

**HYPERPARTISAN
OBAMA
JAY COST**



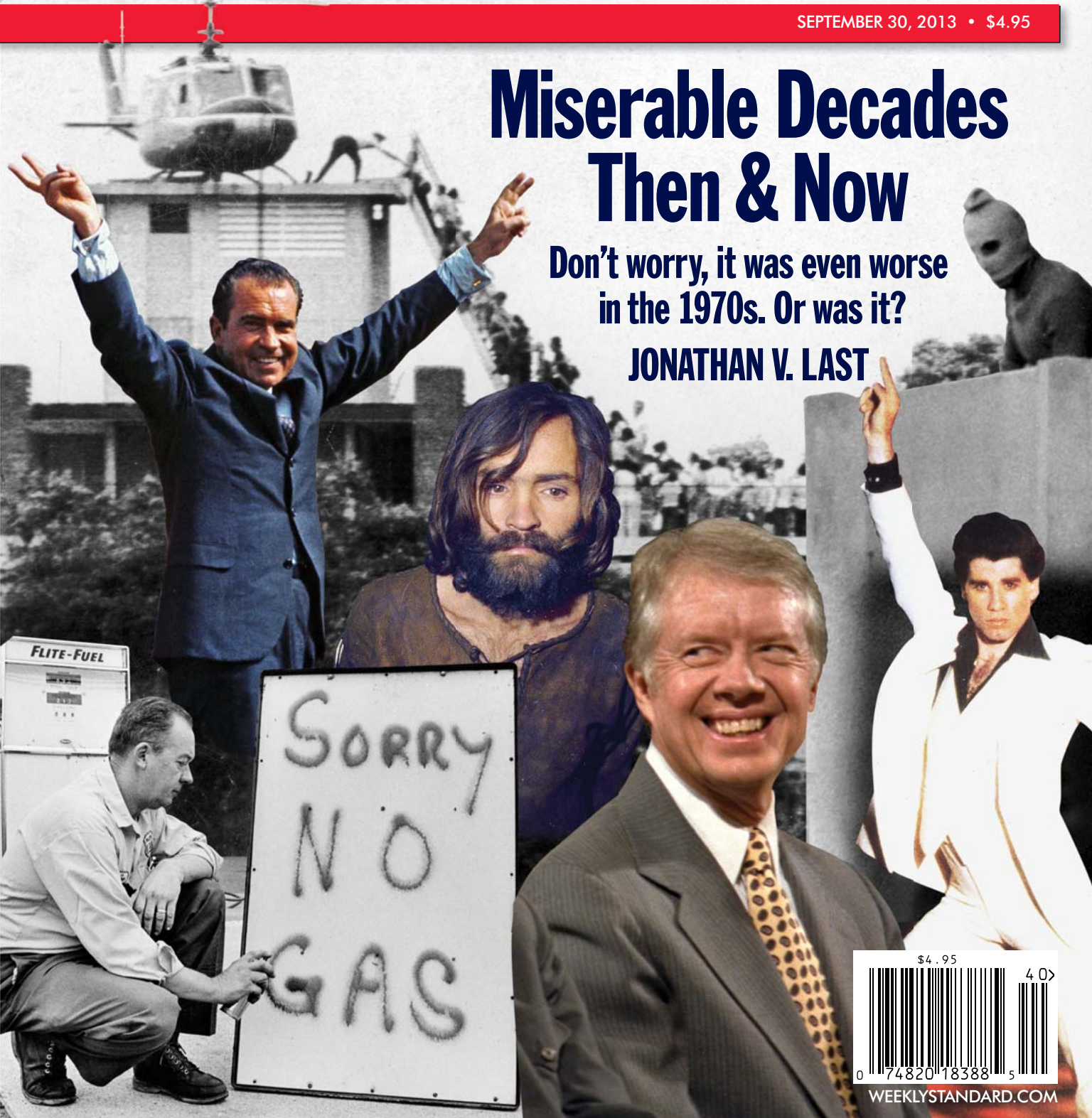
the weekly Standard

SEPTEMBER 30, 2013 • \$4.95

Miserable Decades Then & Now

Don't worry, it was even worse
in the 1970s. Or was it?

JONATHAN V. LAST



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Friendly Fire

The media have been pretty down on Obama recently. Or rather, the media have been about as critical as they're ever going to be. Case in point, THE SCRAPBOOK was a bit taken aback when we saw last week's *Time* cover. Vladimir Putin's visage is glowering against a stark background, and the cover line is brutal: "America's weak and waffling. Russia's rich and resurgent—and its leader doesn't care what anybody thinks of him."

What? You didn't see that *Time* magazine cover when you were in line at the grocery store? Well, that's because it ran on the magazine's Asia, South Pacific, and European editions. The U.S. edition ran with Texas A&M's quarterback sensation Johnny Manziel, under the headline "It's Time to Pay College Athletes."

We'll concede that a college football cover on the U.S. edition might sell better than the Putin cover. Still, it's fair to suspect that *Time* may be covering for our incompetent commander in chief. Last week, it was announced that Richard Stengel, the managing editor of *Time* for the last seven years, is departing the magazine to work for Secretary of State John Kerry. And in case you had forgotten,

the current White House spokesman Jay Carney came to the administration from, yes, *Time*. Since 2009, at least 15 journalists have joined the Obama administration. In addition to *Time*, they have experience working for the *Washington Post*, the Associated Press, the *Boston Globe*, CBS News, ABC



Time at home . . .



and abroad

News, *National Journal*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the *Wall Street Journal*. Upon Stengel's announcement, the *Daily Beast* quipped, "These days, journalists don't retire, they just join the Obama administration."

With such seamless integration between the White House and the Fourth Estate, you can bet that the media think criticism of the Obama administration amounts to friendly fire. Indeed, after a week or so of pathetic rearguard attempts to

deny the undeniable fact that Putin has rendered our president "weak and waffling," they are now in full retreat. This past Wednesday, *Politico* editor John F. Harris co-bylined a piece for his publication headlined "And what's right with President Obama?" In case you had forgotten, Harris wants you to know, "His smile remains dazzling, even if he flashes it less often." (Indeed, the smiling photo of Obama accompanying the article was almost the inverse of *Time*'s everywhere-but-in-America Putin cover.) And, Harris assures us, Obama's "longstanding ability to coolly assess his circumstances and then adapt to them means that he is still better positioned than most of his peers to work his way out of problems." This would be a fawning generalization under any circumstances, but in the wake of Obama's Syria dithering, such an observation is completely at odds with his handling of perhaps the most sensitive and high-pressure episode of his presidency.

The president's repeated failures to "coolly assess his circumstances" should be plenty obvious, but apparently it's too much to ask our press to acknowledge reality instead of re-writing it. ♦

A Foolish Consistency

THE SCRAPBOOK was thumbing through the pages of the *Nation* last week and stumbled upon the sort of essay in which the *Nation* has specialized since October 1917: defending the peace-loving Russians against a bellicose United States ("Demonizing Putin Endangers America's Security"). In this instance, the point was to deplore "influential segments of the American political-media establishment . . . bent on discrediting" Vladimir Putin, and the author's complaint—really a *cri de coeur*, given the circumstances—was that "purportedly liberal and progressive voices are playing a

full-throated role in this mindless denigration of Putin."

At first THE SCRAPBOOK was inclined to smile indulgently and turn the page. We had thought, in our naive way, that the near-universal suspicion in America of Putin's role in the Syria crisis was a rare moment of bipartisanship. But then we noticed that the author is a professor from whom we hadn't heard very much since the collapse of the Soviet Union: Stephen F. Cohen of New York University. And THE SCRAPBOOK was suddenly awash in nostalgia.

For in the 1980s, and especially during the first Reagan administration, if there was one steady, reliable voice, whether in print in the *New York Times* or on television (especially CBS,

where he was a regular commentator), in defense of the peace-loving Soviet government against a bellicose United States, it was Stephen F. Cohen, then of Princeton.

Those were heady days for anti-anti-Communists, and Professor Cohen was always extolling the benign intentions and infinite patience of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in marked contrast to the cowboy rhetoric and dangerous belligerence of the United States of America. Indeed, last week's *Nation* essay made exactly the same point; if you substituted "Chairman Brezhnev" for "President Putin," it could have appeared on the op-ed page of the *Times* in, say, 1982. And probably did.

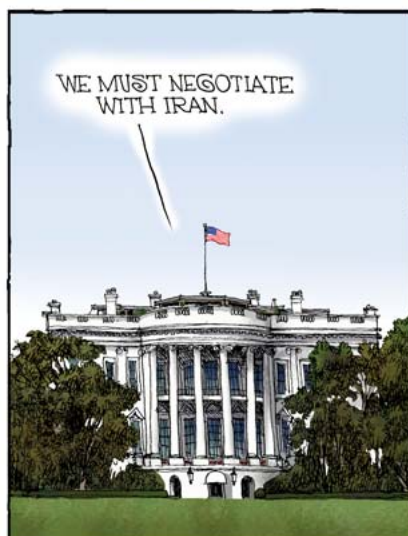
We point this out not to criticize Cohen's consistency, which is impressive in its way, but to remind readers that much left-wing criticism of American policy is grounded not so much in admiration for dubious regimes—Iran, the Soviet Union, Cuba, Venezuela, Vietnam, take your pick—as in contempt for the United States. For as Stephen F. Cohen demonstrates in the pages of the *Nation* (edited by Mrs. Cohen, by the way), it takes genuine intellectual dexterity to evolve from a Soviet apologist into a Russian nationalist, all the while maintaining hostility to the land of your birth. ♦

Baseball's Archaeologist

What if everything we think we know about the history of baseball is wrong? What if despite the carefully cultivated image of its manly origins—long mustachios and tobacco-juice-stained vests—it was a game played by women as well as men? What if the game was invented 100 years before Abner Doubleday allegedly took bat to ball? And, perhaps most astonishing, what if our national pastime was first played in England?

David Block, baseball's archaeologist, is the man whose life work amounts to a systematic debunking of Santa Claus. The subject of a long profile by Bryan Curtis for the excellent sports site *Grantland*, Block has been hammering away at baseball's foundation stories for two decades now. For his 2006 book *Baseball Before We Knew It*, Block scoured libraries and bookstores for volumes, writes Curtis, that "mentioned baseball, books historians might have missed."

Block found "baseball" cited in a number of mid-18th-century books published decades before there was any mention of "rounders," the English game baseball is typically said to have descended from. Wrong, Block found. Baseball is descended from baseball. Early baseball, Curtis writes, "wasn't written about because it was mostly the stuff of commoners. Baseball was *everywhere*. The newspapers didn't cover it because it was so mundane."



Where does that leave the legendary figure believed to be baseball's founding father, Abner Doubleday? As it turns out, the man who first made the claim, Abner Graves, "was a crank." Nonetheless, A.G. Spalding, who chaired baseball's first origins committee, ran with the story because he and Doubleday were fellow members of the Theosophical Society, a spiritualist group founded by Madame Blavatsky (best known for her influence on William Butler Yeats). It seems that Madame Blavatsky stands behind two of the greatest literary works of the 20th century—Yeats's oeuvre, and the just-so story of baseball's origins.

Block's point is that baseball wasn't invented. Rather, it simply evolved, perhaps a vestigial reminder of the

first man who picked up a rock to protect his home or hunt for prey and raised it over his head to throw. Paradoxically, Block's deconstruction of baseball's origins brings the game into perfect alignment. Without a clock to limit time, and only foul lines to limit space, baseball stretches out theoretically into an eternal future—and now we know it may reach just as far back into the past. ♦

Lunch with the Big He

This month's issue of *AARP The Magazine* is chock-full of important news for your golden years. There's an essay on Dr. King's America. (We're still not past racism.) A piece about Obamacare. (It's going to

be great!) And a long feature about Bill Clinton's new-found veganism.

The former president, once fond of Big Macs and pork rinds, has given up on flesh. For over three years, AARP reports, he's had no meat, no game, no fish—not even any dairy products. What does he eat? At a lunch with the president in “a private room overlooking Manhattan's busy Rockefeller Center,” Clinton serves—or rather, has served—“a dazzling kaleidoscope of a dozen delicious dishes: including roasted cauliflower and cherry tomatoes, spiced and herbed quinoa with green onions, shredded red beets in vinaigrette, garlicky hummus with raw vegetable batons, Asian-inspired snow pea salad, an assortment of fresh roasted nuts, plates of sliced melon and strawberries, and rich, toothsome gigante beans tossed with onions in extra-virgin olive oil.” He always did have a weakness for the extra-virgin stuff.

The piece is filled with classic Clintonian moments. The president discourses on diet—“heavily-processed carbs, you really have to control that.” And humbly brags about life as a semi-retired sultan, with talk about how his “house manager” prepares “simple meals” for him and his wife and how even the Peruvian president respected his veganism in preparing a dinner when he journeyed to South America for a visit.

Perhaps the best part is that the piece is written by Joe Conason, whom you might remember from the 1990s as the most slavishly partisan hack of the Clinton years, a guy who made even Sidney Blumenthal and Paul Begala blush. What has Conason been doing since Clinton rode off into the sunset? That's in the article, too:

“I first noticed a change in Clinton's eating habits when we were in Capetown, South Africa, back in July 2010. (I have been covering his extraordinary postpresidential career since 2005, interviewing him frequently and traveling with him across Africa, Europe and the Mideast, as well as the United States.)”

Clinton's diet may have changed, but Conason is still dining out on the Big He. ◆

A Good Deed Undone?

When it approved reforms to the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) last year, a normally spendthrift Congress showed that its members could work together and do the right thing for taxpayers. Majorities from both parties voted to end some of the program's subsidies for vacation homes and “severe repetitive loss” properties (ones taxpayers have already paid to rebuild multiple times).

What a difference a year makes. As soon as it became clear that some constituents would have to shell out more for flood coverage, members of Congress reversed course. Indeed, even Rep. Maxine Waters, the Democratic coauthor of the reforms, has joined coastal-state conservatives like Sen. David Vitter of Louisiana in calling for a rollback. The House has already passed a measure that would gut the reforms, and in banking committee hearings on the subject last week, many senators appeared willing to join them.

If they have a single fiscally responsible bone in their bodies, members of Congress should stick to their guns. An unreformed NFIP provides something for everyone to dislike. Conservatives can rightly express outrage that the program collects \$3.6 billion in premiums each year, owes over \$25 billion to the Treasury, and displaces a potential private market. Liberals and environmentalists, likewise, have every reason to be outraged that the program still provides huge subsidies for developers to tear up environmentally significant areas and bestows its largest handouts on the already rich. Even if all of the promised reforms take force, furthermore, the NFIP will continue to provide huge subsidies for thousands of primary residences and will still need more reforms before it stands on a truly stable footing.

Any group that loses a subsidy will always make a lot of noise. A handful of people now facing higher flood insurance rates do have sympathetic stories to tell. But if members of Congress actually want to represent the public's interest, they need to stay the course on flood insurance reform. ◆

the weekly Standard

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The Weekly Standard (ISSN 1083-3013), a division of Clarity Media Group, is published weekly (except the first week in January, third week in April, second week in July, and fourth week in August) at 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington D.C. 20036. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 421203, Palm Coast, FL 32142-1203. For subscription customer service in the United States, call 1-800-274-7293. For new subscription orders, please call 1-800-274-7293. Subscribers: Please send new subscription orders and changes of address to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 421203, Palm Coast, FL 32142-1203. Please include your latest magazine mailing label. Allow 3 to 5 weeks for arrival of first copy and address changes. Canadian/foreign orders require additional postage and must be paid in full prior to commencement of service. Canadian/foreign subscribers may call 1-386-597-4378 for subscription inquiries. American Express, Visa/MasterCard payments accepted. Cover price, \$4.95. Back issues, \$4.95 (includes postage and handling). Send letters to the editor to The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th Street, N.W., Suite 505, Washington, DC 20036-4617. For a copy of The Weekly Standard Privacy Policy, visit www.weeklystandard.com or write to Customer Service, The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington, D.C. 20036. Copyright 2012, Clarity Media Group. All rights reserved. No material in The Weekly Standard may be reprinted without permission of the copyright owner. The Weekly Standard is a registered trademark of Clarity Media Group.



The Forgotten Woman

A few years ago, I was in New York with my wife, Cynthia. Passing through Queens, we stopped in to see an old family friend of hers who was in town, with a new baby, visiting relatives.

I knew little about this woman, whose name was Cathy, except that she and Cynthia had seen a lot of each other growing up. She was also mentioned in a few family stories, including a favorite of mine about my father-in-law's boating days.

Peter, as his daughters will tell you, once had a terrible weakness for owning a boat, which, when you live near the water, can come to seem a necessary luxury. Only Peter was not rich, and his boats were always used, dinky little things that embarrassed his daughters, who had spent many an afternoon on much nicer boats owned by the wealthier families of friends.

It took a lot of pleading for Peter to get his daughters to go out on the water with him. One time his buddy Nick went fishing with him and brought along his oldest daughter, Cathy, whom Peter used as bait to reel Cynthia in for the day. For the girls, the outing consisted of sitting in the boat and doing no fishing, two bored adolescents, talking little except to say how incredibly lame this trip was and simply waiting to go home. And so they would have, eventually, but the boat's engine failed, and the dull-est day of their lives grew even longer as they waited for the Coast Guard to show up and haul the boat ashore.

This kind of thing happened often to Peter's boats, so there are many such stories, whose telling and retelling I enjoy and Peter seems to take with good humor.

Once Cynthia and I found the right house, we knocked and were greeted warmly by a tallish woman with long brown hair. This was Cathy, and her baby was on the floor, pushing up from the carpet. I felt a little self-conscious, but that's my natural state.

We talked in the living room and then moved to the kitchen for coffee. The conversation came around



to me. I mentioned I was originally from Douglaston, maybe 15 minutes by car from where we were. Cathy had grown up not far away in another direction.

She asked where I had gone to high school. I said I did my first year at St. Francis Prep. Cathy asked, Did I know Jennifer So-and-So? But the name didn't ring a bell. This friend of hers did theater at St. Francis, Cathy said. Oh really, I said, I did some theater there. I think I knew that, Cathy said, adding that it seemed like maybe we had met before. I looked at her closely and drew a blank.

