering with local schools, chambers of commerce, and youth organizations such as the Young Entrepreneurs Academy and Empact. Our goal is to instill the principles of free enterprise in the next generation and empower students with the skills, knowledge, and experience to be successful.



100 Years Standing Up for American Enterprise

U.S. Chamber of Commerce



Navajo code talkers during the battle for Bougainville, 1943

# American Speak

*This tongue has many colors.* BY SARA LODGE

**I**n the musical *My Fair Lady*, snooty dialectician Henry Higgins searches in vain for “purity” of expression in English; he winces at the Scots and the Irish, shudders at the Cockney London accent. His parting shot is, however, fired across the Atlantic: *There even are places where English completely disappears, / In America they haven’t used it for years!* sings the Englishman.

Higgins’s prejudice is absurd, but his identification of American parlance as quite distinct from his own is correct. The difference between American English and British English is consider-

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**Speaking American**  
*A History of English in the United States*  
by Richard W. Bailey  
Oxford, 232 pp., \$27.95

**Trip of the Tongue**  
*Cross-Country Travels in Search of America’s Languages*  
by Elizabeth Little  
Bloomsbury, 320 pp., \$25

able—at least as wide as the difference between an American and an English muffin. Both are made from similar ingredients, but they feel very different on the palate. American English (it seems to my British ears) has greater rise and bounce. “Awesome!” was a word I first encountered at university, spoken by an American friend whose

optimism was legendary. “You rock! I’m psyched,” he would exclaim when I left homemade cake in the communal kitchen. “That sucks!” he commiserated when misfortune befell me.

All of these expressions were new and exciting. They had the ring of Walt Whitman’s poetic “whoop” and “holler”: the language of a nation that celebrates its own physical vigor. British people, it goes without saying, do not whoop. British English is a flatter language, of deadpan irony, subtle hint, and withering understatement. In a comic Internet “translation guide to Britspeak,” an anonymous American source explains that when British people say “With the greatest respect” they mean “I think you are an idiot.” This is true. Americans talk turkey. British people mince their words.

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In *Speaking American*, Professor Richard W. Bailey traces the development of a distinct “American English” from the 16th to the 21st century. The book takes a series of case studies of particular towns at particular periods in history to illustrate some of the mechanisms that have affected the changing use and perception of language in the United States.

In 1643, Roger Williams published (in London) *A Key into the Language of America*. His book described the languages spoken by the Native Americans in Rhode Island. He introduced words from Algonquian into English, but his project was also to introduce European intellectuals to the rich mesh of languages and dialects of the new continent. Communication was crucial for early settlers who relied on their contact with Native Americans. In this era, “linksters”—bilinguals who could act as links between communities speaking different languages—were highly valued.

It was not long, however, before setting limits on acceptable language became a tool for asserting power in the new colony. The Puritans in Massachusetts enacted a law to require deferential speaking. Quakers, whose leveling system of belief was reflected in universally using “thee” and “thou,” rather than the gradations of status involved in distinguishing “you” (respectful) from “thou” (familiar), faced punishments ranging from whipping to execution. Women might also fall foul of patriarchal linguistic rules. In 1637, Anne Hutchinson was banished for striving to address the male ministers in equal terms. “Speaking up” in early American history could constitute a criminal offense in ways unthinkable today. Yet the speech community was already distinctive for the “cluster of various ways of speaking” in which diverse groups could communicate across racial, educational, and linguistic lines.

Just as geology shapes landscape, so social geography shapes language. For example, Charleston, South Carolina, was, in the early 18th century, a sharply divided community. Only 12 percent of the residents in 1710 were white; 22 percent were black slaves and 66 percent were Native American. Most of

the white planters hailed from Barbados and, in the face of relative isolation, felt a very strong connection to England. They persisted in sending their sons to England to be educated at British public schools and universities, and maintaining “correct” English usage was important to them.

Thus, they continued using “prestige” forms of British English pronunciation much longer than other areas of America. Words like “calm,” “palm,” and “psalm” were pronounced “cam,” “pam,” and “sam.” The “r” sound in many words was genteelly omitted while the final “g” in verbs was politely dropped. Well into the 19th century, the eminent citizens of Charleston were goin’ on speakin’ at smaah paahties in a fashion that would be associated with upper-class Britons.

Meanwhile, elsewhere in America, markers of educated and uneducated speech had shifted, and some of the very habits that had been indicators of social prestige for Anglophiles, such as droppin’ that final “g,” were (ironically) fast becoming associated with vulgar speech habits. Professor Bailey’s book is a timely reminder that there is never a stable or absolute “correct” form of expression in any language: The quest for authoritative speech is always a negotiation between competing groups with different norms and values who may coexist separately, integrate peacefully, or force others to submit to their laws.

Linguistic movements often involve conflict. Bailey describes the New York Shakespeare riots of 1849 in which 30 people were killed and 170 badly injured. The topic that sparked the public mayhem, incredibly, was whether American or British English was the superior vehicle for performing Shakespeare.

Edward Forrest, an American acting star, was playing to the lower classes at the Bowery and claimed that, if Shakespeare had been alive, he would sound American. The English actor William Charles Macready, who was playing to upper-class houses at the Astor Opera House, used elegant 19th-century British diction and averred that this was how Shakespeare should be spoken. A

cross-weave of class and national sentiment turned a theatrical controversy into a public tragedy. Of course, what was at stake was not merely pronunciation, but ownership: British English speakers tended to find American speech “purer” before they lost the War of Independence; after 1800, jokes about the gaucheness of “Americanisms” (a new coinage in 1781) multiplied.