As the visit wound down, I racked my brain and finally recalled the girl

she had asked me about. We were in the same all-Catholic production of Neil Simon's classic Jewish comedy *Brighton Beach Memoirs*. And she had introduced me to a friend of hers, whom I started dating. That girl, whose name also escaped me, was tallish and had dyed black hair. Her style was goth or maybe punk. Super thin, she wore pale makeup, except for heavy black eyeliner and lipstick that was so red it might have been oil paint.

I remember us once sitting in my parents' living room and having a long conversation about astral projection. To get together on this plane of reality, however, we had to rely on city buses, which took so long that after a handful of meetings the tiny ember of romance between us went out.

As Cynthia and I drove away, I was slowly realizing this might have been the woman I had just met. And to my wife I gently said that it seemed possible, though I was not really sure, that I had dated her childhood friend Cathy.

"Really?" she said, laughing, and then, as if she were talking to a mental patient, "But you're not sure?"

Whatever this was, it was bad. My having dated Cathy and then, 15 or so years later, failing to recognize her—it had the potential, if true, to become an embarrassing but very repeatable family anecdote.

When I saw my in-laws, at whose house we were staying, I found that Peter had been laughing about it for hours. Cathy had had no trouble recognizing me, but had been politely waiting for me to figure it all out. After I didn't figure it all out, she called her family to tell them the story, and they called Peter, who still gets a kick out of this one, this tale of my awkwardness, this uncool misadventure, my very own boat story.

DAVID SKINNER

Updating Reagan

Republicans these days are eager to replay the Reagan revolution. It is not hard to see why: In the 1980s, the GOP was the party of ideas, and the vision that Ronald Reagan and his supporters brought to Washington proved immensely popular with voters and profoundly improved American life. But in their effort to repeat Reagan's particular policies, rather than his more impressive feat of developing policies that applied conservative principles to the problems of his day, today's Republicans risk becoming detached from the country's real concerns.

Nowhere has that risk been more plainly on display in recent years than in conservative tax policy. And yet it is just on that front that Republicans now have an opportunity to demonstrate how applied conservatism can make for both good policy and good politics.

That opportunity comes in the form of a new tax-reform proposal from Utah senator Mike Lee. Rather than emulate the precise means of the Reagan tax-reform agenda, Lee wants to emulate its ends: easing the tax burden on American families, correcting economic distortions created by the tax code, and encouraging work, investment, and growth. A true revival of conservative tax policy would seek to achieve these ends by means designed with today's economic challenges in mind, rather than those of 30 years ago. And that is what makes the Lee proposal so promising.

His bill would dramatically simplify our tax system—consolidating today's seven tax brackets into two (set at 15 percent and 35 percent), repealing the Alternative Minimum Tax, reforming the deductions for mortgage interest and charitable giving and eliminating all other itemized deductions, and repealing Obamacare's new economically irrational taxes. But most important, it would address the unfair treatment of parents in today's tax code through a new \$2,500 per child tax credit, offered in addition to existing family benefits and refundable against parents' income and payroll tax liabilities.

Even if we put aside the enormous social, cultural, and moral significance of child-rearing and simply consider the economics involved, the immense expense of raising children deserves to be treated as an investment in America's future, and so to be rewarded and encouraged. Our entitlement system in particular depends on future taxpayers,

and over time amounts in effect to a transfer of wealth from larger families to smaller ones.

Lee's proposal begins to correct this imbalance, and in the process offers great relief to working families with children—helping to enable more poor Americans to enter the middle class and more middle-class Americans to contend with rising costs, especially of health care and higher education, amid stagnant wages. A family of four earning the median income (\$51,000 a year) would get a tax cut of roughly \$5,000 a year under Lee's plan.



Senator Mike Lee

The proposal could also rescue Republican tax policy from some of the most damaging conventions it has fallen into over the years. By refusing to accept the artificial and effectively meaningless distinction between payroll and income taxes, Lee is able to offer working families relief from the taxes that actually burden them, and to overcome the misguided resistance to taking more families off the income-tax rolls. Implicitly rebuking Mitt Romney's vision of makers and takers, Lee noted in introducing his plan that "people who pay no income tax do pay federal taxes. . . . Working families are not free riders."

Stagnating economic mobility and rising middle-class costs of living are key impediments to growth and prosperity today, and addressing them as Reagan and the supply-siders addressed the key impediments to growth and prosperity three decades ago will require an approach like the one Lee has proposed. His bill is of course only a start—more would need to be done to improve the corporate tax code, and to further eliminate undue burdens and distortions in the individual code. But it would make for a strong start, and would also make such further steps more plausible by appealing to a broad swath of voters beyond the usual conservative base.

Indeed, the politics of the Lee proposal point beyond tax policy toward a renewed conservative focus on the needs of working families—needs now largely ignored by both parties, and which conservative economic ideas could do much to address. As Lee put it, "For a political party too often seen as out of touch, aligned with the rich, indifferent to the less fortunate, and uninterested in solving the problems of working families, Republicans could not ask for a more worthy cause around which to build a new conservative reform agenda."

—Yuval Levin

From Bad to Worse

Syria has receded from the front pages. A long and winding road of failed diplomacy lies ahead, and who wants to bother covering that? Meanwhile, Bashar al-Assad is more firmly in power than before, al Qaeda is stronger among the Syrian rebels, the United States has lost credibility, and Iran and Russia have gained in stature and influence. This is the product of an irresolute president—and of shortsighted behavior by representatives of both parties in Congress.

But Syria is merely Act One. Next week, Act Two opens at the United Nations. There, we'll see a charm offensive worthy of Richard III by the new Iranian president and veteran deceiver of the West, Hassan Rouhani. In response, the Obama administration will move on from punting in Syria to appeasing Iran. The diplomatic dance with Iran will be long and complex. But who doubts that the couple will end up where Iran, the leading partner, wants to go?



Smaller retreats lead to larger ones. The West's failure to resist

Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia in 1935—and his troops' use of poison gas—was merely a foretaste of the failure to resist Hitler when he took the Rhineland in March 1936. In his essay in the volume *Present Dangers*, the historian Donald Kagan tells the story. Hitler had expected Britain to slap down Mussolini. When Mussolini asked for the loan of ships for his Ethiopian adventure, Hitler had privately said:

Let the Italians have a hundred ships! We'll go back, undamaged. They will go through the Suez Canal, but they will never go further. The British navy's battleship *Repulse* will be waiting there and signaling: "Which way are you going?" "South," the Italians will reply. "Oh no you're not," the *Repulse* will reply. "You're going north!" and north they will go.

But there was no such reply by the *Repulse*. Hitler drew the lesson. The occupation of the Rhineland followed shortly.

There will be no Rhineland this time. Iran isn't 1930s Germany, and the United States is more formidable than Britain. For now, Iran will have to achieve its goals by stealth and diplomacy, while Hitler achieved his by bravado and force. But the accommodation of the Islamic Republic of Iran's quest for nuclear weapons lies ahead as surely as the accommodation of Nazi Germany's expansionist dreams. Moreover, Rouhani knows what he is doing. He was Iran's top nuclear negotiator for two critical

years a decade ago and proved then his skill at duplicity in the furtherance of his regime's nuclear ambitions.

And the Obama administration, too, will play its role, echoing the Baldwin government, which Winston Churchill in 1936 characterized as "decided only to be undecided, resolved to be irresolute, adamant for drift, solid for fluidity, all-powerful to be impotent." Churchill continued, "So we go on preparing more months and years—precious, perhaps vital to the greatness of Britain—for the locusts to eat."

As Iran moves closer to nuclear weapons, undeterred by the West's leading power, a 21st-century tragedy threatens to unfold. Unless. Unless a *dramatis persona* who didn't exist in 1936 intervenes: Israel. Ariel Sharon once famously said that Israel would not play the role of Czechoslovakia in the 1930s. Nor will it play the role of Poland. Despite imprecations from the Obama administration, Israel will act. One prays it will not be too late.

It is a strange course of events, heavy with historical irony, that has made the prime minister of Israel for now the leader of the West. But irony is better than tragedy.

—William Kristol

Never Surrender

Since January 2011, Republicans have tried to repeal Obamacare, in whole or in part, more than 40 times. That number is recited with a predictable sneer by congressional Democrats and the Washington press corps each time a new vote is held. The mockery is meant to obscure the fact that Obamacare is a dysfunctional and unpopular law. It's supposed to make you forget that Republican efforts have actually succeeded in repealing parts of the law, such as the boondoggle known as the CLASS Act. The sneers are supposed to convince Republicans and the majority of Americans who oppose Obamacare that their efforts are futile.

Republicans shouldn't give up the fight. With the weight of Obamacare set to crash down on the country in the coming year, now is a perfect time for members of Congress to try again to protect the American people from all or some of the law's harmful effects. Republicans may lack control of the Senate and the White House, but they should continue to fight for whatever they might be able to achieve, such as attaching anti-fraud measures to Obamacare or delaying the individual mandate so long as the business mandate is delayed.

Some in the GOP have unfortunately embraced a fatalistic view of Obamacare this summer. "The surrender caucus" is what Senator Ted Cruz calls his colleagues who oppose a plan to defund Obamacare by threatening to force a government shutdown. But in reality, skeptics

of the defund-or-shutdown plan didn't spend the past two months raising the white flag in the battle against Obamacare. The freshman senator from Texas did.

"If this goes into effect on January 1, we will never, ever, ever get rid of it," Cruz told the audience of the Laura Ingraham radio show. "We either do it now or we surrender entirely," he warned on Sean Hannity's program.

Why will it become impossible to stop Obamacare after January 1? That's when Americans will become "hooked on the subsidies, addicted to the sugar," Cruz told a Tea Party gathering in his home state on August 19, according to the *Texas Tribune*. "If we get to January 1, this thing is here forever."

Cruz is mistaken. Obamacare is not guaranteed permanent victory when the subsidies start flowing in 2014. Obamacare is unlike Social Security and Medicare, popular programs passed with broad bipartisan support that provide universal entitlements, primarily for the elderly. Americans who pay Social Security and Medicare taxes all their working lives can easily envision benefiting from the programs one day if they live long enough. Obamacare, by contrast, is an elaborate regulatory scheme likely to hurt far more people than it helps. Few hurt by the law will ever be helped by it.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates that just 2 percent of all Americans will receive Obamacare subsidies in 2014. That number is projected to rise to around 6 percent of the population by 2016 (and level off thereafter). But for many recipients, Obamacare subsidies won't even make up for the insurance rate hikes the program will cause.

For people who currently are buying their own insurance on the individual market, the cost of the average plan will skyrocket in many states, rising a projected 41 percent in Ohio and 35 percent in Florida (to pick just two key swing states). According to a nationwide study by the Kaiser Family Foundation, just over half of people now on the individual market will qualify for no subsidy whatsoever under Obamacare.

What about those who will qualify for subsidies? Some will get tax credits insufficient to cover this year's rate hike, though we don't have precise figures. The participation of young Americans is critical to the success of Obamacare, but a study in the magazine of the American Academy of Actuaries found that 80 percent of Americans younger than 30 will face higher premiums even with subsidies.

Of course, some Americans, particularly those earning less than 200 percent of the poverty level, will see significant financial benefits. But insurance will still cost thousands of dollars per year for many beneficiaries who earn slightly more than 250 percent of the poverty rate. And Obamacare's big-government approach to mandating what insurance must cover will do little to rein in the growth of health costs in the long run. Will Americans really become

addicted to subsidies that go to their insurance companies and don't actually lower costs?

Some of the biggest beneficiaries of Obamacare will be those with preexisting health conditions who have been denied insurance coverage. They will be able to purchase insurance at the same price as healthy Americans because of an Obamacare regulation that, incidentally, would still be on the books even if the law were defunded. But all this means is that any repeal of Obamacare must be tied to a plan to help people with preexisting conditions.

And here is the deeper problem with Cruz's argument. The notion that people receiving subsidies will become "addicted" to Obamacare rests on the moocher theory of American politics, a simplistic and inaccurate idea that there are conservative "makers" who pay taxes and vote Republican and liberal "takers" who are dependent on government and vote Democratic. Like Mitt Romney's statement about "the 47 percent," Cruz's remarks implicitly assume that conservatives have nothing to offer beneficiaries of government programs.

If Obamacare is as bad as Cruz and other conservatives say—if it's going to pick the pockets of the young, ration care for the elderly, tax employers, slash wages and benefits of employees, assault religious liberty, subsidize elective abortions with taxpayer money, and bust the budget—shouldn't Republicans be able to rally the American people behind something better? Shouldn't Republicans in Congress be able to unite behind a set of conservative reforms that helps Americans with preexisting conditions through subsidized high-risk pools while freeing up the market and fixing the tax code to lower costs?

Top Democrats are far less confident than Senator Cruz about Obamacare's future. "What we've done with Obamacare is have a step in the right direction, but we're far from having something that's going to work forever," Senate majority leader Harry Reid said at a town hall event in August.

So the big question isn't really whether Obamacare will eventually fail, but what comes after it fails. When Obamacare starts to unravel, will the American people trust the Democrats who designed it to fix it by giving the government more power and more control? Or will Obamacare's failure provide an opportunity to repeal it and replace it with a conservative free-market reform?

Republicans will have a good shot at passing real reform—so long as they avoid blundering into a government shutdown that will not stop Obamacare but will only lend credence to false Democratic claims that the problem with Obamacare isn't the law itself but rather GOP obstruction and sabotage.

Republicans should fight this fall for whatever they can realistically achieve (a matter about which there is reasonable disagreement). But conservatives shouldn't be



panicked into thinking that a government shutdown or debt default this fall is their last, best shot at overturning the law. On January 1, Americans won't become addicted to Obamacare so much as they will be afflicted by it.

—John McCormack

Keystone Kops

It's not often officials from the nation's largest business lobby and an AFL-CIO-affiliated union speak to one another, let alone work together. But last week, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and North America's Building Trades Unions held a joint press conference on Capitol Hill in support of the Keystone XL pipeline that would bring oil from Northern Alberta to the Gulf of Mexico. Nearby that same day, exactly five years after TransCanada Corp. applied for a permit to build the pipeline, the House Energy and Commerce Committee held a hearing whose title said it all: "Keystone's Red Tape Anniversary: Five Years of Bureaucratic Delay and Economic Benefits Denied."

Both events featured a bipartisan group of policymakers and experts whose statements ranged from puzzlement to pique that the Obama administration still hadn't adjudicated TransCanada's application. Keystone's five-year review has taken "far longer than any other cross-border pipeline project and more than twice as long as it will take to build the pipeline," Building Trades president Sean McGarvey said. Lucian Pugliese, president of the Energy Policy Research Foundation, declared at the hearing, "It's not something that should have created all this furor."

Nobody thought it would take the president this long to make a decision on the \$12 billion venture that would move nearly 1,000,000 barrels of oil a day. Pundits predicted he would approve the pipeline soon after his reelection last year, once he could afford to alienate the environmental groups that oppose the plan. But Obama's indecisiveness knows no bounds, as we just saw with the Syria debacle. The president declared the Middle Eastern country would face serious strikes after using deadly chemical weapons, then backtracked, sending Secretary of State John Kerry to Congress and abroad to make a confused case for an abbreviated battle the American public didn't want. Now Obama has suggested that the ultimate authority for Keystone lies with that same, humiliated functionary. The State Department released its final environmental impact report two years ago, finding Keystone would have "no significant impacts." The president insisted then that more research needed to be done and recently told the *New York Times* that it was "John Kerry's decision or recommendation" that would finally end the debate.

The State Department is involved only because the pipeline would cross an international border, so it seems ridicu-

lous for the president to pass off his duty to Kerry. But Keystone might well turn out to be a matter of state and security. Refiners say Canadian oil could replace up to half the 2 million barrels imported each day to the Gulf Coast from less friendly countries. Consulting group IHS CERA, *Forbes* reports, believes "that if the tar sands don't come from Canada then heavy crude oils—with similar attributes—would be shipped from Venezuela." The environmental impact would remain the same; the difference is that America would be doing business with (and contributing to the economy of) an unfriendly dictatorship rather than a close friend.

Neither Obama nor Kerry will decide whether the tar sands of Alberta will be developed. It's not a matter of if the fuel below ground will be extracted, but when—and for whom. The Chinese government has already begun making purchases in an attempt to secure these resources for itself. If the administration rejects Keystone—or even just continues to delay its decision—it's likely that Canadian oil will instead be sent to China. Environmentalists haven't explained how shipping oil across the Pacific by boat will result in a smaller carbon footprint than piping it down to Louisiana. They certainly haven't considered what it might mean to cede control over a vast resource to our biggest (and least friendly) competitor.

That's not why North America's Building Trades Unions joined forces with the Chamber of Commerce to urge approval of the project, of course. Both groups—and the American public—have something more pressing in mind: jobs. The president's own State Department estimated that the initial construction period of the pipeline would result in over 42,000 jobs a year. But Obama then claimed, in his *New York Times* interview, that "this might create maybe 2,000 jobs during the construction" and "between 50 and 100 [chuckles] jobs" afterwards (sneering sound in original).

To be fair, the president's indecision has created quite a number of new jobs—for lobbyists and activists. *Bloomberg* reported last week that "lobbyists representing more than 50 groups" have spent \$1 million in television ads alone this year, after spending almost \$16 million during the election, "making it one of Washington's most protracted and pricey lobbying campaigns." The money hasn't changed the public's mind, however: Multiple surveys indicate Americans want the pipeline approved, by a two-to-one margin. A recent Pew Research Center Poll found 66 percent in favor, with only 23 percent opposed.

So the environmentalists are bringing out the big guns. The Natural Resources Defense Council just launched an Internet campaign featuring pleas from Hollywood stars. In one blog post, Robert Redford wrote, "If you ask me, tar sands oil is exactly the type of dirty oil we can no longer afford." Nobody asked him, of course. And it's a shame that any measure of oil independence and job creation depends on the permission of a single, indecisive prima donna.

—Kelly Jane Torrance

Ronald Binz's German Dream

Energy policy *über alles*.

BY STEVEN F. HAYWARD



It may be overdone to say that the Obama administration aims to shove America in the direction of European social democracy, but there's one domain where this is surely true: energy policy. Any number of administration diktats and subsidy schemes, from Solyndra to proposed EPA strangulation of coal, attest to this ambition, but the most significant sign of Euro-envy is Obama's nomination of Ronald Binz to be chairman of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).

Binz is the former chairman of the Colorado Public Utilities Commission, where he regulated aggressively to suppress conventional hydrocarbon energy in favor of wind and solar power. He threatens to do more of the same at FERC, having gone so far as to assert that natural gas is a "dead end" for the American future, and that "policy and regulation," rather than market forces, should be the key driver of our energy mix. Binz faced a rocky confirmation hearing last week, centered around some of the usual "gotcha" questions about whether he had been fully honest about the lobbying efforts on

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behalf of his nomination, and backtracking from his negative comments on gas. But the Senate should be asking more substantive questions about his philosophy, which relies on the usual fog of renewable energy hype and magical thinking about the transformative power of regulation.

Binz's model is Germany's aggressive approach to promoting renewable energy over the last two decades, known as *Energiewende* ("energy revolution"). He has the worst case of German-envy by an American policy maker since Woodrow Wilson read Hegel. (It is tempting to call him "Mercedes Binz," since he favors exotic and expensive energy.)

The difference between Germany and the United States, Binz says approvingly, is *policy*, claiming that Germany leads the world on renewable energy, getting about 5 percent of its electricity from solar power, and 10 percent from wind. But this is all fun with eye-glazing numbers, which is how the renewable energy game works. In fact the United States actually produces twice as much total energy from non-hydro renewable sources as Germany. (Non-hydro renewables are wind, solar, biomass, and geothermal.) The lower total

percentage share of renewables in the United States owes to our higher use of liquid fuels for transportation since we're a more spread out country than Germany. BP's 2013 *Statistical Review of World Energy* places Germany's renewable energy production at 8.3 percent of its total energy consumption; for the United States the figure is 2.3 percent. However, if you add in our considerable hydropower production, our total renewable share rises to 5.2 percent, while in Germany, with few dams, hydropower brings their renewable total to only 9.9 percent.

Overall, Germany barely beats the United States in terms of using less hydrocarbon energy (coal, oil, and natural gas), which is the object of Binz's sought-after policy exertions. BP's figures show that the United States derived 86.5 percent of its total energy from hydrocarbons in 2012, while the figure for Germany was 82.9 percent. In other words, Binz and others in the *Deutschland über alles* chorus are touting the fact that Germany's total energy mix

GARY LOCKE

is just 3.6 percentage points “cleaner” than that of the United States. And if you really want to rain on the renewable rally, note that coal consumption went *up* 3.9 percent in Germany last year, while coal consumption fell 11.9 percent here, owing chiefly to the availability of the cheap natural gas that Binz wants to put on a course of ultimate extinction. Likewise, German greenhouse gas emissions—the chief object of *Energiewende*—rose in Germany last year, while they fell in the United States.

The irony is that the environmentally correct enthusiasm for Germany among American greens coincides with second thoughts in Germany (and elsewhere in Europe) about the renewables fetish. German energy costs have almost doubled over the last four years. Germany has had to pay enormous subsidies for meager results, and the subterfuges by which the costs are spread and disguised are becoming harder to maintain.

By one estimate, German consumers have already spent \$100 billion in renewable energy surcharges, and the cost is still rising fast. This year the renewable electricity surcharge may top \$26 billion. The Breakthrough Institute in California, which conducts some of the best energy analysis from within the environmental camp, estimates that the German tab for solar power will reach \$130 billion by the year 2030. (Germany’s irrational decision to phase out nuclear power deepens its challenge. Breakthrough calculates that Finland’s massively overbudget new nuclear power plant will still be four times more cost-effective than all of Germany’s solar power.)

Der Spiegel ran a devastating cover story last month lamenting that electricity has become a “luxury good”:

German consumers already pay the highest electricity prices in Europe [actually the second-highest]. But because the government is failing to get the costs of its new energy policy under control, rising prices are already on the horizon. Electricity is becoming a luxury good in Germany. . . . Former Environment Minister Jürgen Trittin of the Green Party

once claimed that switching Germany to renewable energy wasn’t going to cost citizens more than one scoop of ice cream. Today his successor [Peter] Altmaier admits consumers are paying enough to “eat everything on the ice cream menu.”

Altmaier has said that the total cost of Germany’s energy dreams could reach 1 trillion euros by the 2030s if the nation doesn’t change course. No wonder Chancellor Angela Merkel is promising to reform Germany’s renewable energy policy after her expected reelection.

Naturally Merkel is concerned about the impact of higher costs on energy-intensive German industry. In

The irony is that the environmentally correct enthusiasm for Germany coincides with second thoughts in Germany (and elsewhere in Europe) about the renewables fetish. Energy costs have almost doubled over the last four years.

a reversal of the usual globalization story, some German firms are looking to locate new facilities *in the United States*, to take advantage of cheaper energy as well as proximity to our markets. So the government has done what they usually do: cut special deals with favored businesses, exempting more than 2,000 companies from paying the renewable energy surcharge, while 2,000 more German firms have applied for exemptions. (The European Union is investigating whether these exemptions violate EU regulations of government subsidies.) This has resulted in offloading the costs to households. German households not only pay the second-highest electricity rates in Europe (only wind-happy Denmark—no coincidence—charges higher rates), but the gap between household and industrial rates is the largest of any European nation: Households pay more than twice as

much for their electricity. Industrial discounts are much lower in most other eurozone nations.

Germany’s American cheerleaders, like Binz, argue that the increase in coal and greenhouse gas emissions is temporary and that costs will come under control soon because of sharply falling prices for solar and wind power. It is true that solar costs are falling, but there’s reason to think, paradoxically, that more solar and wind power will also cause the use of coal to continue to increase. Because of the intermittency of wind and solar, German electric utilities have to have backup baseload power ready, and coal-fired power is cheaper than natural gas-fired power right now. Perversely for the German greens, coal-fired power is profitable while gas-fired power is not. Natural gas prices in Germany are about two-and-a-half times higher than U.S. prices (thank you, fracking), which is why gas-fired power in Germany is so much more expensive than here. If Germany and other eurozone nations want to replicate our success, they’ll need to join the fracking revolution.

Dissent magazine, one of the leading journals of the American left, was honest enough to report in a recent article entitled “Green Energy Bust in Germany” that “when you look beyond the cherry-picked hype, the results are dismal and disquieting.”

Yet this is the energy vision of the Obama administration—Obama specifically singled out Germany as a model to be emulated in his 2008 campaign—and Ron Binz is just the latest in a line of aggressive regulators that have become so familiar over the last five years. FERC, a sleepy backwater among agencies, seldom makes the front pages of the paper. FERC’s regulatory authority is confined chiefly to matters of interstate energy infrastructure (pipelines, electricity grids, etc.) and not directly to energy sources or supply. But the Obama administration has shown repeatedly that it is more than willing to expand the bounds of administrative policy-making. If Binz is confirmed, FERC will likely join the EPA in its crusade to strangle America’s hydrocarbon renaissance. ♦

Blowin' in the Wind

How many times must a bald eagle die?

BY ETHAN EPSTEIN

In their seemingly quixotic efforts to reduce emissions, energy companies have increasingly tilted towards windmills. The United States now houses some 45,000 wind turbines on nearly 900 wind farms. That's enough to power about 1.6 million homes, according to the American Wind Energy Association. Despite the much-hyped natural gas boom, wind is now the number one source of new power generation in the country; 43 percent of the generating capacity that came online last year was from wind.

The main benefit of wind power is obvious: It generates no air or water pollution, and none of the carbon emissions that are thought to contribute to climate change. What's more, wind itself is free, meaning that over the long term, wind farms should prove profitable for utility companies. It also doesn't hurt that energy companies benefit from a bevy of federal subsidies and tax credits for investing in wind farm projects.

Wind turbines come with undeniable drawbacks, though. Many are aesthetic. Today's wind turbines aren't the picturesque, gentle windmills that one associates with, say, the Dutch countryside. They're more like something out of *Blade Runner*: monstrous, dystopian-looking things that can stand as tall as a 20-story building

Craftsbury, Vt.



A Palm Springs wind farm

and carry 200-foot-long blades, utterly dominating their typically bucolic surroundings. They're murder on birds, killing more than a half-million each year in the United States alone, according to an Associated Press analysis. They're noisy, generating upwards of 50 decibels when they rotate. (Quiet,

rural areas, where most wind farms are located, average about 30 decibels of ambient noise.) And worst of all, because wind is inherently unreliable (sometimes it blows, sometimes it doesn't), backup power from other sources—usually fossil fuels—is a must. The power grid cannot live on wind alone.

Wind power's unfortunate side effects have splintered typical ideological alliances, with many greens finding themselves in the odd position of opposing what's usually cast as the greenest of green power supplies. Consider Craftsbury, Vermont, a New England village so idyllic it looks more like cliché than reality (white wooden church, lovely town green). The view of a nearby ridge has been despoiled by 21 monstrous 459-foot turbines. The noise has also been a problem. Despite the fact that the project is limited to 45 decibels, local resident Shirley Nelson has kept a "noise diary" since the project opened, and has recorded "sleep loss, ringing in the ears, headaches and lapses in memory, which she attributes to the turbines," reports the *Burlington Free Press*. Snow and ice buildup on the turbines, meanwhile—hardly uncommon in northern

Vermont—makes them even louder.

It's not only the local human population that's suffering as a result. According to Steven Wright, former commissioner of the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department, the project required clearcutting 134 acres of forest filled with "bear, moose, bobcat and deer." Wright also notes that the emissions reductions will be negligible. As he wrote in the *New York Times* a couple of years back, "Only 4 percent of [Vermont's greenhouse gas] emissions now result from electricity generation. (Nearly half come from cars and trucks, and another third from the burning of heating oil.)"

As one Vermont progressive wrote in a local newspaper, wind turbine projects on ridgelines amount to "corporate vandalism." The writer has a point: The ridgelines *are* being defaced by wind turbine projects. (To be sure, she also lamented that wind power is serving to enrich "War profiteer Halliburton.") And building wind turbines on ridges is a particularly shortsighted move for a state like Vermont, which is dependent on tourism and whose primary natural resource is its justly renowned natural beauty. What's the sense in trashing your environment for what amounts to only a minuscule reduction in greenhouse gas emissions?

Debates of this kind have echoed across the country. In Groton, New Hampshire, local activists are protesting a planned farm of 400-foot wind turbines in a rural area, arguing that conservation is a better way to fight climate change than wind turbine construction. A proposal to place wind turbines in Lake Erie, just off the northern Ohio coast, has drawn a flurry of local opposition. The Blue Mountain Alliance in Umatilla County, Oregon, is agitating against wind turbine construction in its beautiful corner of Eastern Oregon on environmental and aesthetic grounds. And perhaps most famously, in Hyannis Port, Massachusetts, home of the famed Kennedy compound, a proposal to build 130 turbines in Nantucket Sound was mired in political and legal controversy for years, with the Kennedys leading the opposition, until the

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project gained final approval last year.

Shrewdly, anti-turbine activists have tarred wind energy projects with the same kind of language that's used to demonize big oil. The New Hampshire anti-wind campaigners, for example, cast their fight as one against "Industrial Wind in NH." FairWindCT, an environmental anti-wind-turbine group in Connecticut, worries about the "unregulated installation of wind turbines." Some of the opponents' objections are silly. Many trumpet the fact that the power doesn't stay "local"—they argue that it's somehow objectionable that not all of the power generated by the turbines stays in the communities that house the turbines. But that fundamentally misunderstands the nature of the power grid. It's simplest to think of the power grid like a giant bathtub—every power plant dumps its electricity into the tub. There's no way to sequester the output of one power plant or wind farm and distribute it only to a particular community.

But the opponents nonetheless have a strong case. All in all, while wind is the fastest-growing energy source, it still represents a meager 3.5 percent of U.S. electricity generation. With tens of thousands of turbines already built, that's a clear sign that wind power is deeply inefficient. It provides just a token reduction in emissions at serious environmental, aesthetic, and quality of life costs. Even in gung-ho Germany, where sometimes it seems like every bit of spare land now sports a turbine, wind only supplies about 10 percent of the country's power, among the world's highest rates. The United States would have to blanket itself in turbines to make a meaningful difference in its power supply—an unlikely and, frankly, undesirable outcome.

Opponents of wind power got some extra ammunition earlier this month when a study from government biologists found that wind turbines had killed at least 67 golden and bald eagles over the past five years—a number it said was probably a profound underestimate. That should bolster the anti-turbine side. After all, how do you ask a bald eagle to be the last bird to die for a federally subsidized mistake? ♦

The Best Bargain I Ever Made

Ronald Coase, 1910-2013.

BY ANDREW B. WILSON

Though I never met the man, I feel a debt of gratitude to Ronald Coase, the Nobel Prize-winning economist who died on Labor Day at age 102. Reading his "Nature of the Firm," one of the most cited essays in all of economics literature, encouraged me to start my own business.

Two decades ago, I persuaded John McDonnell, the CEO of McDonnell Douglas, then the nation's twenty-third-largest industrial company, to outsource the biggest part of my job—writing his speeches—back to me as an independent writer. I left the company with an annual contract that paid me no less money than I had been making before and that allowed me to pursue other clients. But as I told McDonnell, I knew that I had to perform at a high level, being painfully aware that the company could cancel my contract at any time if I did less well as an independent contractor than I had as a "salary-man" (to use the Japanese expression), or employee.

Anyone familiar with Ronald Coase's work will recognize that I had struck a classic "Coasian" bargain—finding an efficient free-market solution to a problem (my unhappiness with the corporate environment and desire for independence) that

worked for both parties: The CEO accepted the notion that I would be a hyper-motivated non-employee, and I became my own boss.

Coase was the first to ask, and provide a plausible answer to, the question of why companies exist, and why a critical part of their success comes

from getting large numbers of people to submit to a form of voluntary servitude—punching a time clock and giving employers the right to direct their performance in exchange for predetermined wages or salaries and protection from sudden or arbitrary dismissal.

His answer was that companies exist for the purpose of reducing "transaction costs," meaning all the costs of trying to order economic activity through voluntary exchange. That includes the costs of searching out and evaluating other parties; negotiating contracts; maintaining communication; and policing and enforcing the terms of those contracts.

Imagine the extraordinary difficulty that a Henry Ford or a William Boeing would have faced in trying to contract out for every part and every task going into the manufacturing and assembly of a car or airplane. Hence the need for the visible hand of management in coordinating the allocation of resources.

At the same time, Coase fully appreciated the disciplines and rewards of free enterprise, and he was acutely aware of the tendency of corporate



Ronald Coase

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(and government) bureaucracies to stifle individual initiative and kill any sense of real ownership that people have over the quality of their own work. Within a large, publicly owned corporation, no one, including the CEO, is spending his own money.

Citing the picturesque words of another economist (D.H. Robertson), the British-born Coase, who spent most of his working life in the United States, described companies as “islands of conscious power”—or central planning—in an “ocean of unconscious (i.e., spontaneous free-market) co-operation . . . like lumps of butter in a pail of coagulating buttermilk.”

The “lump of butter” of which I was a part in the early 1990s was a shrinking rather than a growing mass: In just three years, the company shed more than 50,000 jobs, or 42 percent of the workforce. In the midst of all the downsizing, people were angry and confused, not knowing where the axe would fall next and bitterly resenting a sudden loss of the personal security that they had gained (and felt entitled to) through years of fealty to the same company. What they didn’t see was that a whole way of life was disappearing.

And now it is gone. Today, no one—not even someone graduating from a top business school—expects to spend his or her entire adult life with a single company. Everyone accepts that big companies really aren’t built to last. More like lumps of butter than castles of perpetual growth and stability, they may dissolve at any moment and disappear into the surrounding liquid.

One may think of the quarter-century from 1955 (the first year of the Fortune 500) to 1980 as a golden age for big business in America. During that time, Fortune 500 companies ruled the roost, growing at about twice the rate of GDP growth and enjoying robust profitability from one year to the next, even during recessions. In 1975, the last year of the virulent recession touched off by the Arab oil embargo, only 15 Fortune 500 companies, or 3 percent of the total, reported

losses, and all of the top 50 companies were solidly in the black.

Compare that with 1993, which happened to be my last year as an employee at McDonnell Douglas. This was a brutal year for many big companies. Even though the 1990-91 recession was officially over, no fewer than 151 Fortune 500 companies, or just over 30 percent, lost money in 1993, and that included 4 out of the top 10 (GM, Ford, IBM, and DuPont) and 22 out of the top 50 ranked by revenues.

To add just one more statistic gleaned from sifting through old issues of the Fortune annual survey, it is worth noting that Fortune 500 companies shed close to 3 million jobs in the decade ending in 1993.

So what happened to bring the era of big business dominance to a close and set the stage for a new era of entrepreneurship and greater dispersal as opposed to centralization of economic activity?

We may turn to Ronald Coase for the key insight. In his essay on the nature of the firm—published in 1937, when he was a young professor at the London School of Economics—he addressed the different ways in which technological advances could affect the size of companies:

It should be noted that most inventions will change both the costs of organizing and the costs of using the price mechanism. In such cases, whether the invention tends to make firms larger or smaller will depend upon the relative effect on these two sets of costs. For instance, if the telephone reduces the costs of using the price mechanism more than it reduces the costs of organizing, then it will have the effect of reducing the size of the firm.

But of course, I thought, when I read those words for the first time. This was a year before John McDonnell and I struck our Coasian bargain. With his encouragement, I had agreed to take part in a research project by the Center for the Study of American Business at Washington University in St. Louis examining how U.S. firms (including

McDonnell Douglas) were responding to the twin challenges of the information revolution and globalization and to write sections of a book (*The Dynamic American Firm*) summarizing the findings.

Coase’s thinking loomed large in the book and in my subsequent decision to go out on my own.

The mainframe computers that came into existence in the 1950s were so big and expensive that only the biggest companies could use them. With the help of these early computers in reducing the costs of organizing production and marketing, Fortune 500 companies became bigger and more prosperous throughout the sixties and seventies.