Bailey’s study extends to modern times and the influence of Los Angeles surfer and “Valley” slang through film and television. He makes the interesting point that Hollywood, through marketing an “invented vernacular,” has a disproportionate and often unconscious effect on what the world thinks America sounds like. For example, the 1990s television series *Beverly Hills 90210* was not at all representative of the mixed speech community in the ZIP code it claimed to depict, where nearly a third of residents were born outside the United States and the most frequently used language, after English, is Farsi. Such fantasies tend to perpetuate a global image of America as less linguistically and culturally diverse than it has always been.

*Speaking American* is the last work of an eminent academic, who, sadly, died shortly before he could see it into print. Doubtless, it would have been edited further had he lived, but it still makes a fascinating contribution to the study of American English.

For a chattier, youthful, and personal tour of America’s linguistic heritage, I can recommend *Trip of the Tongue* by Elizabeth Little. Little is a self-confessed polyglot swot: a lady who collects dictionaries of obscure languages the way other people collect passport stamps. She also, however, enjoys playing poker and has an extensive repertoire of expletives. When driving west from Seattle on Highway 101 to study the Makah language, she is so overwhelmed by the splendor of the Olympic Mountains that her obscenities reach sublime heights. Such idiosyncrasies and self-deprecating anecdotes enliven with humor a road trip that also has a serious intellectual agenda: to uncover America’s lesser-known languages.

Her journey takes her (among many other destinations) to Montana to

study the Crow language; to Arizona to explore Navajo; to South Carolina to trace Gullah; and to North Dakota to reconnect with the Norwegian speakers from whom her own family is descended. Everywhere she goes, she discovers rich seams of language glinting like rare minerals in the rocks of America. Her account of these languages and the communities that use them is beguiling.

I was fascinated, for example, by her description of Navajo, which is part of a vast family of Native-American languages that has relatives as far apart as Mescalero in the Southwest and Eskimo in Alaska. Navajo has a verbal matrix of such sophistication and precision that it would delight a computer programmer. Verbs in Navajo consist of stems, modified by a long series of possible prefixes. They can tell us not only when an action was performed and whether the perpetrator was singular or plural, but, with great clarity and specificity, what happened—did the chickens fly the coop all at once, or one by one?—and what the perpetrator was like.

The physical properties of objects affect verb stems: Rock, paper, and scissors would have their different morphologies embedded in the verbs used to describe how they act. Many Native-American languages contain calibrations of equal subtlety.

It is sobering to find, through Little's travels, that most of these remarkable and intricate languages are under threat of extinction. Linguist Michael Krauss has estimated that of the 175 indigenous languages still spoken in the United States, 90 percent are at risk. Although the 19th-century decree, reflected in early 20th-century educational policy, that "the Indian tongue must be put to silence and nothing but the English allowed in all social intercourse" is now discredited, the damage done by decades of negativism and neglect will be difficult to undo. Little reveals that Harvard teaches courses in Old Norse and Sanskrit but none in any Native-American language.

Everywhere in her tour of America, Little encounters vibrant language clusters: groups which cherish rich, mixed linguistic heritages. But, equally, she

meets with many people who, for various reasons (race, class, politics), have been forcibly made to abandon their linguistic heritage. This is heartbreaking, and one leaves this book with a strong conviction that it must stop.

Languages matter, not just because they are beautiful in themselves, but because they express a unique way of thinking and being in the world. Making a person ashamed of his or her birth language is akin to making that person ashamed of his or her birth family: It is a process of self-alienation that produces deep and lasting harm. Better than any tribal headdress or slave-sewn quilt (objects which American museums rightly treasure), a language can take us into a culture, as it has developed and been passed down over centuries,

and offer us a chance to engage with its living form, color, subjectivity, and creativity. A language is a time machine: When we lose it, we lose the chance to speak with our ancestors.

As Little points out, many of the words that seem most American originate in other languages. "Yankee" may derive from "Jan Kees" (John Cheese), an affectionate Dutch dig at New Englanders. Many American state names have Native-American roots. Languages other than English are much closer to "home" than many American citizens who think they speak only English realize. Both *Speaking American* and *Trip of the Tongue* are gentle and eloquent pleas for America to recognize and celebrate its linguistic diversity as a key strength. ♦



# Recycling to Nowhere

*The green economy meets the facts.*

BY IRWIN M. STELZER

**D**iana Furchtgott-Roth, former chief economist at the Department of Labor and now a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute (as well as a former colleague of mine at the Hudson Institute), likes to tilt at windmills, and in her latest book she has an opportunity to do so—and at actual windmills, no less.

In this year's revised edition of her earlier work, *Women's Figures*, Furchtgott-Roth marshals reams of data in an effort to debunk "the myth of women as victims"—an undertaking hardly for the faint of heart. *Regulating to Disaster* demonstrates equal courage: She attempts, successfully, to show that the concept of "green jobs" is

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## Regulating to Disaster

*How Green Jobs Policies Are Damaging America's Economy*  
by Diana Furchtgott-Roth  
Encounter, 168 pp., \$23.99

a fiction, that the 3.1 million such jobs the Obama administration claims to have created include a reclassification of employees at bicycle shops, drivers of hybrid buses, and manufacturers of paper cups with a "Save Energy" logo (but not of those without that imprint).

By simply "relabeling existing jobs as 'green,'" the administration has sought to justify massive subsidies to wind, solar, and other "green" ventures, subsidies that are labeled as loans but are, in fact, venture capital allocated by bureaucrats convinced they can pick winners. That these subsidies often end up in the hands of contributors to President Obama's campaigns is no coincidence, as the hearings following

the bankruptcy of Solyndra demonstrated. But this is not a purely partisan attack: Furchtgott-Roth points out that legislation to promote green jobs began with George W. Bush. There is blame enough to go around.