Then came the information revolution—which (even before the Internet) had the opposite effect of reducing the size of firms. It reduced the need for corporate bureaucracy. Still more, it caused many big companies to disassemble their carefully constructed vertical empires and to contract out for just about everything outside of their own core competencies. I knew that writing was not one of McDonnell Douglas’s core competencies, and I reasoned that I should set a price for my work as an outside contractor that would be equal to the cost that the company would incur in having to hire a speechwriter to replace me. Since the drafting of speeches and annual reports took maybe 50 percent of my time at McDonnell Douglas, I figured I would free up many hours that would go into serving other clients.

The Dynamic American Firm did not become a bestseller, but in rereading some passages of the book, I can relive a bit of the excitement I felt in pondering the next step in my own life:

Like “de-industrialization,” the rapid rise in business services and self-employment over the past several years has set alarm bells ringing in enlightened centers of thought. “In the future,” one displaced executive told *Time* magazine, “we are going to be moving from job to job in the same way that migrant workers move from crop to crop.”

Perhaps. But unlike the migrant worker, today's corporate refugee, equipped with a personal computer, printer, copier and fax machine—all purchased for about \$7,000—can earn a good living toiling in the comfort of his, or her, home. That is so because the information revolution has greatly reduced transaction costs—for big firms and small contractors alike.

Coase may have done more to extend our understanding of business and commerce than any thinker since Adam Smith. But his influence did not stop there. He also had a profound influence in challenging the belief that government regulations, taxes, or subsidies were the best and, indeed, the only way of dealing with actions of business firms that have harmful effects on others, with a commonly cited example being the emission of sparks from a train that damages a farmer's crops along the railroad's right of way.

In "The Problem of Social Cost," his second-most-famous essay, published in 1960, Coase argued that most disputes of this nature are best resolved by negotiation, rather than regulation or imposing strict penalties on the damaging party.

As Coase pointed out, both the railroad and the farmer would be better off if the latter agreed not to cultivate the vulnerable portion of his land in exchange for a payment that would equal or exceed the opportunity cost incurred in forgoing its cultivation. In other words, without regulation, the two sides could easily reach a mutually beneficial solution.

"The Problem of Social Cost" gave rise to a whole new body of literature in the field of "economics and the law."

In awarding him the 1991 prize in economics, the Nobel committee observed that "Coase may be said to have identified a new set of 'elementary particles' in the economic system." Coase himself made no such claim. In 2012 he told an interviewer, "I've never done anything that wasn't obvious, and I didn't know why other people didn't do it." ♦

Economic Malpractice

The stagnation president.

BY FRED BARNES

It's amazing how little President Obama has learned about economics in his four and a half years in the White House. Growth, incentives, tax reform, tax increases, private investment, the middle class, a second



A Manhattan jobseeker, August 12, 2013

great depression, the sequester—all these issues have one thing in common: Obama doesn't understand their role in our economy.

Nor does he appear interested in finding out. Members of the now-defunct President's Council on Jobs and Competitiveness have privately talked about Obama's economic shallowness. After the 2010 election, he invited four conservative economists to the White House. When former Congressional Budget Office director Douglas Holtz-Eakin broached the subject of the economic cost of Obamacare, the president dismissed it as politics, not economics.

Obama seems oblivious to the

feeble recovery his policies have produced since the recession bottomed out in June 2009. The jobless rate is 7.3 percent. But if the millions who've dropped out of the job market altogether since Obama took office in January 2009 were counted, the unemployment rate would be 10.8 percent. "In other words, the United States faces a permanently larger pool of jobless Americans," says the American Enterprise Institute's James Pethokoukis.

The economy has grown at less than 2 percent during Obama's presidency and shows few signs of picking up the pace. "We need to grow faster," he acknowledged last week. "We need more good-paying jobs." Yet he's sticking to the same policies that led to stagnation in the first place.

His solution for slow growth is more government spending. Government is going to have a critical role, Obama said, in determining "whether we can hire more workers to upgrade our transportation and communications networks or fund the kinds of research and development that always kept America on the cutting edge." Not really. What has kept America ahead of the curve is private investment, which has lagged in the Obama era.

Investment incentives spurred fast, robust, and stable growth and strong job creation in the '60s and '80s, thanks to tax cuts on individual and corporate income championed by Presidents Kennedy and Reagan. Obama acts as if he's never heard of such a thing. True, he's for killing some tax loopholes and preferences and lowering the corporate tax rate by a few percentage points. He'd also use some of the proceeds to spend still more.

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Obama calls this tax reform. But it's hardly the popular version, which would broaden the tax base and lower tax rates, including the rates on individual income. That would mean a lower rate for the investor class, the top 1 percent. Since Obama won't consider that, tax reform is dead and along with it incentives to invest.

Among the president's excuses for stunted growth is the sequester, the spending cut of \$85 billion this year. It has "cost jobs, harmed growth, [and hurt] our military readiness," he said in last week's "Remarks by the President at the Five-Year Anniversary of the Financial Crisis." In fact, the economic impact of the sequester is unknowable. It's guesswork.

But Obama's claim raises two questions should ask himself. One, if spending cuts impede growth, shouldn't a massive spending increase unleash it? But the spending surge in Obama's first term certainly didn't. Two, if cutting the corporate tax rate (now 35 percent) will "create more good jobs and with good wages for the middle-class folks who work at those businesses," won't a tax hike have the opposite effect? Just this year, Obama boosted taxes, notably on business-related income, capital gains, dividends, and personal earnings. These came on top of a 3.8 percent surtax on investment income.

Despite all this, Obama claims his policies have "begun to lay a new foundation for economic growth and prosperity." He boasts: "Our deficits are now falling at the fastest rate since the end of World War II." That sounds impressive—until you realize the decline is from a deficit of \$1.4 trillion in 2009 to \$1.1 trillion in 2012. Meanwhile, the Congressional Budget Office reported last week the accumulation of national debt is on an unsustainable path. Some foundation!

Obama continues to talk up the fantasy that he saved the country from plunging into a full-blown depression in 2009. "The economy was on the verge of a great depression," he told George Stephanopoulos of ABC News recently. "In some ways, actually, the economic data" pointed to a downturn

"worse than what happened in the 1930s. And we came in [and] stabilized the situation."

He insists the \$821 billion "stimulus" package stopped the "downward spiral and put a floor under the fall." But the recession was over by June 2009, well before the bulk of the stimulus had been implemented. Instead, the Federal Reserve had flooded the economy with liquidity, and the big banks had been bailed out, before Obama was inaugurated. The crisis had been largely quelled without his help.

There's another fantasy in Obama's economic dreams: He's the savior of a beleaguered middle-class America that hasn't gained economically in many years. "We also started pushing back against trends that have been battering the middle class for decades," he said in last week's speech. The rich got 20 percent of national income in 2012, "while the average worker isn't seeing any raise at all," he added. "In fact, that understates the problem."

It overstates the situation and distorts it. The idea of a faltering middle class has been debunked frequently by AEI's Pethokoukis. Now he has the Census Bureau to back him up. It pegged "real median household income"—a proxy for middle-class income—as rising during the boom years from 1983 through 2007.

The median income was \$51,017 in 2012, close to what it was in 2011 but below the \$55,627 level in 2007 (before the recession). The peak was \$56,080 in 1999. "The Census Bureau is just tracking pre-tax, pre-transfer, non-fringe-benefit market income," Pethokoukis wrote. So, the bureau said, median income "does not completely capture the economic well-being of individuals and families."

Note that household income has fallen in the Obama years, as it did in George W. Bush's second term. From this, I draw a simple conclusion. Middle-class Americans don't need to be protected by Obama. They need to be protected from him. ♦



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The New Pioneers

Starting over in North Dakota.

BY MICHAEL WARREN

Williston, N.D.

In O.E. Rølvaag's *Giants in the Earth*, homesteader Per Hansa and his family depart from the safety of their Norwegian immigrant community in Minnesota for the open land of the Dakota Territory. This is something Americans have done for hundreds of years—leave home for the chance to start anew. Today, the frontier isn't far from where the homesteaders of the 19th century settled. North Dakota (unemployment rate 3.2 percent and falling) is a place where plenty of Americans are finding their second chance.

Michelle Westlund, the 48-year-old owner of Lynden Chocolate on Second Avenue in Williston, is one of them. Since opening her store in March, she's been busier than she ever was in six years in her old shop in Washington state. She sells fudge, chocolate truffles, chocolate-covered pretzels and nuts, and much more—all of it made on site.

"These hands make it!" she tells me, shaking her fingers to emphasize the point. "A truck doesn't come in."

But the customers sure do. One week, a few months after she opened, Michelle's candy flew off the shelves faster than she could make it. By Saturday, her cases were empty, and she had to turn people away. "It's hard for me to keep up," she says.

That's the way life is in North Dakota now. The oil boom that began in 2007 has transformed this area of sleepy ranching communities into America's new energy powerhouse. Shortly after the drilling process called

hydraulic fracturing (commonly known as "fracking") made available the oil and natural gas buried two miles beneath the surface in the Bakken shale formation, the engineers and drill hands and rig workers swooped into town. That brought more people, with more disposable income. Businesses not directly connected to the energy sector soon followed to serve the growing region: retailers, service stations, hotels and man camps, fast-food restaurants, and, yes, boutiques like Lynden Chocolate.



Michelle Westlund

Michelle attributes much of her shop's success to a positive write-up in the local newspaper. But there's also the fact that here in the heart of the oil patch, a lot of men are working long hours, with money to spend and girlfriends or wives to keep happy. Those oil workers like to buy quality chocolate—milk, not dark, is the favorite in Williston, she says—and lots of it.

"Once my thing came out in the *Williston Herald*, it was like Christmas," Michelle says. "And I was working seven days a week, 12-, 15-hour days. I would get up, start work at nine, and I was going to bed at midnight every day."

Michelle decided to close on Sundays and Mondays, to give herself a break. "Sunday, I don't even look at chocolate, and then Monday I work all day and all night if I have to, but I don't get interrupted."

Clearly, there was an untapped market in Williston for something better than a box of Russell Stover from the drugstore. But Michelle didn't move here with plans to become the chocolate queen of the Bakken. She didn't even know how to find Williston on

a map when her husband, Mark, said he wanted them to move there from their adopted hometown of Lynden, Washington. (The Westlunds are originally from just across the border in British Columbia.)

Mark, 52, had worked in construction for 30 years, installing drywall and pouring foundations. But the real estate collapse in Washington state after 2008 was devastating to his career, and years of lifting heavy slabs of sheetrock were putting a strain on his body. Mark's unemployment and Michelle's struggles as a small-business owner in the Great Recession depleted the couple's savings. Then Mark heard about the oil boom hundreds of miles east and the demand for truck drivers.

"He's always wanted to be a truck driver," Michelle says, rolling her eyes. "So I'm just like, 'Whatever, Mark! Just do it.'"

Mark got his commercial driver's license and found a driving job based in Williston. He moved to North Dakota, living in a trailer he had purchased for \$1,500. The drive from Lynden to Williston takes nearly 24 hours—too long for regular weekend trips for Mark or Michelle. So they packed up their home and their shop, made eight long car trips back and forth between Washington and North Dakota to transport everything, and began their new life.

Some, like Mark and Michelle, find in North Dakota the ability to start over in middle age. It's not uncommon to hear of new arrivals who are well into their sixties looking for jobs in Williston. But for the younger pioneers, moving to the Bakken can be a chance to correct course.

I meet 25-year-old Kaley Keane as we wait for our luggage at the airport in Minot. She's returning from visiting friends in sunny California to Tioga, a tiny town with plenty of drilling activity about 85 miles west of Minot. As the rain and wind blow in a typical prairie gale, the power in the airport flickers on and off, stopping the baggage conveyor belt. Kaley looks at me, then at the clock, and sighs. "I guess I won't be getting to work today," she says, her voice mixed with relief and exasperation.

COURTESY MICHELLE WESTLUND

Michael Warren is a staff writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

A job is better than the alternative, but sometimes it's hard to get excited.

Kaley has worked in Tioga since August 2012. She's originally from Arizona and went to college there. I ask what her major was.

"The first time, the second time, or the third time?" she laughs.

She started as pre-med. Then she switched her major to "psychology and linguistics." Then to philosophy. Kaley eventually left school without a degree, though she says she's just 12 credits away from earning her bachelor's online. After school, her attempt to start a paralegal business in Arizona failed. Suddenly, Kaley found herself with no college degree, no prospects of gainful employment, and a staggering \$70,000 in student loan debt.

"So I started looking online," she tells me. "I said, 'Where's hiring at the highest rate right now?' Found a whole bunch of articles about North Dakota and then some websites that were like recruiting sites."

She found a job as a receptionist at a man camp, those groupings of dorm-like lodgings for temporary workers that flank the highways of the Bakken. She still lives in the camp but has a better job in payroll for a subcontractor. It still wasn't much money, not any more than she might be making in Arizona.

"But I didn't have to pay any bills," she says. "All of my money went toward paying off my debt. So that was a big load off my and my mom's shoulders. She was practically supporting me by that point."

Kaley smiles and adds, "I am only \$12,000 away. I took a big chunk out of it. I'm pretty proud of that."

With all the talk about the easy money to be made in the oil boom, for most people here it's just that: talk. The prairie didn't promise riches to Per Hansa and the homesteaders, but it did promise a chance to build something new for their families. That's what North Dakota is offering now.

"I'm not here to get rich," says Michelle Westlund. "I want to be successful and make money to pay my bills, but I'm here for my husband. I'm not here as part of the whole oil boom thing." ♦

Bipartisanship and Biofuels

A volatile mix.

BY DAVE JUDAY

Just before the August congressional recess the House Energy and Commerce Committee issued a press release on its progress in reviewing the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS), the nation's biofuels policy. Since 2005 the RFS has established an annual mandate for the amount of



Fred Upton

renewable biofuels that must be used in America's fuel supply. The August press release promised more "bipartisan collaboration" through the recess and included an eight-sentence joint statement from Fred Upton, the Republican chairman, and Henry Waxman, the ranking Democrat. The word "bipartisan" or reference to "both parties" or "both sides of the aisle" appeared in five of those sentences. With such apparent comity, Capitol Hill observers expected a proposal soon after Congress's return.

Now those reform efforts are faltering, despite clear warning signs that

the RFS is broken. In retrospect, too much bipartisanship may have created some of the very problems Congress now needs to repair. The RFS was established in 2005 but was greatly expanded in 2007 to what is in place today. The expanded structure was proposed by President George W. Bush in his 2007 State of the Union address. By December 2007, the Democratic Congress had codified it—and much more—in the Energy Independence and Security Act.

The result was not a well-considered consensus forged from principled debate but good old-fashioned logrolling. There were goodies for everyone. For the Bush administration there was a vast expansion in the volume of biofuels to be produced—from the then-existing mandate of 7.5 billion gallons of ethanol a year, to a future goal of 36 billion gallons. That was the administration's response to what it called a "geopolitical imperative" to reduce dependence on foreign (primarily Middle Eastern) oil. "We've got to get off oil," President Bush said, "for the sake of national security."

For environmentalists who were skeptical about the scope of the plan and its potential environmental impact, there were new categories of biofuels, so-called advanced and cellulosic ethanol, along with strict guidelines for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and land-use regulations to control where and how the feedstocks used for biofuels would be harvested. For farm interests, there was an expanded mandate for corn ethanol and biodiesel made from soybean oil, which would boost commodity prices.

There were incentives for auto manufacturers and the autoworker

Dave Juday is an agricultural commodity market analyst.

unions to make more “flex-fuel” vehicles capable of running on biofuels. In 2006, United Auto Workers then-president Ron Gettelfinger had pressed for just that. He said the federal government should “aggressively promote the production, sale and use of alternative fuel vehicles,” with the exception of gas-electric hybrids because components for the latter were “currently manufactured overseas.” The RFS fulfilled that goal.

There were concessions to the opponents of the RFS, designed to lower their resistance. The livestock and food manufacturing industries—facing higher corn and soybean prices—were assured there would be “off-ramp” waivers triggered if grain prices began to cause them grief. And for the obligated parties, the oil refiners and fuel blenders, there was the ability to store and trade compliance credits to ease the burden of meeting the heightened mandates.

All of these provisions were stacked one on top of another. Some were linked, some worked at cross-purposes, some were based on wildly unrealistic assumptions, and all had unintended consequences—which is why Congress is now in the position of reviewing the RFS. Consider that while the 2007 measure prescribes an increased amount of biofuels to be used each year, total fuel use has been declining significantly—down more than 6 percent since 2007 and projected to keep going down. That fuel squeeze is displacing U.S.-produced gasoline, much of which is now being exported—ironically, in the name of energy independence.

Moreover, most of the advanced ethanol mandated for domestic use is being imported from Brazil. That’s because Congress mandated the use of cellulosic ethanol (made from grasses and other plant matter) before it had been commercially developed. Under the 2007 statute, a total of 1.85 billion gallons should have been used by U.S. motorists by now; less than 150,000 gallons have actually been produced. Something had to make up the difference under the category of advanced ethanol and Brazil’s sugar-cane

version fit the bill. Pity that cellulosic was also the category of fuel that was supposed to provide the greatest environmental benefits.

The safety valves to protect other grain users have failed as well. Severe drought conditions—the worst in 50 years—that reduced the corn supply last year did not meet the technical criteria to trigger the waiver administered by the Environmental Protection Agency. So a short supply of corn resulted in red ink on the ledgers of livestock feeders, meat packers, and food companies. Indeed, the corn market conditions were so bad that ethanol production suffered as well, with production dropping about 5 percent from 2011 to 2012.

As for the compliance credit system, it is the proverbial “canary in the coal mine” which has provided the strongest signal to date that the RFS is in trouble. The tradable corn-based ethanol credits—known as renewable identification numbers, or RINs—allow refiners and blenders to meet their annual biofuel mandate either by producing the blended fuels themselves or buying RINs from other refiners and blenders with a surplus. The price of these credits has spiked from less than \$.01 per RIN to a high of more than \$1.40—a function of the reduced national fuel demand juxtaposed with the ever-increasing annual ethanol mandates and exacerbated by last year’s short supply of corn.

Taken together these dynamics have created a RIN market that is volatile and costly and is adding to the costs of America’s retail fuel supply. Moreover, the Environmental Protection Agency, which administers the system, is now trying to develop a verification system after discovering more than \$9 million in counterfeit credits were sold in 2009-10 by one sham biodiesel company that produced no biodiesel yet sold the credits. More than 20 obligated parties were victimized by this fraud.

Finally, as for energy independence and security, it should be noted that since the RFS was passed, monthly oil production in the United States has increased by more than 38 percent.

In May of this year (the most recent month for which statistics have been released), the United States produced more oil than Russia or any Persian Gulf country or member state of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), including Saudi Arabia. That was the seventh month in a row that the United States led world production. When President Bush said we needed to “get off oil,” U.S. proven reserves were at 22.8 billion barrels; today they’re at 29 billion barrels, and potential reserves are vastly greater given the Bakken shale and Eagle Ford shale formations in North Dakota and Texas respectively, and the oil shale in the Green River Formation in Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming.

Indeed, House Energy and Commerce chairman Fred Upton was understating matters when he noted in a July hearing that “much has changed since the RFS was last revised in 2007, including the exciting new developments that have led to unexpected increases in domestic oil and natural gas production.” The committee commendably issued a series of four white papers over the spring and summer grappling with the changed policy environment and posing questions for discussion among stakeholders, noting however that “building consensus will not be an easy task.”

Unfortunately, the only consensus this self-described bipartisan effort has reached so far was stipulated at the outset: that the biofuel mandates will be reformed, not repealed. The entrenched special interests have not been as dynamic as the energy market and don’t want to see their favors and preferences wiped away. Nonetheless, repeal should not be off the table, even if reform is the ultimate goal. As one affected industry trade group—the National Turkey Federation, which bore the brunt of high feed prices under the RFS—has pointed out, “the RFS needs a fresh start in order to put in place a smarter policy.” The RFS has become a Gordian knot. Lawmakers need to take a sword to our nation’s biofuels policy. ♦

No More Carrots, Lots More Stick

The increasingly imperious Arne Duncan.

BY **FREDERICK M. HESS & MAX EDEN**

In the early days of the Obama administration, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan was the bipartisan superstar. At Duncan's confirmation hearing, Senator Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) told him, "President-elect Obama has made several distinguished cabinet appointments, but in my view of it all, I think you are the best."

But while Duncan continues to champion ideas, like charter schooling and smarter teacher evaluation, that enjoy bipartisan support, his methods have become increasingly imperious. Indeed, Alexander, the ranking Republican on the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, now warns that Duncan is trying to turn the federal Department of Education into a "National School Board." Listen to key conservative critics and Hill staff long enough, and you can't help but start to see Duncan as a giant octopus, using waivers as tentacles to command education policy down to the individual district level.

Charmed by Duncan's awkward demeanor and "aw, shucks" attitude, the media have missed the shift. Recalling their giddy excitement during Duncan's 2009 federal Race to the Top competition, columnists and reporters still treat Duncan as a bipartisan golden boy. A \$4.35 billion program tucked into the 2009 stimulus bill, Race to the Top awarded hundreds of millions to the cash-starved states that most effectively promised to pursue Obama administration

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priorities in 19 areas of school reform.

The program was a huge hit. David Brooks glowingly asked, "Why don't we use a similarly light but energetic



Arne Duncan

... approach when it comes to health care, transportation, or energy or environmental policy?" Thomas Friedman wanted to see Arne Duncan named secretary of state in 2012, explaining, "It would be very helpful to have a secretary of state who can start a negotiating session with Hamas . . . by asking 'Do you know how far behind your kids are?'" While Race to the Top largely consisted of Uncle Sam borrowing funds so Duncan could reward states for empty promises, it had some real pluses. It encouraged states to lift caps on charter schooling and remove data "firewalls" that prohibited states from using student performance to evaluate teachers. Just maybe, with enough funds, Duncan could have brought peace to the Middle East.

But then the stimulus money ran out. Duncan was out of carrots. Thanks

to No Child Left Behind, though, he had a big stick. NCLB, Bush's signature education bill enacted in 2001, had bizarrely declared in statute that 100 percent of the nation's students would be proficient in reading and math by 2014. Schools that failed to demonstrate Adequate Yearly Progress would be subject to a variety of remedies, culminating in a plan to restructure the school. In 2011, Duncan warned that "four out of five schools" might fail to make AYP the following year.

While Duncan was exaggerating, the problem was real. Governors and superintendents knew they'd be labeling lots of decent schools as failing to make AYP—disrupting schools and infuriating parents, teachers, and voters. Conveniently enough, it just so happened that Duncan had the authority to waive provisions of NCLB. That waiver authority is straightforward: Duncan could allow states to opt out of portions of the law for reasons he deemed appropriate.

Without funds to push his agenda, Duncan went for something much grander. He offered up a novel, expansive interpretation of his waiver authority. He would grant waivers to states only on the condition that they promise to enact a slate of Obama priorities. It was an offer that states truly couldn't refuse. Of course, nothing in the law provides Duncan with the authority to impose these conditions, legislating by fiat. While it's for the courts to decide whether this is illegal, it is certainly, by definition, lawless.

It is also looking increasingly capricious. Duncan required that states adopt the Common Core or a similar substitute in order to qualify for waivers, and that states agree to adopt particular approaches to teacher evaluation in both district and charter schools. The initial set of waivers required states to link personnel decisions to test-based student growth by the 2015-2016 school year, but given that the tests that the Department of Education encouraged states to adopt won't be released at scale until 2014-2015, not even the Department of Education thought that a year would be enough time to work out the kinks.

So, making the law as he went, Duncan gave some (but not all) states the opportunity to apply for waivers from waivers to delay this requirement.

Duncan took the astonishing step of issuing waivers directly to eight California districts this summer, allowing them to operate under a different set of federal policies than the other 1,000 districts in California. Even the left-leaning New America Foundation thought this was “opening Pandora’s box.”

Last month, the Department of Education warned three states, Kansas, Oregon, and Washington, that their waivers were at risk because they were failing to abide by the promises on teacher evaluation they’d made to earn their conditional waivers—even though NCLB doesn’t give the feds any control over state teacher evaluation, and even though no one in the Department of Education has explained what’s distinctive about these three states when many of the dozens of states with waivers have also broken various commitments. Duncan has turned into Dean Wormer from *Animal House*, putting states on “double-secret probation” when they displease him.

After being conspicuously absent from the NCLB reauthorization debate, Duncan penned an op-ed in the *Washington Post* faulting Congress for not passing a bill—hypocritical, given that it was Duncan’s use of waivers that alienated even moderate Republicans like Senator Alexander and helped blow the slender chance of a deal. Truth is, the administration is content to let Duncan legislate from the seventh floor of the Department of Education. The White House gets what it wants without reauthorizing the long-overdue NCLB, and it gets to snipe at Congress for not acting to boot. In legislating by fiat, Duncan is ensuring that partisan fissures over the Common Core are likely to grow and that conservatives will have to step in to push back on this supersizing of the federal role. Arne Duncan may still see himself as a champion of bipartisan reform, but he’s now governing more like an octopus than a cabinet secretary. ♦

Back to School

A reclamation project for higher ed.

BY DAVID GELERNTER

This school-reopening season ought to be a time of deep pondering and self-examination for conservatives and everyone else who cares about the future of this nation and the world. It’s time to notice how little we have done about the most powerful, dangerous, reactionary force in America today: the schools establishment, and the hundred or so purebred, pedigreed universities that trot forward at the head of the ongoing black comedy called American education.

There are simple things we can do and are not doing. There are difficult but important things we are wholly ignoring—we conservatives and liberals who care about the future of this country and of Western civilization, which is today in (just about) America’s sole keeping.

Since the cultural revolution culminating in the 1970s, the left has run nearly all of the nation’s most influential, prestigious universities. Their alumni, in turn, run American culture—the broadcast networks, newspapers, the legal and many other professions, Hollywood, book publishing, and, most important, the massive, insensate, crush-everything-in-your-path mega-glacier known as the U.S. federal bureaucracy—and even more important than that, the education establishment charged with indoctrinating our children from kindergarten up. Conservative organizations and individuals have a few outstanding education projects underway—bravo!—but not enough.

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Not even close. We must do more:

(1) For every college in the nation, we need software that connects all conservatives and dissenters on campus into a single ongoing conversation. Today such groups are nearly always small minorities—but they lack the coherence and neighborliness small minorities ought to have, because they are scattered and hidden like diamonds in the ragweed. All but the strongest-willed dissenters can be discouraged and silenced by the sheer density of fire they encounter in class and on campus. They need support.

Every on-campus dissident or conservative—student, faculty, staff—is a “member” of a single stream (roughly like a blog, feed, Twitter stream, chat-stream) and is invited to post news, to comment, or just to watch the discussion flow. Whether a professor attacked you for heresy in class or merely talked nonsense, trashed religion, salaamed before Obama, or used “Bush” as a laugh line, you owe it to yourself, to your colleagues, and to the truth to let people know. If you’re faced with a tough question—such as whether great literature or art exists, whether there’s any music to speak of outside the inexhaustible rock tradition, whether white men have any achievements worth naming or have always been the bums and freeloaders we know them for today, whether the reality of man-made global warming is acknowledged by 100.0 percent of all sane scientists in the universe or is merely sacred writ—you need to talk things over with your colleagues. The stream helps draw the small dissident community together. And eventually, local streams become part of larger streams. The technology is

thoroughly understood. It ought to be deployed and in use *right now*.

Where is it written that conservatives can never introduce new social-network software?

(2) We need authoritative online survey courses in the core humanities taught by recognized authorities, in a standard (and intelligent!) format. Basic requirements for an online course, usually ignored today though easily achieved with well-designed software: It must be possible to unfold or unwrap the course systematically, top-down, so a potential student understands its goals, its broad structure, and then the topics to be covered. It should be simple to slot online courses into a digital tray or rack so they can be compared directly, or a semester's work racked up and considered as a unit. It must be simple for students to repeat or skip whatever sub-segments they choose. Above all, it must be easy for students to stop a lecture at any point to ask a question. Some Internet course-suppliers will provide teaching assistants online around the clock to write answers; other times, students will have to wait a few hours. Either way, questions and answers will accumulate online from year to year over the life of the course, into a rich commentary on every important issue in every lecture. Imagine the Vilna edition of the Talmud, with the lecture in the center and commentary accumulating around the perimeter like the growth rings of a Sequoia.

Where is it written that conservatives can never *lead* the technology parade?

(3) And we need to start developing a new way of turning a college education into a valuable, negotiable commodity without going through the obsolete certification process. It's easy to picture how this will work. If a major thinker with an international reputation were to review a student's college record and pronounce it "a satisfactory education" and sign a letter to that effect, that letter would be as good as any diploma in the world. The world's best scholars have other things to do with their time; but

they might be persuaded to accept a few students every year, with whom they'd consult, whose progress they'd keep an eye on. Distinguished people outside academia might do the same. But think tanks would probably play the major role. Many U.S. think tanks are qualified to oversee a group of students every year. At first, only the best and bravest students would undertake this sort of degree, and only the bravest organizations would hire them. But this is so obviously the future that the trend will be impossible to resist.

Where is it written that conservatives can't lead the online education revolution?



Congrats—sorry your degree is such a joke.

This is the future: The Internet can be an international gossip machine, or it can be a switchboard for connecting pairs or groups who could never otherwise have come together. The most important aspect of the university of the near future is not the Internet *per se*; it's *the distribution of university functions throughout the educated population*. Engineers and industrial scientists, retired schoolteachers, journalists, combat veterans, economists, housewives, MDs, diplomats, businessmen, musicians, and many thousands of others across the globe are potential teachers or (just as important) one-on-one tutors in science, mathematics and engineering, music and the arts, and—the university's most important mission—in how to read and write like a grown-up. Some humanities

fields will continue to require heavy assistance from academia. Some areas in the social sciences will disappear. And easily 90 percent (maybe 95) of existing U.S. colleges and universities could be gone within 15 years.

Modern universities are such grotesque failures that we have started to hear a natural, healthy response from certain critics: Abolish college! Let people learn on the job. It's a valuable line of thought, because it forces us to come to grips with the reason college education exists in this country to begin with. Not to train people for jobs or make them economically useful; but to create a responsible, informed, dutiful citizenry that values this nation and Western civilization sufficiently to protect and sustain them. And of course colleges must teach the skills and facts, the verbs and nouns, that students need when they encounter the worlds of art, scholarship, science, and society at large. They must fill in the blanks left by incompetent grade and high schools, especially in history and English. And they must teach the mathematics required to do physics, chemistry, engineering, or computing, the chemistry you need to be a physician or biologist, and the other unglamorous technical skills that keep the mighty American research machine inching forward. No one is going to pick up intermediate calculus or basic organic chemistry on the job.

If conservative groups don't see this future, build it, put their stamp on it—the stamp of no ideology but Americanism, no mission except searching out and teaching genuine 24-carat truth—they will have no right to complain. Let them prepare now to keep quiet as American culture gutters lower every year, as per-capita years-of-education, leftist tendencies, and gross ignorance in the population at large continue to shoot up in a blistering geyser, and the line of Obamacrats and Clintoons stretches outward to the horizon—until America as a first-rate spiritual and temporal power is gone forever.

Instead, let's act. ♦

Two Miserable Decades

Don't worry, it was even worse in the 1970s. Or was it?

By JONATHAN V. LAST

Happy times are all alike, nestled in the comfortable batting of peace, growth, and stability. Every unhappy time is unhappy in its own way.

America has been blessed because, since the end of the Great Depression, our nation has experienced only two periods of deep discontent that lasted a decade or more. The first was the 1970s. We are living through the second today. Which was worse?

The popular mind often misremembers the past. For instance, these days the 1950s are held out as a time deserving special scorn. Stories set in the Eisenhower era are often shot through with contempt for the racism, sexism, hypocrisy, and dissatisfaction of American life. But this is revisionism; by many measures—wages, unemployment, home sales, marital stability, births, savings rates, upward mobility—the '50s were an idyll.

What's more, the happy times of the 1950s stretched into the 1960s. So long that "The '60s" as we remember them—Woodstock, long hair, free love—didn't really get underway until 1967 and continued well into the 1970s. That's one of the central insights of David Frum's wonderful book about the '70s, *How We Got Here*. His other insight is that whatever people want to believe about the '50s and '60s, the stretch from 1967 to 1979 was a rarely mitigated disaster.

Many people remember the headlines from the 1970s: the shooting war in Vietnam and the quiet but existential threat of the larger Cold War; a president nearly impeached; oil shocks that forced people to stand in line for gasoline. But the problems in America were both broader and deeper.



The economics of the 1970s, for example, were brutal. In 1969, the unemployment rate was 3.5 percent, the lowest it had been since the mid-1950s. (The postwar average has been about 5 percent.) By 1975 unemployment had more than doubled, to 8.5 percent. While people were working less, so was their money, as inflation ate into the value of the dollar. In the 1960s, the inflation rate rose above 2 percent only twice—until 1968. At which point it began steadily increasing, reaching 11 percent in 1974, 9.1 percent in 1975, and 11.3 percent in 1979. To understand the effect this financial terror had

on the national psyche, consider how often inflation fears have recurred during the last 30 years—even though inflation hasn't topped 6 percent since 1982.

Everyday life wasn't much better than economic life. Terrorism first came into vogue in the 1970s. Sometimes it was a thuggish hijacking, with criminals commandeering an airplane and demanding passage to Cuba. Sometimes it was deadly, like the massacre of 11 Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics. Nobody much remembers it today, but in March 1977 Muslim radicals with machine guns and machetes marched into the B'nai B'rith headquarters in Washington, just five blocks north of the White House, and took 100 workers hostage. They herded the hostages onto the roof, where one was killed and two others were shot over the course of a standoff that lasted two days. Simultaneously, affiliated terrorists took over D.C. city hall, where future mayor Marion Barry was shot and a radio reporter was shot and killed.

The B'nai B'rith incident was soon lost in the wash of small-scale attacks and bombings from Islamic extremists, Black Power radicals, and student leftists that punctuated life in the '70s—none of which seems to have left much of an impact. One prelude to the '70s did have lasting consequences. During the "long, hot summers" of 1964-68, 329 "important" riots took place in 257 U.S. cities, according to Stephan and Abigail Thernstrom's authoritative

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America in Black and White, with a toll of some 300 dead, 8,000 injured, and 60,000 arrested. The riots in Harlem, Watts, Detroit, Newark, and, after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Washington, D.C., were only the most famous. These eruptions helped drive the middle class out of urban cores in the '70s, sending cities into decline and making the new underclass permanent.

Violent crime was almost nonexistent in the 1950s, but by 1973 it was rampant, and the Department of Justice had to create a new accounting system to keep track of it all. As Frum reports, in 1973 the FBI found that “37 million Americans—meaning one household out of every four—had suffered a rape, robbery, assault, burglary, larceny, or auto theft.” In cities, the victimization rate was 1 in 3. In 1960, there were 9,000 murders in America. By 1975, the number was in excess of 20,000. (In 2010, with America’s population 50 percent larger, there were 14,000 murders.) Perhaps the most evocative statistical concerns schoolchildren. In 1979, 1 out of every 20 public school teachers reported being physically assaulted by a student during the previous year.

Mind you, the kids had a lot to be angry about. During the 1970s their families were falling apart. Cohabitation, which only a few years before had been looked down on as “living in sin,” began migrating upward from the lower socioeconomic rungs during the 1960s. In the '70s it became so commonplace that by the end of the decade nearly half of all couples who got married had lived together first. Of course, lots of couples never bothered to marry at all—during the '70s the percentage of men and women tying the knot dropped by roughly 10 percent. And marriage was becoming an increasingly frail institution. In 1960 there were about 400,000 divorces annually. By 1979, the number was just shy of 1.2 million.

(All of this leaves aside abortion. In 1974, the year after *Roe v. Wade* made it every woman’s right, there were 900,000 abortions in America; five years later the number was 1.5 million, a 66 percent increase.)

The prevailing sense one gets is of a civilization unspooling. Even the environment seemed on the brink of calamity, with smog descending on Los Angeles and Cleveland’s Cuyahoga River catching fire, not to mention the toxic waste scandal at Love Canal, or the floating garbage barge outside of New York City, or the scare at the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant. This witch’s brew conjured the return of neo-Malthusian thinking about the dangers of “overpopulation,” which came to dominate

both public discourse and public policy. (More on this in a moment.)