Furchtgott-Roth is blessed with opponents who have no understanding of cost/benefit analyses. They see only benefits, so desirable that to measure costs would be substituting bean-counting for policymaking. For them, the inefficiency with which bureaucrats allocate capital to favored green enterprises is not a problem worth considering, and they ignore studies showing that the Clean Air Act “inhibited net [economic] growth because it shifted investment into less dynamic industries at the expense of successful industries, which were penalized by higher energy costs,” resulting in a 3 percent reduction in GDP when the amendments to the act were fully implemented.

Furchtgott-Roth doesn't just tilt at windmills and deflate politicians' absurd claims about the job-creating potential of subsidies to “green” enterprises that waste scarce resources. She takes on what she characterizes as a theology that provides its advocates with a feeling of moral superiority, akin to that felt by Jimmy Carter when he advised us to confront oil embargoes by turning down our thermostats in winter and donning sweaters, his version of the ever-comforting hair shirt. The theological nature of the support for green policies (most greens typically capitalize “Earth”) places a huge burden on anyone who wishes to do more than preach to the choir.

Furchtgott-Roth meets that burden. And it is no easy thing, given the high moral standing of the green machine among those who feel good when recycling (despite the fact that its costs often exceed its benefits), who can afford hybrid and electric-powered vehicles (after reaping substantial taxpayer-funded benefits), and who genuinely believe they are inhibiting what, to them, is the impending catastrophe of global warming.

When it comes to shale gas, however, her lack of experience with

private-sector energy operations shows. Shale gas is produced by hydrofracturing (fracking), which some say might contaminate water supplies. “Some of these worries,” says Furchtgott-Roth, “while conscientious, are misguided.” While the “some” is generous—there might be others among the conscientious who are not misguided—it doesn't



*Diana Furchtgott-Roth*

go far enough, for she fails to apply to the private sector the standards she rightly applies to error-prone bureaucrats.

The rare but well-publicized cases of water-table contamination occurred due to poor casing jobs or improper drilling techniques and were immediately prosecuted by the government authorities. . . . Hydrofracturing itself is not the villain. Sloppy drilling and casing are problems, but such problems are neither inevitable nor pervasive.

Besides ascribing a legitimate role to the regulators for which she has little use in most other connections, Furchtgott-Roth here ignores the fact that, like governments, large private-sector companies can screw up. Think of BP. Of course, private-sector players bear the cost of their incompetence (at least sometimes), while government bureaucrats rarely do. But in appraising the environmental impact of something like fracking, it is not enough to say, in the absence of private-sector errors, worry not about the environment. I have been around the energy

industries for more decades than I care to remember and can assure the author that there will be errors. They may not be frequent, but these are industries in which one error—be it by BP in the Gulf of Mexico, or by the utility companies during the blackouts of 1965 and 2003, or by the officials responsible for the Exxon Valdez oil spill of 1989—can have rather high costs.

Given the complicated nature of the energy sector, the not-always-perfect performance of the industry's managers, and plain bad luck, these possibilities must be considered and weighed against the more serious costs of refusing to add to our energy supply sufficiently in advance of demand growth. Shale oil will, as Furchtgott-Roth notes, prove to be an economic game-changer for an energy-hungry America, but its risks must be recognized and managed.

But this is a quibble, required of all reviewers of economic tracts. My main quarrel stems from a desire for more from an author surely capable of providing it. It would have added to the large contribution this book makes to the debate about regulatory policy if she had shared with us her suggestions for the criteria to be used in setting policy capable of avoiding the errors she criticizes. From her other writings we know that she is unenthusiastic about the carbon taxes that so many economists feel would create a level playing field for all energy sources and eliminate the (non-theological) justification for subsidies to uneconomic wind, solar, and other renewables, and allow markets rather than regulations to determine the level and pattern of energy consumption. She is, after all, more than a little skeptical about those who believe there is such a thing as “green jobs” to be wished into existence by lavishing taxpayer cash on worthy recipients. How would she reduce their role?

In the end, it would be churlish to argue that Diana Furchtgott-Roth has not made her case. By piling fact upon fact, example upon example, carefully analyzing the relevant data relating to the costs of green-jobs policies, and reminding us of the fallibility and partisan nature of politicians' glowing forecasts of the job-creating potential

of subsidies and regulations, she has shown that these programs, more often than not, make “people feel good about themselves” only by placing a huge burden on the economy.

They might not quite be the “disaster” the title suggests, but they surely are “expensive, inefficient . . . counter to economic growth and . . . a wasteful way of meeting our objectives.” ♦

BCA

# Bloody Inquiries

*Separating truth from fiction in Ulster.*

BY ANDREW ROBERTS



*Tending to a shooting victim, Londonderry, January 30, 1972*

Whenever discussion turns to the causes of the Irish “Troubles,” the decades-long terrorist campaign of the Irish Republican Army to force the British government to relinquish Ulster as part of the United Kingdom, it inevitably focuses on the terrible events of January 30, 1972, known to both sides of the conflict as “Bloody Sunday.” For that was the day

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**Bloody Sunday**  
*Truth, Lies and the Saville Inquiry*  
by Douglas Murray  
Dialogue, 320 pp., \$29.95

on which a political demonstration in what used to be called Londonderry (but is now called “Derry,” its de-anglicized name, by most Roman Catholics) turned into a massacre. British paratroopers fired upon the crowd, killing 13 people and wounding another 15, and what had until then been a campaign of

mass civil disobedience turned into a full-scale terrorist war which was to cost the lives of over 3,500 people during the next quarter-century.