If people weren’t worrying about overpopulation, it was something else; a constant cloud of eschatological alarm loomed over the decade. A new Ice Age was coming to end our way of life—that is, if the comet Kahoutek or the killer bees that were en route from Mexico didn’t wipe us out first. On the *New York Times* op-ed page, editorial board member William Shannon wrote about “a new spirit of nihilism” and observed—with only a slight flourish—that “there are fleeting moments when the public scene recalls the Weimar Republic of 1932-33.”

Yet the most disconcerting aspect of the '70s was the degree to which elite thinking suggested that the world had temporarily lost its mind. For instance, in 1972, the Supreme Court heard a case in which the Sierra Club attempted to prevent the Forest Service from allowing development of a valley near Sequoia National Park, which hinged on the technical question of whether or not the plaintiffs had standing to sue. Having liberalized standing in several cases, the High Court finally drew a line and denied it to the Sierra Club.

In a dissenting opinion, William O. Douglas offered not only that the Sierra Club should have standing, but that legal standing ought to be granted to inanimate objects, too:

The river as plaintiff speaks for the ecological unit of life that is part of it. The people who have a meaningful relation to that body of water . . . must be able to speak for the values which the river represents and which are threatened with destruction.

This was legal reasoning by a justice of the Supreme Court in the 1970s.

For another example, consider the sudden stardom of Paul Ehrlich. In 1968, Ehrlich, a Stanford University entomologist specializing in butterflies, published *The Population Bomb*, a book claiming that overpopulation would cause worldwide cataclysm, the deaths of “hundreds of millions,” and the end of human civilization—all within a year or three.

Ehrlich pitched all sorts of public policy ideas. He worked with legislators in the California state assembly to engineer a bill outlawing the internal combustion engine. (This bill actually passed the assembly before the senate killed it.) He proposed eliminating Monday holidays, so as to discourage people from traveling on long weekends and conserve precious resources. He said that the “freedom to



The New York Times’s William Shannon wrote about ‘a new spirit of nihilism’ and compared America of the ‘70s to the Weimar Republic of 1932-33.

breed is intolerable” and advocated coercive government measures to prevent people from having children. Some of these measures were soft—he proposed a luxury tax on diapers, bottles, and other baby paraphernalia. Others were firmer—he suggested the government should quietly add antifertility drugs to the water supply to prevent couples from conceiving.

Paul Ehrlich wasn’t some rogue crackpot; he was a notable personage. His book sold millions of copies, and he appeared on *The Tonight Show* with Johnny Carson at least 20 times. He was routinely courted by politicians and had the ear of three presidents, Johnson, Nixon, and Carter—all of whom crafted policies around his ideas.

In the 1970s, the public square became indistinguishable from an asylum.

Against that litany of horrors, you might think we have it pretty good these days. Whatever else there is to be said about the ’00s, at least some degree of sanity returned to public life. Granted, we have our oddballs, too. But by the time Al Gore revealed himself definitively to be a crank, he was out of office and relegated to film festivals and a minor cable TV channel. Ron Paul never found a following beyond the fringe. Belief in conspiracy theories—about Israel or vaccines or black helicopters—is now automatically disqualifying. There are standards for public life these days, and anyone who suggested outlawing the internal combustion engine or tacking a luxury tax on diapers would be ignored by the White House. Three years before being elected president of the United States, Jimmy Carter filed an official UFO report. Imagine how that might go over with voters today.

In other ways, however, we are less well off. If the ’70s started in 1967, the current age began on September 11, 2001. It has been an era marked, first and foremost, by large-scale terrorism. The Cold War was terrifying, and we should not discount the fears of the 1970s just because we know how the story ended. But the abstract threat of a global nuclear holocaust is different from the possibility that a jetliner will be flown into your office building, or that the passenger sitting next to you on your flight will try to set off a bomb in his shoe, or that a coworker will yell “Alahu Akbar” before opening fire in your workplace.

The Cold War and the (unfortunately misnamed)

war on terror are not entirely dissimilar. Both involve a long, subterranean, ideological struggle pockmarked by shooting wars. What’s more, the two ideological struggles center around the same question: Does liberalism have the cultural confidence to insist on its own survival? The weak horse/strong horse paradigm is broadly applicable to both conflicts.

Economic life during the ’00s hasn’t been much fun, either. The attacks of 9/11 were followed by one long downturn. Strictly speaking, it has not been a single recession, but the periods of relief we have seen were undergirded not by real growth, but by bubbles—the tech bubble, which burst in 2001-02, and the housing bubble, which burst in 2007-08. Inflation was kept under control in the aughts,

but unemployment has been more intractable. The term “jobless recovery” has become a black joke because for four straight years, whenever the unemployment rate dipped, the good news has been caused not by the creation of jobs, but rather by people dropping out of the workforce. Twenty-four months into the official recovery, most analysts put the “real unemployment” figure north of 11 percent.

Lurking behind these near-term economic problems is a long-term crisis that would have startled people in the ’70s: The American government is going broke. Even during the stagflation of the 1970s, the government remained reasonably solvent. After piling up enormous debts during the Depression and Second World War, America gradually put its house back in order during the ’50s and ’60s, and the deficit and debt were modest during the ’70s.

But in the ’00s they ballooned under both Bush and Obama, and the ratio of debt to gross domestic product exploded. Even worse, the commitments of Social Security and Medicare will relentlessly exacerbate the problem. As the blue-ribbon committees like to say, something must be done. And eventually it will be; the country won’t file for Chapter 11. Instead, it will, at some point, be forced to impose a great deal of pain on the citizenry. Or at least one cohort of it. As bad as the economics of the 1970s were, we almost certainly have it worse today.

You could probably say the same about our politics. Both eras featured a string of presidencies that can be reasonably categorized as failures. Nixon’s near-impeachment and resignation were blows to the body politic. But in a



B'nai B'rith headquarters under siege in Washington, 1977

way, at least that debacle unfolded in a manner consistent with traditional politics. The wild political swings during the '00s—triumph for Republicans in 2002 and 2004, landslides for the Democrats in 2006 and 2008, a counter-realignment for the Republicans in 2010—suggest an electorate lurching from one party to the other in search of competent political management.

Nothing illustrates the failure of the political order better than the passage of Obamacare. Objectively speaking, it's remarkable how little support there was for the Affordable Care Act when it was passed. No one—left, right, or center—much liked the bill. (This goes for voters as well as lawmakers.) Republicans hated it. Democrats, for the most part, were wary of it. It was passed as an act of political vanity because President Obama wanted his name on an omnibus health care reform plan, irrespective of what the plan said.

Our political system is designed to prevent this sort of legislation because it's based on a kind of Maslow's hierarchy of needs for our elected officials. At the top of the pyramid are high-minded hopes about wisdom and judgment. And very occasionally lawmakers do buck public opinion because they believe in the rightness of a policy or action. But at the base of the pyramid, the people trust their officials to be self-interested—that is, to respect their constituents' will, or at least not deliberately to do anything so abhorrent that they know it will cost them their jobs.

The passage of Obamacare broke this compact. The marginal Democrats who passed the law (and were subsequently defeated in 2010) violated every tier of the Maslow hierarchy: They didn't believe in Obamacare, they didn't like Obamacare, and they knew that voting for it would cost them their jobs because their constituents hated it, too. But they voted for it anyway. Pure partisanship overrode every other concern. It is not crazy to suspect that in the long run Obamacare may prove more damaging to political life than Nixon's resignation.

Which leaves us, finally, with the culture. On the one hand, by many of the big statistical markers—violent crime, drug use, teen pregnancy, abortion—the aughts are clearly superior to the seventies. By others they are unarguably worse.

Family structure, for instance, has fractured to an extent that would have shocked even the drippy hippies at Woodstock. The divorce epidemic escalated beyond the '70s before it plateaued, so that today “only” about 45 percent of marriages fail. Even family formation has become optional. In 1970, 8 percent of women finished their childbearing

years without having children and 11 percent finished with only one child. Today 18.8 percent of American women have no children, and 18.5 percent have only one—a sea change that has spawned a movement—recently celebrated in a *Time* magazine cover story—called the “childfree life.”

But the most pernicious change is the abandonment of children by their fathers. In 1970, fewer than 10 percent of U.S. births were to single mothers. For 2011, the figure is 41 percent. The median age at first birth is actually lower than the median age at first marriage, and 48 percent—nearly half—of first births are to unwed mothers.

For all of the acid-dropping and love-ins, this destruction of family norms would have been unfathomable in the 1970s; it would have stunned even the radicals of the Weather Underground who vowed to “smash monogamy.” As would the creation of a constitutionally protected right to gay marriage. Or the encroachments gay marriage has made on religious freedom, with bakers and florists forced by the state to take part in gay marriage ceremonies.

By the same token, as dangerous as life was in the '70s, the modern security state would also have been unthinkable. People walking into a football game or a theme park these days are treated as if they were visiting a prison. In many office buildings, visitors are now photographed and issued picture IDs. Imagine someone time-traveling from 1970 to a modern airport, with its lines, magnetometers, X-ray machines, millimeter wave scanners, and full-body pat-downs. It would strike him as a scene from a dystopian science-fiction novel. Yet we've constructed and accepted this vast apparatus over the last 12 years, and we've done so with little public debate.

It's possible to see the calamities of both the '70s and '00s as consequences of institutional failure. Yet in the two decades, it was different types of institutions that faltered.

The '70s were caused, in no small part, by failures of public institutions. Mismanagement by generals and politicians made Vietnam costlier. Poor judgment by Richard Nixon led to his near-impeachment. Unwise policies—the sudden termination of Bretton Woods and the refusal of Federal Reserve chairman William Miller to raise interest rates—made the economic environment more painful. The law enforcement apparatus was simply unable to maintain public order.

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The institutions that failed during the '00s tended to be private. Both the tech and housing bubbles were pumped up by ratings agencies that should have known better—and probably did. Banks abandoned banking in an effort to act like hedge funds, leading to the financial crisis of 2008. And the rise of flash-trading, exotic derivatives, tranches, and the fixed-income market made Wall Street function less like an engine for capital allocation and more like an arbitrage machine. Or possibly a casino.

Even the university system seems on the brink of failure as the rationale for a college education—that it is a glide path to a middle-class life—has steadily eroded. Until 1970, only about 11 percent of the workforce had a college degree; today it's closer to a third. But because universities keep minting new graduates—in all manner of trivial and useless subjects—a bachelor's degree no longer has the value it once did. In 2010, for instance, the unemployment rate for recent graduates was well over the national average, at 10.4 percent. And even that doesn't tell the whole story. Since many of these young adults were working in McJobs, their underemployment rate was 19.8 percent.

To be sure, in the '70s there was plenty of institutional failure outside the public sector. In the auto industry, for example, the labor movement was so unhinged that, as

Fortune reported in 1970, it was not uncommon for assembly line workers to vandalize cars as they were building them: “[S]crews have been left in brake drums, tool handles welded into fender compartments (to cause mysterious, unfindable, and eternal rattles), paint scratched, and upholstery cut.” And as previously discussed, there has been plenty of failure from public institutions in the '00s.

The point is that in both times, difficult environments were made worse by failures of the elites. And once institutions falter, it can be difficult to rebuild them.

So which period was worse? There's a strong case to be made for each. Superficially, you could argue the '70s, for all the obvious reasons: 58,000 Americans dead in Vietnam, Watergate, gas lines, the last helicopter leaving Saigon. But the deeper undercurrents suggest a different answer.

After all, American culture was fraying in the '70s, but for the most part, society agreed that it was fraying and that this dissolution was problematic. In the 1970s, the country retained habits learned during almost two generations of the strongest growth in American history. A 40-year-old in 1970 had lived through the Depression and the Second

Cybersecurity = Economic Security

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

In an interconnected world, economic security and national security are linked. To maintain a strong and resilient economy, we must protect against the threat of cyberattacks. The Internet is responsible for trillions of dollars in annual online transactions and is a vital conduit for global commerce.

But, today, that valuable asset is under threat by nation-states, hacktivists, and criminal organizations. They compromise public safety, classified information, intellectual property, consumer and financial data, and business networks, putting both our national and economic security at risk. This year, cybercrime topped the intelligence community's global threat assessment, and former FBI Director Robert Mueller declared that cyberattacks will eventually pose as great a risk to our national security as al-Qaeda.

The Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3), a partnership established in 2000 between

the FBI and the National White Collar Crime Center, receives some 24,000 complaints of online crime every month. Cybercrime cost the economy \$525.4 million in 2012—a massive jump from \$17.8 million in 2001.

The vast majority of the systems and assets being targeted are owned and operated in the private sector. We tend to only hear about the most high-profile incidents—such as when online criminals shut down a leading news outlet, disrupt a popular social networking website, or breach a major financial network. But the truth is that any company—large or small—that does business online is vulnerable to attack. In fact, small and medium-size businesses actually face greater cyber risks because they often lack the resources to adequately defend themselves.

Information security must be part of all businesses' risk management framework. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has developed *Internet Security Essentials for Business 2.0*, available at www.uschamber.com/cybersecurity. This

resource informs businesses about threats they could face online and outlines steps to protect their systems, network, and data.

Private industry also needs the federal government to be a strong partner to guard against cyberattacks. To bring leaders together from the private and public sectors to discuss this national priority, the Chamber is holding its Second Annual Cybersecurity Summit. The Chamber will also continue to push for legislation that would direct the government to share timely, reliable, and actionable information on cyber activity with business owners and operators, while ensuring that cybersecurity policies don't create burdensome regulations or new bureaucracies.

If we work together to tackle this national priority, we can strengthen the security of businesses, communities, our economy, and the country.



U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
Comment at FreeEnterprise.com.

World War, and his parents had seen the Great War, too. These people were made of stern stuff. And they could plausibly look at the world around them and see it as a terrible aberration. They could believe that the normal state of affairs was much better and that a return to normalcy was possible. That's why the country responded to Reagan's call for "morning in America."

Our age is different. A 40-year-old in 2000 was a teenager during the maelstrom of the '70s. He saw the bright spot of the mid-1980s and the respite from history that was the 1990s. But to him, the economic and social patterns of the '00s look like the norm.

As for the culture, the social order of the 1950s may have been washing out to sea during the 1970s, but today it might as well be Atlantis—a world so lost that people no longer believe it ever really existed. When 1 out of every 10 births is illegitimate, it's a societal failure. When nearly half are, it's a new way of life.

Or think about it this way: In 1972, the X-rated movie *Deep Throat* became a national sensation. It played in mainstream theaters. It was talked about in polite conversation. It was noted by the *New York Times*, which claimed it had launched a trend of "porno chic." In the course of all of this, *Deep Throat* was a flash point for a debate about propriety, pornography, morality, and culture.

In 2011, a TV show called *The Secret Life of the American Teenager* featured an exchange in which a teenage lesbian throws herself at a high school quarterback and begs him to give her "lots and lots of sex. Day and night. Around the clock. Twenty-four, seven. Oral sex. Sex-sex. Any kind of sex." On the one hand, this scene was played for laughs, and both characters kept their clothes on. It was tamer than anything in *Deep Throat*, including the credit sequence.

On the other hand, *The Secret Life of the American Teenager* was written for young adolescents, and it aired in prime time on the ABC Family Channel, a cable network owned by Disney which caters expressly to, such as they are, "families."

It's not clear that a politician could run a "morning in America" campaign today, because people might not believe that "better" is an option. It is no accident that the last three presidential cycles have showcased politicians

who, instead of promising to make America great again, pleaded for voters to support them lest the other side make things worse. (The 2008 Obama "Hope and Change" campaign never even pretended to be about bettering American life with jobs or growth or stability; the hope and change being sold was all internal, a vote for Obama being an act of spiritual enlightenment.)

And worse may be in the cards. In addition to everything else, the '00s have featured an accelerating social stratification. Charles Murray detailed the new phenomenon in last year's *Coming Apart*, and it boils down to this: Where lawyers once married their secretaries, they now marry, and stay married to, other lawyers. High school dropouts, meanwhile, have children with, but do *not* marry, other high school dropouts. With weak family formation and slack attachment to the workforce creeping up the socioeconomic scale, patterns that were once unthinkable start to seem inescapable.

In the spring of 2012, I had coffee with an enormously successful young Internet entrepreneur. He had no special technical genius; he'd majored in social studies at Harvard. But, he informed me, he had been "early at Facebook." Which was his polite way of saying that as an undergraduate he had befriended a classmate named Mark Zuckerberg and, by chance, gotten richer than Croesus.

Still in his mid-20s, he worried that the American middle class was on a road to extinction. In the near future, he explained, the only people able to make real money would be elites in the tech sector, like himself. There would be, he allowed, a class of tradesmen who could make a living servicing the elites. "For example," he said, "I like artisan pickles. So there will be a place for people in Brooklyn who make really good artisan pickles, for people like me." But outside of the artisan-pickle-makers? Nothing. "We're headed," he said unhappily, "for the kind of social divide they have in Brazil."

Whether he is wrong or right is beside the point. What made an impression on me was that this fellow—a young man of copious wealth and ambition, who was one of the few winners from the Great Recession—believed that, as bad as things were in America today, we hadn't yet touched bottom.

Setting these two decades side by side doesn't force us to choose one over the other, but rather helps us to appreciate a dismal truth: They're both worse. Just in different ways. ♦



The national sensation of 1972

Uncommonly Partisan

The consistently divisive rhetoric of President Obama

BY JAY COST

In the wake of last week's mass shooting at the Washington Navy Yard, as first responders were tending the victims, police were searching for more culprits, and the nation's capital was entering lockdown, President Barack Obama gave a speech. This normally would not be news. After all, the president is a loquacious man, and, moreover, the country now expects the president to be therapist-in-chief whenever some sort of disaster, human or natural, occurs.

But Obama's speech was different from what one would expect. After a few rote words of condolence to the victims, he went after his political opponents with vehemence, charging them with fiscal recklessness and a disregard for the plight of the middle class, and mocking them for wanting to repeal Obamacare. It was a remarkably tone-deaf presentation considering the events of the day. But it was par for the course for this administration, which is one of the most partisan we have seen in the last 60 years.