What precisely happened during those tense, dramatic, lethal hours was the subject of speculation, assertion, counterassertion, and, above all, of Irish Republican myth-making for 26 years until, in 1998, as part of the British government’s peace deal with the IRA, a full-scale government inquiry was instituted under Lord Justice Saville. Astonishingly, the inquiry then took half as long to investigate Bloody Sunday and report upon it as the entire Troubles themselves had taken.

The statistics are still staggering. The Saville Inquiry took a full 12 years, heard the testimonies of thousands of people, filling 10 huge volumes, and cost the British taxpayer no less than \$305 million in lawyers’ fees and other expenses. All that, over something that happened 40 years ago, in which 108 rounds were fired in a few minutes. And the equally extraordinary thing is that, despite it all, we still cannot be certain about precisely what happened that day. (Nor was it even the first inquiry into the events of that calamitous day: Lord Chief Justice Widgery had already undertaken one back in the 1970s.)

Douglas Murray, an award-winning British political journalist and associate director of the Henry Jackson Society, attended hundreds of sittings of the inquiry and has read all 10 volumes of the Saville Report, and much else besides. As well as, of course, wanting to understand what really happened that day, he was interested in the wider question of, as he puts it, “how any truth can be uncovered after such a long time—what people remember and what they forget. And what happens when things turn up from the past that might have been easier left undiscovered.”

One thing that the Saville Inquiry made very clear was that, by the 1990s, British intelligence had thoroughly infiltrated even the highest levels of the IRA. Stakeknife was the code name given to Freddie Scappaticci, who rose to be deputy head of the IRA’s “nutting” (i.e., execution) squad, yet also

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turned out to be a longtime informant for the British domestic intelligence service, MI5. IRA chief Gerry Adams had a driver who worked for MI5, and one of Adams's closest aides, Denis Donaldson, was also an informant. All of these men were immensely brave, as was Sean O'Callaghan, a member of the IRA's ruling council who also worked for the Irish police force, the Garda. When the IRA discovered members who were working for MI5, they were tortured before being killed.

Another high-ranking British agent is still today only known by his code name: Infliction. One of the top-secret documents submitted to the Saville Inquiry showed that, at a debriefing in The Hague in 1984, Infliction told his MI5 handler (known only as Officer A) that "Martin McGuinness had admitted to Infliction that he had personally fired the shot from the Rossville flats in Bogside that had precipitated the Bloody Sunday episode." The next 19 lines of type on the page were redacted. If ever there were a (almost literal, in this case) "smoking gun" in the whole grim story of that day, it is surely this. Yet McGuinness, who naturally denies everything, went on to become a minister under the crown, and last month was photographed shaking hands cordially with the queen.

If Martin McGuinness did, indeed, fire on the paratroops first, deliberately escalating the demonstration into what the IRA had always wanted—a shooting war—then he must bear a good deal of responsibility for the tragedy that ensued. The simple black-and-white explanation that the British Army provoked the Republicans and were entirely to blame for Bloody Sunday is clearly not good enough, although that was the substance of what Saville finally reported in 2010, and for which David Cameron apologized in the House of Commons.

"What turned up before Saville was often as much about the present and future as it was about the past," concludes Murray in this brave, revelatory, and gripping book, "an effort at truth and reconciliation that woke some ghosts just as others were being laid to rest." ♦

BCA

# The Greek Gift

*On the classical origins of democratic freedom.*

BY DAVID WHARTON

**A**mericans are a free people, who know that freedom is the right of every person and the future of every nation. The liberty we prize . . . is God's gift to humanity."

So said George W. Bush in his 2003 State of the Union address, and we hope he is right. But Lady Liberty did not simply spring full-grown from the brow of

Thomas Jefferson. What is the source of this divine gift? Christian Meier argues that it was birthed, arduously, on the unlikely soil of a poor backwater of the ancient world: preclassical Greece. Unnoticed by the great powers of the time, it was an event of world-historical significance.

Meier, one of Europe's most distinguished ancient historians, is the author of a popular biography of Julius Caesar and of *Athens: A Portrait of the City in Its Golden Age*, among many books and articles. He has spent a long life ruminating on the ancient world and its connections with the modern, and here he excavates the origins of European culture among Greece's scattered literary remains, dating from the late Bronze Age to the brink of the first Persian invasion in 490 B.C.

That Meier should look there at all for the beginnings of European identity is controversial. It is popular now to locate Europe's beginnings in the Middle Ages (see Michael Mitterauer's *Why Europe? The Medieval Origins of Its Special Path*). It is also trendy to explain

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the rise of Europe in terms of geography and technology, as in Jared Diamond's popular *Guns, Germs, and Steel*. But Meier is an old-school cultural historian for whom ideas matter as much as

material externalities. His radical thesis is that freedom was the "motor" that drove the development of early Greek culture: An ethic of freedom not only permeated the culture, but the

Greeks invented their culture precisely to augment and maintain that freedom.

The nurturing matrix of this culture was, of course, the *polis*, a strange and unprecedented political configuration. Citizens in these independent city-states fiercely defended their right to self-determination, free of forceful constraint from within and without. Meier interweaves the political growth of the *poleis* with interpretations of the poetry, philosophy, social customs, religious life, and modes of warfare which they developed in response to the challenges they faced.

Political instability was a constant problem, frequently sparked by the ambition of aristocrats who feuded violently among themselves. The *poleis* also housed a recurrently disgruntled and disfranchised middle class that jostled for power. Meier argues that the intensely competitive, face-to-face interactions among citizens in the agora, the gymnasium, and on the battlefield provided outlets for potentially destructive impulses toward oppressive preeminence of citizens or states. Equally important for providing creative solutions to pressing problems were the Greeks' bold excursions into philosophy, science, and the arts:

**A Culture of Freedom**  
*Ancient Greece and the Origins of Europe*  
by Christian Meier  
trans. by Jefferson Chase  
Oxford, 344 pp., \$29.95

[T]he citizens needed not only the rationality of political thought, but also the ideas, images, and stories offered by the arts to help them interpret, understand, and visualize the unusual and unexpected. And because all needed such help, for themselves, and in concert with one another, working on these arts was a public task.

Meier is clear that, although the *poleis* were widely divergent in their political systems, the greatest achievement of this ancient “experimental laboratory” of politics was the *isonomia* pioneered by the Athenians: the idea that laws and the duties of civic life should fall equally to all citizens. If this principle seems transparently obvious

imprinted in the Christian tradition that dominated the Middle Ages, and European reappropriations of Greek texts and ideas have been constant since the Renaissance.

Although Meier doesn’t say anything about America, we know how those ideas reached our shores: Our Founders drank deeply from the classical font.

John Adams thought that reading Demosthenes was the most important part of his son’s education, and Jefferson loved nothing so much in his retirement as reading the Greeks in their own language. He was said always to have an ancient text in his hand.

Yet as much as Meier enthuses about the salutary contributions of the Greeks’ spirit of freedom and dynamism to European culture, he is far less sanguine than George W. Bush about its prospects in the modern geopolitical landscape:

To far too great an extent we today live under the illusion that the achievements of all cultures are readily available, as in a supermarket, and can be consumed by anyone in whatever mixture he chooses—and not just by individuals but by whole societies.

Meier here mildly indicts not only the facile multiculturalism that taints much leftist thought, but also its conservative antistrophe: the idea that freedom and all the traditions, institutions, and habits of thought and action that sustain it are easily transplanted.

If *A Culture of Freedom* has faults, they are few. Meier’s argument, in places, becomes repetitious, and some may find his analysis of Greek literature too reductive. The stories of Oedipus, for example, and of Achilles reconciling himself to his fated early death, are difficult to construe as celebrations of freedom. Still, on the whole, he has elaborated in beautiful detail the energetic genius of the Greeks, and we are lucky to have in this volume the distilled reflections of a long and productive scholarly life. ♦

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*The Agora, the central gathering place in Athens, at the foot of the Acropolis*

To maintain the precarious balance of interests and ambitions that sustained their freedom, free men in the *polis* were expected to be proficient in hoplite combat, to engage regularly in athletic exertions, to hold civic or religious offices, to speak knowledgeably and persuasively in the political arena, and to sing, and perhaps compose poetry, at drinking parties (*symposia*) that facilitated elite social interaction—all this in addition to managing their private affairs.

Freedom was a strenuous business conducted by remarkably versatile men. And because such men had no powerful governmental traditions or religious authorities to bind them, they “worked through the questions that arose for them both individually and communally with often shocking openness and rigor, and they found answers that prove to be relevant time and again even today.”

to us now, that is a testament to how thoroughly steeped we are in Athenian ideals. It need hardly be said that the Greeks themselves did not push this idea to its logical conclusions—women, slaves, and immigrants were excluded from citizenship—but the breadth of political participation in Athens was breathtaking in its day.

How did Greek culture have any effect on later Europe, and then America? After all, Athens disintegrated quickly, and all the *poleis* were soon subjugated to Macedonian, then Roman, rule. Nothing in late antiquity or the early Middle Ages resembles the freedom that is Meier’s theme; yet Meier contends persuasively that it was the Greeks who first conceived of Europe as a unity, and that Europe has persistently oriented itself toward Greek culture, even if often filtered through a Hellenized Roman overlay. Greek patterns of thought are

# Identity Crisis

*The high costs of feeling good about yourself.*

BY MARK BAUERLEIN

In academia, few sins are as grave and unforgivable as criticizing the “studies” programs. Journalist/author Naomi Schaefer Riley found that out this past spring when she wrote a blog post for the *Chronicle of Higher Education* website describing Black Studies as “left-wing victimization claptrap.”

The reaction was swift. The *Chronicle* opened its Brainstorm blog (to which I contribute) to graduate students whose dissertation topics were mentioned by Riley as prime examples of stupid scholarship. They accused Riley of “breathtaking arrogance and gutless anti-intellectualism,” then discerned a motive: “One can only assume that in a bid to not be ‘out-niggered’ by her right-wing cohort, Riley found some black women graduate students to beat up on.”

The African American Studies faculty at Northwestern commented, too, calling Riley’s post “cowardly, uninformed, irresponsible, repugnant, and contrary to the mission of higher education.” One fellow Brainstorm contributor labeled it “hate speech,” while another wrote a poem that began,

*A certain white chick—Schaefer Riley—  
Decided to do something wily:  
Knowing her blogs  
Were going to the dogs,  
She got all gnarly and smiley.*

An online petition demanding that the *Chronicle* fire Riley collected more than 6,000 (!) signatures within a few

Mark Bauerlein, professor of English at Emory, is the author, most recently, of *The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future*.

**The Victims’ Revolution**  
*The Rise of Identity Studies  
and the Closing of the Liberal Mind*  
by Bruce Bawer  
Broadside, 400 pp., \$25.99

days, and one week later, the editor of the *Chronicle* issued a statement heeding the “outrage and disappointment”:

We’ve heard you, and we have taken to heart what you said.

We now agree that Ms. Riley’s blog posting did not meet *The Chronicle’s* basic editorial standards for reporting and fairness in opinion articles. As a result, we have asked Ms. Riley to leave the Brainstorm blog.

All because of a 500-word post. Amidst the indignation and hurt, it should be added, one couldn’t find the obvious rejoinder to Riley’s charge: evidence of the intellectual value of Black Studies, such as research that has shaped social policy or books that have won honors.