The American president holds a place within the structure of government quite unlike that of most other national leaders. The Framers envisioned the president as an agent removed from the messy world of politics, and in many respects this idea held sway for more than a generation. It was only under the presidency of Andrew Jackson, for instance, that the precedent was established that the president could veto a bill purely because he viewed it as inadvisable. Previously, presidents vetoed only bills they believed were unconstitutional.

The Jackson era heralded the rise of mass-based political parties competing for the presidency in elections. The politicized presidency had well and truly begun, leaving the president in a peculiar position that persists to this day. On the one hand, he is charged with leading a partisan coalition in pursuit of reelection against an opponent who is mobilizing his own coalition. On the other hand, he holds a job that is in theory above politics. He is enjoined to faithfully execute the laws, promote the national interest, and represent all the people.

Volumes could be written about how presidents have

balanced these competing demands. Until well into the 20th century, presidential candidates avoided the appearance of pursuing the nomination; Franklin Roosevelt, in fact, was the first to accept his party's nomination in an address to its convention. As for campaigning, for most of the 19th century, the candidates avoided it altogether. The first candidate to make a national campaign tour was Republican James G. Blaine in 1884. Otherwise, presidential candidates were entirely aloof or, at most, received groups of well-wishers at their homes. At the same time, winners practiced the infamous spoils system, ousting their predecessor's appointees from the bureaucracy so as to reward their own supporters with government jobs.

Since the presidencies of Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, the president has been an active participant in the national conversation, and the tension between his two roles—leader of the nation and leader of his party—can be traced in presidential rhetoric. In speaking to the nation, will the president be a partisan bull, attacking his opponents to secure his political and policy goals, or will he demur from direct attacks, presumably leaving the dirty rhetorical work to subordinates?

There are, of course, degrees and shades of partisanship that a chief executive can weave into his rhetoric, but the tenures of Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower illustrate the extremes. Truman, though he fit well into the clubby atmosphere of the 1940s Senate, was an unabashed partisan in the White House, taking on Republicans and anyone else who stood in his way. He even wrote an infamous letter to the *Washington Post* music critic who had panned daughter Margaret's singing at Constitution Hall. Truman wrote, "Some day I hope to meet you. When that happens you'll need a new nose, a lot of beefsteak for black eyes, and perhaps a supporter below!" His attacks on Republicans were often as classy; late in the 1948 presidential campaign Truman likened the (moderate and mild-mannered) GOP nominee to Adolf Hitler.

Eisenhower was Truman's opposite. He hardly uttered a harsh word about anybody in public while president, and his press conferences often gave the impression that he was a confused old grandpa eager to get back onto the putting green. It was only years later, when his administration's archives were opened to the public, that the full picture

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came into view. Eisenhower, in fact, was an able and vigorous chief executive who simply eschewed direct assaults on his political opponents. He was relatively mum on the antics of Senator Joseph McCarthy, for instance, but behind the scenes he was instrumental in ensuring that McCarthy embarrassed himself at Senate hearings about Communist infiltration of the Army.

Over the last quarter-century, presidents have mimicked Eisenhower or Truman to varying degrees. George H.W. Bush fell toward the Eisenhower end of the scale. Though he certainly had hard-charging partisans doing the messy work for him, Bush tended to eschew the harshest attacks. Perhaps the best tool for presidential communication today is the press conference, and Bush rarely used it to attack his opponents. More often than not, he waved off invitations from the press to get into the mud. When he did attack Democrats, his assaults were mild by comparison with Truman's harangues. Thus, in early 1992, in response to a question about how another Bush term would differ from the gridlock of his first (and ultimately only) term, Bush replied that the country had to "get more Republicans in [Congress] and more sensible Democrats that will vote for what we want." That was classic Bush: Even a partisan sentiment was blunted by his endorsement of "sensible Democrats."

George W. Bush followed much the same strategy as his father, including employing heavy-hitters to rough up his political opponents. Nevertheless, Bush himself rarely took an opportunity to attack Democrats during his first-term press conferences; he took fewer shots than his father, in fact. And, again, his shots were tame compared with Truman's vitriol. Instead, Bush usually referred to the Democrats only in his calls for Republicans and Democrats to act, or his advocacy of proposals that had won support from both Republicans and Democrats. Statements like these annoy one's opponents, whose feathers are ruffled when a president cites an apostate in their ranks, but they can't be described as hardball presidential rhetoric.

Toward the opposite end of the presidential-rhetoric spectrum in the last 25 years is Bill Clinton. Like all presidents, Clinton had a crack political team whose job it was to attack the opposition. Unlike the Bushes, however, Clinton seemed to relish participating himself. Throughout his first term, Clinton took press conferences as an

opportunity to go after Republicans, and during the budget standoff of 1995-96 he used his opening statements to drill home partisan points. Clinton's big complaints about the GOP were usually hypocrisy (they once favored the position they now oppose), obstructionism (the Senate is filibustering a sensible policy), and, after the GOP sweep of 1994, ideological extremism. A common trope running through Clinton's press conferences during the 104th Congress was that the Republicans were threatening to shut down the government, poison the water, starve little children, and deny senior citizens Medicare, all in service of their goals to cut taxes for the wealthy and radically redefine the role of government in society. Clinton hit most of these points in a December 1995 press conference, when he said in his opening statement:



In partisanship, Obama far surpasses Bush...

These Republicans want to force the government to stay closed until I accept their deep and harmful cuts in Medicare and Medicaid, in education, in the environment, and agree to raise taxes on the hardest-pressed working families, all, in part, to pay for their very large tax cut.

Press conferences, while one of the most important forms of presidential communication (outside political campaigns), do not admit of apples-to-apples comparisons across presidents. Chief executives, after all, use press conferences differently. Sometimes when they are in political trouble, they like to call them regularly (as Clinton did during the budget standoff); sometimes they prefer to avoid them when times are tough (as Bush did in the second half of 1992). Moreover, outside of opening statements, much depends on the questions the president is asked.

More readily comparable are the weekly presidential addresses that have been a fixture since the Reagan days. While less important from a political perspective, these brief broadcasts give the president free rein to say whatever he likes, unburdened by journalists' questions, so they can offer clues to the president's general messaging strategy. The American Presidency Project at the University of California at Santa Barbara has catalogued all such addresses since the start of Clinton's tenure, and the results confirm what the press conferences suggest. During his first term, George W. Bush attacked Democrats directly only 3 times in his radio addresses, while Clinton engaged in such attacks 30 times.

Moreover, there are qualitative differences between the two presidents' rhetoric. About the worst thing Bush ever said of Democrats during an address was this complaint in February 2003:

It is my responsibility to submit judicial nominations. It is the Senate's responsibility to conduct prompt hearings and an up-or-down floor vote on all judicial nominees. Yet a handful of Democratic senators, for partisan reasons, are attempting to prevent any vote at all on highly qualified nominees.

In comparison, Clinton often resorted to the “Mediscare” attack. In late 1995, he argued:

The Republicans say they support Medicare. They say they just want to reform it. But just this week we learned that the Senate majority leader is bragging that he opposed Medicare from the beginning, and the speaker of the House admitted that his goal is to have Medicare, quote, “wither on the vine.” When they say those things, it's clear that the Republicans come not to praise Medicare but to bury it.

When Barack Obama entered the White House in 2009, there was wide anticipation that the new president would avoid the Trumanesque model of total partisan warfare. The hope, in fact, was based on his campaigns against Hillary Clinton and John McCain. In both, Obama bemoaned not just the last 8 years, but the last 20 years. What was needed, he insisted, was someone who could move beyond the old partisan games to forge alliances on Capitol Hill. In his second book, *The Audacity of Hope*, Obama had written:

Genuine bipartisanship . . . assumes an honest process of give-and-take, and that the quality of compromise is measured by how well it serves some agreed-upon goal, whether better schools or lower deficits. This in turn assumes the majority will be constrained—by an exacting press corps and ultimately an informed electorate—to negotiate in good faith.

Having been handed the largest congressional majority any Democratic president had enjoyed since FDR, Obama could reasonably be expected to exercise the very restraint he had praised.

On the rhetorical level, at least, that expectation turned out to be flat wrong. Obama has been decidedly unrestrained. Following Clinton and Truman, Obama has gone after Republicans with vehemence. He has resurrected all of the old categories of Republican perfidy—hypocrisy, obstructionism, extremism—and added another to the Democratic canon: the idea that Republicans are mere tools of special interests. During the budget crisis of 2011, Obama intoned:

Now, let me acknowledge what everybody understands: It is hard to do a big package. My Republican friends have said that they're not willing to do revenues, and they have repeated that on several occasions.

My hope, though, is that they're listening not just to lobbyists or special interests here in Washington, but they're also listening to the American people. Because it turns out

poll after poll, many done by your organizations, shows that it's not just Democrats who think we need to take a balanced approach; it's Republicans as well.

It is more than a little ironic that Obama—who has abundantly demonstrated his willingness to offer special deals to interest groups that are ready to deal back—would open this line of attack. But then presidential rhetoric has never really been about consistency.

For whatever reason, Obama's attacks on Republicans at press conferences have rarely been as colorful as Clinton's were. While exceedingly partisan, Obama's opening statements are caveat-laden, overlong expositions that simply do not have the old partisan zing perfected by Truman and Clinton. Perhaps it has something to do with their political backgrounds. It is little wonder that Clinton, a populist Democrat from Arkansas, was so adept at partisan hardball in the impromptu setting of the press conference. Obama, meanwhile, a former law lecturer at the University of Chicago and state senator from the nerdy Chicago enclave of Hyde Park, sounds more like a lawyer with little courtroom experience.

It is in his weekly addresses, however, that Obama has proven himself to be a true partisan warrior. During his first term, Obama attacked Republicans directly in 44 weekly addresses, nearly one-quarter of his entire output. What makes this number even more striking is that, from the time of Senator Arlen Specter's party flip in April 2009 to Scott Brown's arrival in the Senate from Massachusetts in February 2010, Republicans were wholly powerless to stop the president on Capitol Hill. So through most of 2009, attacking Republicans was pointless (although Obama did manage a dig at them in December that year, when he chided House Republicans for currying favor with special interests to stymie the Consumer Financial Protection Agency).

It is in his weekly addresses that Obama most resembles the Clinton of the press conferences. There is the classic “Mediscare” attack (from August 14, 2010):

Republican leaders in Congress don't seem to have learned any lessons from the past few years. They're pushing to make privatizing Social Security a key part of their legislative agenda if they win a majority in Congress this fall. It's right up there on their to-do list with repealing some of the Medicare benefits and reforms that are adding at least a dozen years to the fiscal health of Medicare, the single longest extension in history.

There are complaints about sticking it to poor children and the infirm (from April 16, 2011):

It's a vision that says at a time when other nations are hustling to outcompete us for the jobs and businesses of tomorrow, we have to make drastic cuts in education, infrastructure, and clean energy, the very investments we need to win that competition and get those good jobs.

It's a vision that says in order to reduce the deficit, we have to end Medicare as we know it and make cuts to Medicaid that would leave millions of seniors, poor children, and Americans with disabilities without the care they need.

There is the old saw that Republicans are only out to benefit the wealthy (from July 14, 2012):

One path, pushed by Republicans in Congress and their nominee for president, says that the best way to create prosperity is to let it trickle down from the top. They believe that if we spend trillions more on tax cuts for the wealthy, it'll somehow create jobs, even if we have to pay for it by gutting education and training and by raising middle-class taxes.

And, of course, there is the claim that Republicans like dirty air and water (from September 18, 2010):

We've rolled back tax breaks for companies that ship jobs overseas. And we've restored enforcement of commonsense rules to protect clean air and clean water. In other words, we've refused to go along with business as usual.

Now the special interests want to take Congress back and return to the days when lobbyists wrote the laws. And a partisan minority in Congress is hoping their defense of these special interests and the status quo will be rewarded with a flood of negative ads against their opponents.

What is amazing about all of this is how very old it is. Obama promised to turn the page once and for all, but he has used the very same partisan attacks perfected by Harry Truman some 65 years ago. Indeed, one could argue that the forerunner of these slash-and-burn tactics was William Jennings Bryan, who said all the way back in 1896:

There are two ideas of government. There are those who believe that if you just legislate to make the well-to-do prosperous, that their prosperity will leak through on those below. The Democratic idea has been that if you legislate to make the masses prosperous their prosperity will find its way up and through every class that rests upon it.

One could be forgiven for believing that this came from Barack Obama's latest weekly address!

So there it is, the tension within the American presidency. As the leader of a political party, he knows he will never win reelection unanimously, so he must rally one subset of the population against another subset. In days of yore, presidents wielded the patronage power for this purpose; today, rhetoric is one substitute. At the same time, as the representative of all the people, the president is charged with faithfully executing the laws and empowered

to defend the national interest in foreign affairs. Different presidents have handled the tension in different ways, and Obama is not the first to choose the more partisan path. Perhaps what makes him extraordinary is the lengths he went to during his campaigns of 2007 and 2008 to promise that he would *not* be a partisan brawler.

In the final analysis, it is hard to draw a straight line from rhetorical strategy to political or policy success. Yet dangers do seem to lie at the extremes. George H.W. Bush was probably too kind to the Democrats during his tenure and paid a price for it, with a primary challenge from Pat Buchanan and a dispirited Republican electorate. Similarly, Eisenhower never made a full-throated case for Republican control of government and, despite his massive popularity, faced Democratic majorities in Congress after 1955 that stopped or adulterated most of his legislative initiatives. On the other hand, while Bill Clinton was

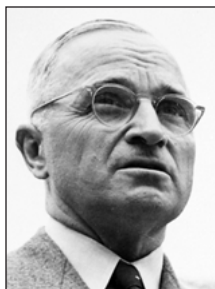
as tough a partisan brawler as one will ever find, he nevertheless cut a series of deals with the 104th Congress, the most important of which was welfare reform. Clinton moved more toward the Republicans than vice versa, even as he was representing himself as the sole defender against GOP atavism!

Clinton's policy successes notwithstanding, the danger of the bare-knuckle approach is that it can

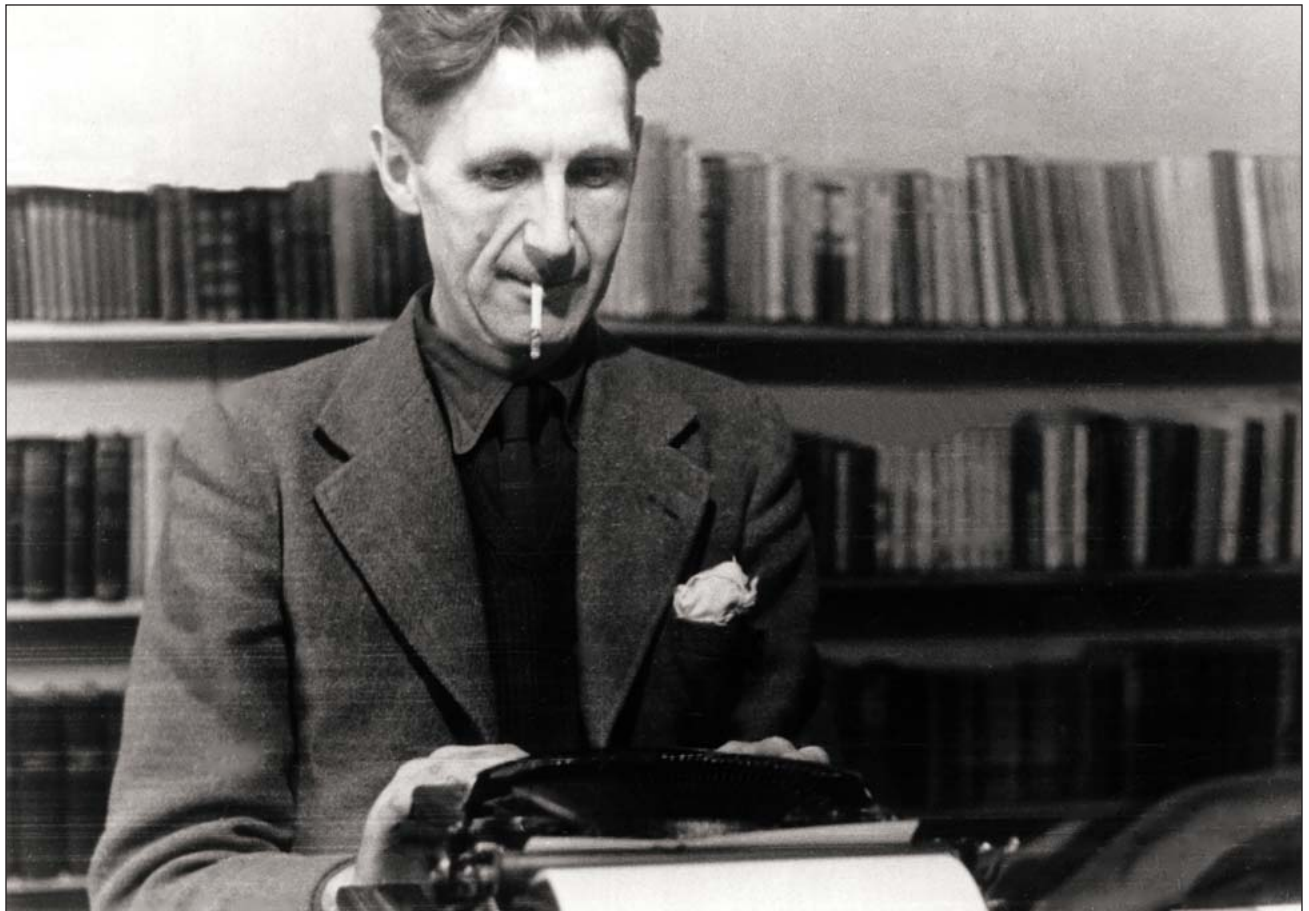
erode trust. Bipartisan accomplishments often hinge on the promise that a breakthrough will be a win-win. But how can a legislator believe that a highly partisan president will spread the credit around? And even under Clinton, many of the deals congressional Republicans cut with the president came only after they recognized that they were losing the public relations battle. In other words, Clinton's victories came in large part because he had outboxed his opponents.