The episode illustrates the syndromes outlined in Bruce Bawer’s book, a survey of major and minor “studies” fields, from heated beginnings to current, academic ends. Bawer has long chapters on Women’s Studies, Black Studies, Queer Studies, and Chicano Studies, plus summaries of Disability Studies, Fat Studies, Men’s Studies, and Whiteness Studies.

The older ones he chronicles from their origins in social forces, such as the Black Arts Movement of the late 1960s, to early academic units (San Francisco State had the first Black Studies department, and the Cal State system remains a bastion of identity programs), to today’s network of cen-

ters and departments, organizations such as the National Association of African American Studies, and annual conferences at which professors and graduate students share thoughts and research. Bawer interviews celebrities (Chon Noriega) and dissenters (Shelby Steele), cites canonical texts (*Women’s Ways of Knowing*, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, etc.), and attends cutting-edge panels highlighting the common concern of the fields: the operations of power, violent and hegemonic, upon victims (generally, anyone who is not a straight white male).

On one level, nothing is surprising in these portraits. Bawer quotes copiously from books, lectures, and mission statements to deliver familiar samples of special pleading, anti-Americanism, anticapitalism, one-upmanship victimology (being Chicana isn’t as authoritative as being a Chicana lesbian), and jargon. When the authors of a leading Chicano Studies volume hail Fidel and Che, declaring that “the Chicana/o movement strove to emulate Cuba’s monumental gains in eliminating poverty and racism and its courageous solidarity with global liberation struggles,” laypersons might reply, “Huh?” But such audacious pronouncements have been standard campus fare for 30 years.

On another level, however, Bawer draws out something remarkably ironic, and sometimes bizarre, in the course and condition of studies programs, and it has nothing to do with their political commitments. It surfaces every time the political outlook of identity studies takes academic form in scholarly books and presentations, course descriptions, and mission statements. There, the radical thrust of Black Power, Women’s Lib, Gay Pride, and Chicano separatism enters an idiom of abstract, predictable, formulaic verbiage. Here is a professor summarizing her Intro to Women’s Studies course on her blog:

[We will examine] ways in which power is deployed over and through bodies for use of the nation-state and elites. We will critique feminist histories, knowledges, and production

in the face of imperialism, colonialism, environmental development-destruction & the negative consequences of violences deployed against poor, subordinated, and indigenous peoples.

The words tumble forth with the momentum of an imposing critique behind it; but pause over the phrases, and they sink into meaninglessness. The language is bloated and hackneyed (“power is deployed . . . violences deployed”), the basic sense fuzzy (power works “over and through bodies for use of the nation-state and elites”). Here are some lines from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s idolized queer theory volume *Epistemology of the Closet*:

In “The Beast in the Jungle,” written at the threshold of the new century, the possibility of an embodied male-homosexual thematic has, I would like to argue, a precisely liminal presence.

Not just a “liminal presence” but a “*precisely* liminal presence.” And it is not just the “male-homosexual thematic” that bears such presence, but an “embodied” one, or rather, the *possibility* of that embodied one which does so. The prose slides into ever more nuanced and qualified assertions, as if the reality the theorist broaches has such a tremulous existence that only the most delicately stated propositions can capture it.

Bawer also quotes from a historical tome on California by a Chicano Studies expert:

Those immigrants who arrived under Spanish rule, I call simply “Spanish,” or “Spanish colonizers.” . . . I call those arriving or living in California after 1821 “settler-colonizers.” . . . For those colonizers and settlers who were raised in California, I also use the term by which they identified themselves, *Californianas/os*. . . . I refer to Californianos and Mexican immigrants collectively as “Chicanas/os.”

The nomenclature discussion goes on for a full page, Bawer notes—part of the “tireless attention to labels [so] common in Chicano Studies.” Naturally, of course, for in fields based upon mark-

ers of identity, the taxonomy of human beings rises to an obsession.

The problem with these statements isn’t the stilted prose or conceptual jargon or posturing personae. It is that they exemplify customary academic speech, which is to say that they couldn’t stand any farther from the revolutionary impetus of identity studies. For all the adversarial, aggressive extremism of identity studies ideology, the practice accords neatly with the Establishment. Identity studies professors parse identitarian terms just as English professors do the terms of prosody. They analyze cultural texts just as art historians analyze a Caravaggio. “This academically approved rhetoric pretends to be unorthodox, deviant, threatening, and anti-normative,” Bawer observes, “but is, in point of fact, mind-numbingly conformist.”

Even more ironically, they have secured money and resources for three decades while being held to low intellectual standards. Shelby Steele recalls his days in the early 1970s building such programs, at a time when “there was so much white guilt that you could just go into these places and they’d give you anything you wanted.”

The very endurance of Women’s Studies, Bawer remarks, “belies its own rhetoric about the ruthless hegemonic power of the patriarchy.” For years, University of Pennsylvania professor Alan Charles Kors tells Bawer, Michael Eric Dyson, author of books like *Know What I Mean? Reflections on Hip-Hop*, was the highest paid arts-and-sciences professor at Penn in spite of his youth. To watch individuals who enjoy such lavish professional rewards denounce American racism, sexism, and homophobia is either comical or pathetic. Steele labels them “hustlers.”

The professors might respond, “Academia may, to some degree, escape those evils, but America doesn’t, and we aim to change that.” If that’s the case, though, then why make academia your home? Why speak in terms that only “Ivory-Tower initiates” (Bawer’s

term) can understand (e.g., “marginal positionality,” “paranoid modality”)? Academia forces them into academic behavior that blunts the radicalism. No wonder they are so defensive; they are living a transparent pretense.

The result is bad education. This is Bawer’s ultimate complaint, and it makes a stronger indictment of identity studies than do charges of ideological bias. Students don’t graduate from these programs learned and thoughtful leftists. They don’t even acquire distorted versions of history, politics, art, and ethics. In truth, they don’t acquire any versions of them at all.

Quickly they realize that their professors discourage free inquiry lest it stray from party lines, and so education turns into a parroting procedure. The lectures Bawer hears and the books he reads display little historical knowledge and less independent reflection. He finds the same catchphrases and seventies platitudes again and again offered as if they were transgressive and brilliant. If everyone in the room weren’t playing the same game, the whole setup would collapse.

The question is: How long can it go on? Political correctness demands solemn respect for these units, and every administrator knows that an honest appraisal of them will kill a career. Bawer agrees that “it’s not easy to imagine a successful revolt against identity studies,” and he merely advises parents to avoid them.

From what I’ve seen, I believe that the fate of identity studies rests upon money. Identity studies will survive as long as administrators believe that the cost of maintaining these programs is less than the fallout that would come from phasing them out. If a dean faces a shrinking budget and the Women’s Studies department has eight tenured professors but only 30 undergraduate majors, it looks a lot more vulnerable than the more popular, less “top-heavy” departments. If they have the money, they’ll keep it going. But if they don’t, and it’s a matter of cutting a biochemistry unit that brings in steady federal research dollars or a Women’s Studies department that offers courses on Barbie-femininity . . . ♦

# Holy Deadlock

*After 31 years of marriage, what is holding them together?* BY JOHN PODHORETZ

Marriage is one of the great subjects—perhaps *the* great subject—of the novel. That is not true of the cinema. Movies end with marriages; they do not begin with them. Marriage is the ultimate fulfillment of the wishes and dreams of cinematic characters. It is not the ongoing condition of their lives. We are simply to assume that the characters we see kissing at the altar as the credits roll are going to be happy.

A potent new movie called *Hope Springs* begins with a marriage in its 31st year. The wife approaches her husband looking for intimacy and is rebuffed on the grounds that he's feeling gassy because he ate pork at lunch. The wife, Kay, is played by Meryl Streep, which proves to be a bit of a problem for the movie later on. Tommy Lee Jones plays Arnold, her husband, in a gobsmacking performance that will win him an Oscar next February. (I was right the last three years on Best Actor, so harken unto me.)

Kay and Arnold live in Omaha. He's an accountant. She works at Coldwater Creek in the nearby mall. They have two grown children, no grandchildren as yet, and they have run out of things to say to each other. They sleep in separate rooms, ostensibly owing to his sleep apnea. He falls asleep watching golf shows every night. Finding her life increasingly intolerable, the passive Kay takes action and books them for a week of intensive couples counseling with a marriage guru named Bernie Feld (Steve Carell) in a town in Maine called Great Hope Springs.

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

## Hope Springs

Directed by David Frankel



The town is charming. The therapist is kind and calm and wise. No matter. Having said almost nothing to Kay for years, Arnold is suddenly unable to keep quiet and issues a litany of complaints: Breakfast costs too much; therapy is nonsense; they don't have the \$4,000 to waste on this foolishness. She takes it and takes it until she can take it no longer.

Then, as the days progress, the ice starts to thaw. They, and we, begin to learn what has happened to build the walls between them—and, to the inestimable credit of Vanessa Taylor, who wrote this prodigious debut screenplay, their woes derive from nothing major. It's just the ordinary wear and tear of a very ordinary life that has rent the marital fabric.

I don't think I'm making *Hope Springs* sound very appealing, and that's because it isn't, really. In one sense, it's too good to be appealing because it tries to look honestly at something very real and very difficult and very hard to romanticize or soften without degrading itself into Hallmark goo.

But in an effort to keep the focus relentlessly on Kay and Arnold and the aridity of their sex life, Taylor and director David Frankel fail their characters. They make these middle-American lives seem far bleaker than the existence any real-life Kay and Arnold would likely have. Where are their friends? What are their hobbies? What about church? Arnold watches

shows about his golf swing, but we never see him enjoying himself on a golf course. Kay seems to take pleasure in almost nothing.

This inability or refusal to set Kay and Arnold in any kind of milieu is unfortunate, because, had the movie offered us a more rounded view of them, it would have made their company more pleasant and their self-inflicted wounds seem all the more tragic. The movie that would have resulted might have been a masterpiece.

Still, *Hope Springs* is a ray of hope for mainstream American moviemaking—it is a sign of engagement with real life, the most surprising Hollywood release in years. It was probably made only because of Meryl Streep's remarkable emergence in her late 50s as the most financially successful female star in Hollywood. She can write her own ticket, it would appear, and this is the ticket she chose.

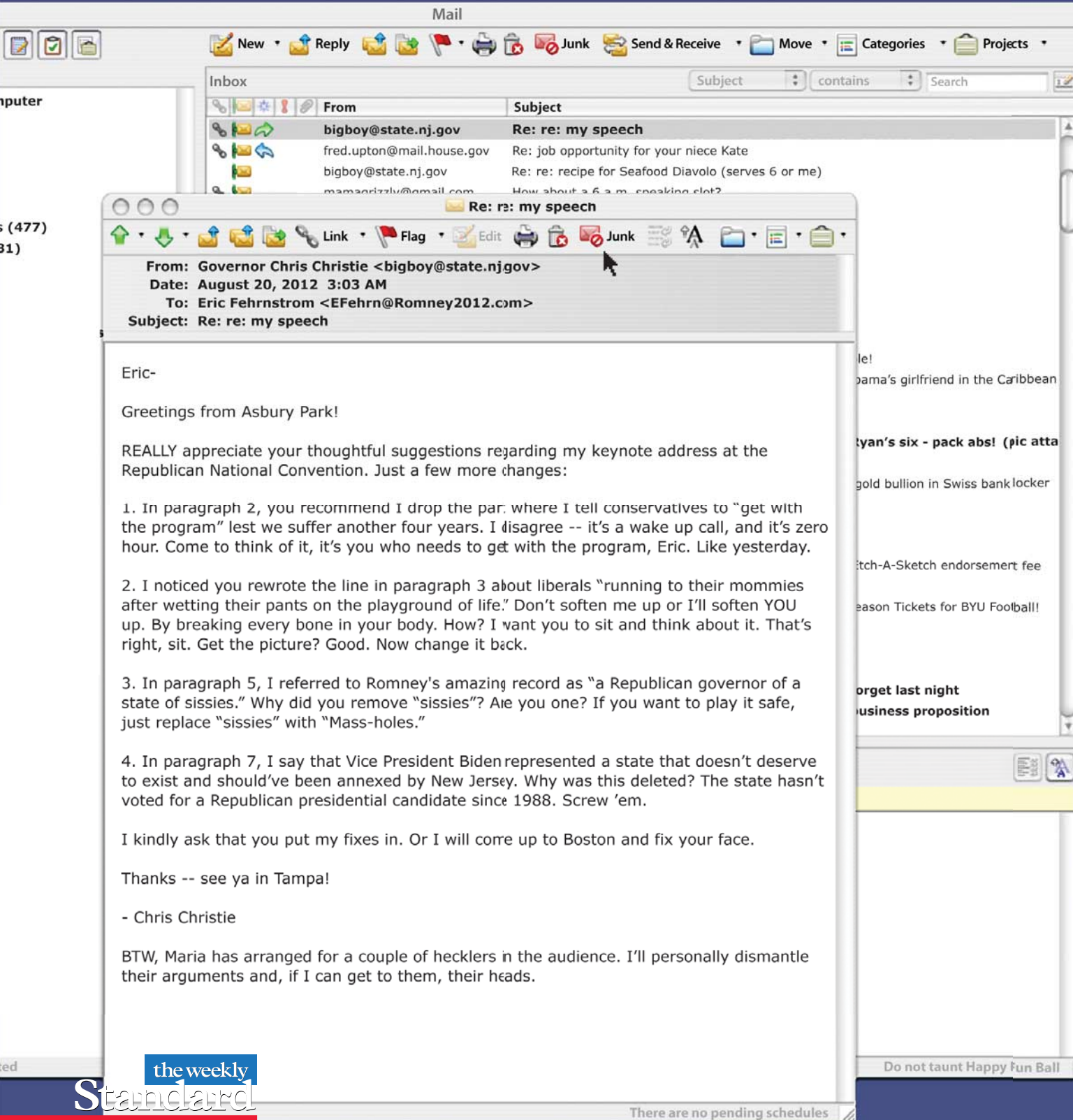
Alas, I'm not sure Streep can play an ordinary person any longer, if she ever could. While she is almost certainly the American film actress nonpareil, her particular gift is for giving three dimensions to oversized personalities that might otherwise descend into mere caricature. She doesn't know how to scale herself down to Kay's level.

That is not the case with Tommy Lee Jones, to put it mildly. Jones's specialty has always been the unexpectedly extraordinary man, whose world-weary demeanor masks an inexhaustible intelligence and hard-won wisdom (or devilish villainy). Arnold is none of these things. He's a well-meaning, repressed, parochial fellow who finds himself forced out of his comfort zone and scrambles, sometimes desperately, to get back to it. With a precision and subtlety he has never before shown in his 40 years on screen, Jones simply becomes Arnold Soames of Omaha, Nebraska—a man whose carefully circumscribed life begins to disintegrate right in front of him. He is heartbreaking. When would you ever have thought Tommy Lee Jones could break your heart? For that gift alone, *Hope Springs* deserves to be celebrated. ♦

**“Chris Christie, the sometimes abrasive but always entertaining governor of New Jersey, is set to be announced Tuesday as the keynote speaker for the Republicans’ national convention later this month.”**  
—Associated Press, August 14, 2012

**PARODY**

Go Window Help



Eric-

Greetings from Asbury Park!

REALLY appreciate your thoughtful suggestions regarding my keynote address at the Republican National Convention. Just a few more changes:

1. In paragraph 2, you recommend I drop the par. where I tell conservatives to "get with the program" lest we suffer another four years. I disagree -- it's a wake up call, and it's zero hour. Come to think of it, it's you who needs to get with the program, Eric. Like yesterday.
2. I noticed you rewrote the line in paragraph 3 about liberals "running to their mommies after wetting their pants on the playground of life." Don't soften me up or I'll soften YOU up. By breaking every bone in your body. How? I want you to sit and think about it. That's right, sit. Get the picture? Good. Now change it back.
3. In paragraph 5, I referred to Romney's amazing record as "a Republican governor of a state of sissies." Why did you remove "sissies"? Are you one? If you want to play it safe, just replace "sissies" with "Mass-holes."
4. In paragraph 7, I say that Vice President Biden represented a state that doesn't deserve to exist and should've been annexed by New Jersey. Why was this deleted? The state hasn't voted for a Republican presidential candidate since 1988. Screw 'em.

I kindly ask that you put my fixes in. Or I will come up to Boston and fix your face.

Thanks -- see ya in Tampa!

- Chris Christie

BTW, Maria has arranged for a couple of hecklers in the audience. I'll personally dismantle their arguments and, if I can get to them, their heads.