The current occupant of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue has clearly failed to do that. While Barack Obama won reelection last year, he did so with a diminished share of the votes, and Republicans were returned to Congress in roughly the same numbers as before. This year, Republicans' battles with the White House have done at least as much damage to Obama as to Republicans. So, without fear of the president, what incentive do his opponents have to deal with him? Certainly, there is no trust, no expectation that both sides would walk away satisfied from any agreement.

So it goes in the age of Obama. Far from being a post-partisan presidency, this has been a hyperpartisan one, ranking up there with the most polarizing in the postwar era. ♦



... and is much more like Clinton or Truman.



Sincerely, George Orwell

The correspondence of a 'wintry conscience.' BY ELIZABETH POWERS

Literary reputation is an unstable thing. Not so long ago, the luminaries were Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and Mailer, but one hardly hears about them these days, unless one of their novels is adapted for the screen. Certainly Arthur Koestler, a much more profound thinker than his contemporary George Orwell, told the same story and in prose that is even better (and in a language not his own). But it is the latter whose books remain in print and whose name has become a byword for

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George Orwell

A Life in Letters

edited by Peter Davison

Liveright, 560 pp., \$35

the political destruction of individual freedom and thought.

An instructive comparison is Orwell's slightly older contemporary, Virginia Woolf. Despite major differences, they had in common spouses who faithfully shepherded publication of their works, thereby allowing their reputations to rise above the hot-button issues of their own time. (Koestler and

Stefan Zweig suffer in this respect, as their wives committed suicide with them.) One can't help thinking that some writers have outlived their reputation because no one remains to tend the flame. Thus, Orwell seems to tower over his age, whereas there were others in his cohort: Koestler, Ignazio Silone, Herbert Read, and such critics of authoritarianism as Wilhelm Reich, Erich Fromm, and Theodor Adorno.

George Orwell has certainly been fortunate in his editors. First among them was Sonia Brownell, Orwell's widow, who, with Ian Angus, published the four-volume *Collected Essays, Journalism, and Letters* in 1968.

MONDADORI / GETTY IMAGES

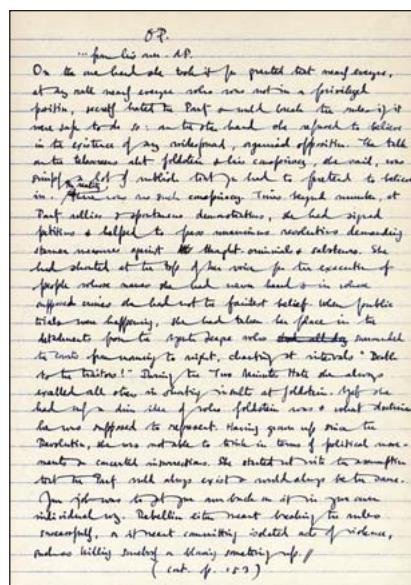
She was also successful, in accordance with Orwell's own wishes, in keeping biographers at bay until 1980, thus preventing indiscriminate pilfering in the archives. (Koestler's afterlife is a cautionary tale: His immense archive in Scotland remains, with one exception, untapped by serious scholars, which has resulted in at least one very tendentious biography and, recently, allegations of rape.) Peter Davison, professor and bibliographer, has worked for almost two decades producing the 20-volume complete works of Orwell and its supplement, *The Lost Orwell*, and, several years ago, *George Orwell: Diaries*. Now we have the one-volume *Life in Letters*.

The first thing that surprises, especially because of the fame of Orwell's essays, is the lack of literary style: He was not a great letter writer. It is not the "literary" George Orwell who is on display here, but the active man in engagement with the world, the Orwell who "matters," to use Christopher Hitchens's term. Although most of us know the end of the story, the editor's selection produces a built-in tension, and one reads with increasing dismay of the progress of his sickness and of the miscellaneous work he did to earn money but that kept him from worthwhile writing. With impressive professional discipline, however, and uncomplaining stoicism, he provided a perfect typescript of 1984 (or *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, as per the English edition) while in bed suffering the final stages of tuberculosis.

It was said of Jonathan Swift, one of Orwell's models, that "his personality is a problem which has not as yet disclosed the whole of his secret." From the evidence of this "life in letters," the same mystery does not apply to Orwell, who comes across as exceedingly straightforward and unsentimental. Indeed, it is the letters of Eileen Blair, Orwell's first wife, included here that balance the life represented by the letters.

In the 1946 essay "Why I Write," Orwell spelled out his goal: "Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, *against* totalitarianism and *for* democratic socialism, as I understand it." It was in pursuit of

this goal that Orwell worked under appalling (to us moderns) conditions. Running water, bathrooms, electrical lighting—he seems not to have given much thought to them, as long as there was high tea at the end of the afternoon or "his ration of gin" in the evening. Jack Common, a working-class colleague from Orwell's stint at the *Adelphi*, occupied the Orwells' cottage in Hertfordshire for a time in the late 1930s. Apologizing for neglecting "several important items . . . that were



Leaf from the manuscript of '1984'

chased out of my mind by the European situation," Orwell warned Common not to use thick paper in the WC: "It sometimes chokes the cesspool up, with disastrous results. The best to use is Jeyes paper which is 6d a packet."

Orwell was certainly not clairvoyant about coming events. In the same letter to Common, in 1938, he wrote: "I think now we're in for a period of slow fascisation, the sort of Dollfuss-Schussnig Fascism which is what Chamberlain and Co would presumably introduce." Like most English people, however, he was relieved that Neville Chamberlain had averted war. He had no doubt that war would come, but felt that time had been bought to prepare for it. What comes across here is his understanding of the effects of politics and politicians on ordinary people. One does not encounter the

overused word "justice" in these letters; the refrain Orwell keeps returning to is one of decency and personal morality. His was not the airy-fairy vision of the university men—for instance, the Cambridge Five.

There are no letters about Orwell's experience as a policeman in Burma in the early 1920s (portrayed in *Burmese Days*, 1934), which seems to have turned him against imperialism. Afterward, unlike men of his own class, he sought out a life among working people. The results were *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933) and *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937). By then he had morphed from Eric Blair, his birth name, into his famous nom de plume. By the time of the Spanish Civil War, he had made the conversion to socialism, although, ironically, it was his experience fighting the fascists in Spain that turned Orwell into an anti-Stalinist. When he went to Spain in 1936, it was by accident that he landed in a brigade of the Workers' Party of Marxist Unification (POUM), a partly Trotskyist socialist party. He was unaware that Moscow had already determined that POUM should be liquidated. Orwell and Eileen barely got out of Spain with their lives.

His anti-Stalinist *Homage to Catalonia* appeared in 1938, but its impact was blunted by the outbreak of World War II. By 1946, Joseph Stalin was at the height of his popularity in Western Europe, and *Animal Farm* experienced a publishing blackout. Despite today's suppression of speech in the name of political correctness, one is still taken aback at the spectacle of left-wing intellectuals toeing the Moscow line. "Do the Bolsheviks have to be pigs?" asked one would-be publisher.

Anthony West, in a review of 1984 for the *New Yorker*, made a penetrating comparison with "Such, Such Were the Joys," an autobiographical essay describing the sadism and oppression of Orwell's pre-World War I prep school. In West's view, Orwell simply channeled his schoolboy experience into the totalitarian horrors of 1984. Nevertheless, if elementary education has become more gentle, one can't say that Orwell's vision of the danger of the

modern bureaucratic state, now increasingly international, is less relevant.

Alongside evidence of Orwell's deep love of gardening and of his young son are many insights about contemporary political and literary figures. In particular, Orwell's working-class correspondents bring to mind the historical strength of labor unionism in England. I recall in the 1950s, as a child of about 8, that something of this got through to me, in connection with reports of brutal labor strikes in the coal mines. My father was led to explain to me the difference between the American and the English laboring classes: If an American worker saw you driving a Cadillac, he worked to earn enough to buy one for himself; the English worker, on the other hand, sought to deprive you of yours. It was in this environment that George Orwell, despite his Eton education, came of age.

One wonders what he would make of today's workers of the world. Orwell's heart, however, was always with the left, and these letters don't give the impression that he ever grappled with conservative thought as such. Ultimately, he seems to have been a man of no party, exemplified by what V.S. Pritchett wrote in his obituary of Orwell: "In one sense, he always made this impression of the passing traveler who meets one on the station, points out that one is waiting for the wrong train, and vanishes."

To return to the earlier comparison with Virginia Woolf: Woolf, I believe, will continue to be relevant, at least so long as aesthetics, i.e., feeling, prevails in political thinking. Orwell, who never sat down to write with an "artistic purpose" in mind, was a purveyor of nonconformist opinion. As he wrote in his essay on Swift, "public opinion, because of the tremendous urge to conformity in gregarious animals, is less tolerant than any system of law." It is not simply because of his anti-Stalinism that we (especially conservatives) admire him, but because of his fearlessness in countering, as he wrote of Dickens, the "smelly little orthodoxies which are contending for our souls."

As long as there is no "wintry conscience" of the present era, George Orwell will remain relevant. ♦

BCA

Warfare of Ideas

There is an alternative to Obama diplomacy.

BY ELLIOTT ABRAMS

Christian Whiton occupied several posts at the State Department during the administration of George W. Bush, all of them at the juncture where realpolitik meets ideology. Or would meet, anyway, if the department were able to recognize the importance of ideas in international politics. Whiton served under Jay Lefkowitz when Lefkowitz was Bush's special envoy for human rights in North Korea, where he learned what the department can do to corner and undermine a foreign body it views as dangerous. From his years at State comes this book, half memoir of what the United States government does wrong and half proposal for fixing it.

There is an old joke about a restaurant patron who complains that "the food is inedible and the portions are too small." Whiton is sometimes left in this position by the State Department, and the government more broadly: We are doing the wrong things, he complains, and we are doing them badly. His main targets are our handling of China, which we insist is not an adversary, and Islamism, of which we only treat the symptom—terrorism—rather than the underlying ideological disease. As he notes, "terrorism is but the preferred tool and vanguard of a much broader political force," and yet, "surprisingly many among the Washington foreign policy establishment have yet to take [the first step] recognizing and understanding the existence of Islamism."

Elliott Abrams is a senior fellow for Middle Eastern studies at the Council on Foreign Relations and author of Tested by Zion: The Bush Administration and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.

Smart Power
Between Diplomacy and War
by Christian Whiton
Potomac, 304 pp., \$29.95

These are two of the five main myths of the bureaucracy that he lists and examines: that China is not an adversary; that al Qaeda terror is the only real threat to us; that neglecting our allies softens up our adversaries' attitudes toward the United States; that the CIA knows all; and that social media can destroy dictatorships.

The range here shows how much Whiton tries to take in, and to do it better he would have needed a longer book. His analyses are often more compelling (and longer) than his prescriptions—for example, Iran gets just four pages. He also has the habit of attacking potential allies—for example, neoconservatives—and writes of "neoconservatives on the right and moralists on the left [who] call for intervention at the drop of a hat" and "whose sole solution to foreign problems so often seems to be sideshow wars."

As someone seeking recognition of the role of ideology in world politics, and of the new agencies and programs that can use "smart power" best, Whiton ought to realize that he is most likely to find support among neocons—and incomprehension almost everywhere else, in the government and in both political parties. There are also a few too many snarky personal comments here, such as an attack on John McCain (Whiton backed Newt Gingrich in 2012), that add nothing to the serious arguments he is making.

What is "smart power" to Christian Whiton? It is not, he stresses, "public

diplomacy,” but rather ideological and political warfare:

If U.S. espionage today is the “pull” of information that America’s opponents do not want it to have, political warfare is the “push” of confrontational ideas, people, forces, and events with which America’s opponents would rather not contend. That push is aided by a strong military posture, whether or not it is engaged in outright combat.

Smart Power is not, then, a paean to replacing hard power with the Internet. Discussing China, for example, he says flatly that “restoring hard power and projecting it into the Pacific is a key to smart power,” and he calls for “a different military posture” against the Chinese. His analyses of our relationship with China are smart, nowhere more so than in his discussion of Taiwan. We generally treat her as an embarrassment, but Whiton suggests a very different policy:

The mainland’s Han Chinese—the majority ethnic group of Taiwan and China—should see in Taiwan’s example their potential too when they become free. Part of this effort, however, requires Washington to treat Taiwan as an asset rather than as a liability in U.S.-China interactions. The freedoms of speech and worship that exist in Hong Kong should also be highlighted to the mainland Chinese, with the goal of prompting them to ask, “Why not here?”

That is, why treat the 1949 victory of the Communists as the permanent solution for China? Why not wonder if the model presented by Taiwan and Hong Kong (and, for that matter, Singapore) will win out in the decades ahead?

But in order to conduct political warfare, the United States will need political warriors—and agencies that allow them to work together effectively. Whiton’s experience tells him that there are very few such people in the government, and that our agencies are incompetent and, in fact, flee from the very idea of political warfare. He spends many pages telling horror stories about the bureaucracy and describing how America successfully engaged in political warfare in the past.

During and after World War II, we seemed to be good at it, able to fight the Communists on their own intellectual and ideological turf. Whiton recalls the success of the CIA and the Congress for Cultural Freedom in combating Communist parties and ideology in Europe. Indeed, *Smart Power* begins with the tale of a CIA agent delivering bags of cash to Italy’s Christian Democrats in the years after the war, allowing them to take on the Soviet-backed Italian Communist Party.



Sidney Hook, Seymour Martin Lipset (right)
at the Congress for Cultural Freedom, Milan, 1955

Whiton despairs of teaching new (or, actually, old) tricks to the State Department, though, and argues that “no instrument is available to presidents to initiate and manage political warfare. . . . The closest operation the United States ever had to a peacetime political warfare agency was the U.S. Information Agency.” But the USIA was a victim of success and closed down when the Soviet Union collapsed and the Cold War ended.

The best model he examines is the Political Warfare Executive, created in London during World War II as part of the Special Operations Executive, whose mission Winston Churchill said was “to set Europe ablaze.” Today, Whiton laments, “the United States has neither the tools nor even the serious inclination to engage in a war of ideas against Washington’s adversaries,” a “deficiency [that] represents a no-show for a major part of

the smart power spectrum. There is no updated Congress for Cultural Freedom for China today.”

Whiton does not suggest reopening USIA, but wants a new agency instead, one capable not only of information operations but of covert activities. It needs “the ability to act covertly and at times even support political forces that might not want U.S. help but whose progress would advance U.S. interests (e.g., the opposition movements in Iran).”

Whiton’s own experiences in the intelligence bureaucracy should suggest to him that this is very unlikely to happen: The CIA and the State Department would fight it to the death. But it is not Whiton’s specific proposals that make this a valuable book; it is his analyses of today’s foreign policy challenges and our bureaucratic failings in meeting them. His portrait of the Foreign Service is etched in acid, and his description of the jumble of agencies and offices supposedly handling political warfare when they oppose even the *idea* that we should engage in this type of combat is effective and therefore depressing. But he seems a happy warrior himself, confident that the next Harry Truman or Ronald Reagan is out there and that “American voters will find them eventually.”

This book forces us to hope that “eventually” won’t be too far away. ♦

Hearts of Darkness

Postcards from a surreal landscape.

BY PARKER BAUER

You get the sense, reading this off-kilter collection of stories, that somewhere in the background, jazz is playing. Bop, probably. The plotlines and patter of the characters tootle off every which way, high and low, with now and then a nod to the theme. Sometimes (as in the sax work of Coleman Hawkins, cited in one story) the theme peters out. Such bold flightiness is both the weakness of Colin Fleming's writing and its strength.

What you don't get is much grounding in the material world: No red wheelbarrow, not even a blue nude. Again, the effect is musical. For all that we see—a mud hut and a hole in the ground—a story set in Botswana might as well be in the Bronx. The starkness gives these fables a universality or, just as arguably, a lostness in space.

The first story, "Terry from the Cape," begins on an estuary and recalls Joseph Conrad's Marlow commencing his tale while afloat on the Thames at sunset, with sails hanging slack and a three-legged lighthouse on a shoal. Fleming allows only that his river "ceases to be a salt water river and gives itself over to the ocean proper." Nothing to see here. Yet the river *does* evoke a feel of merging and becoming, a letting go.

Things shape up with the coming of Terry, the first in a long conga line of grotesques. Rotund and wearing clothing from four different Boston sports teams all at once, he's the consummate radio talk-show caller, the seer who somehow knows what all the jocks are plotting. He floats a rumor that he nearly made the Patriots roster back in 1978. One night, he carries this gig too far, avowing that

Parker Bauer is a documentary film writer in Florida.

Between Cloud and Horizon

A Relationship Casebook in Stories

by Colin Fleming

Texas Review, 256 pp., \$22.95



Colin Fleming

his "advanced knowledge of baseball metrics" has won him a front-office job with the Red Sox. Moreover, he might "take on Mr. Joshua Slocum" and sail around the world in his homemade boat—a completely unseaworthy craft fitted out with old seats from Fenway Park. The tale hangs on what Conrad termed the romance of illusions: Cornered by his own extravagant claims, Terry does set out on that voyage, in the dark of night and in a fearsome gal. You feel for the guy.

It's less clear what Fleming is up to in "Hail, the Eye." This seems the centerpiece story, if the preface is any guide. Again, a grotesque lurks at the heart of darkness—this time a monstrous eyeball, three feet high—along with two brothers and the wife of both of them, a threesome who come to Botswana to scam the locals. This they do by stealing cattle from one village and bestow-

ing them on another, then attributing the good fortune to the costly gems, eye agates, they have sold to the lucky new herders. They get away with it until the Eye, the three-footer, steps in. Is this breakaway organ, in fact, God, in some judgmental guise? Or the brothers' guilty conscience? The Eye fries their hut, one of the brothers is imprisoned in the hole, and things go on from there.

At times the language feels tossed off too breezily, like a fast-food sack flung from a speeding car. (You wonder why scraps like this weren't tidied up: "One whom—and this really pricked up my ears—hailed from Gloucester, oddly enough.") Yet the wayside debris can be overlooked, given the pace and inventive fervor, even joy, of these motley tales. The jazziness plays well in "Bone's Blues," about a circumspect tenor who bows out of a quintet just as it's riding high on his shoulders. "The Dedicated Antiquarian," told by a languid law student in Boston, opens with an echo of Nabokov:

When you're engaged to be married, it's probably not wise to live with a woman who is not your fiancée. I am no romantic acrobat, lithely swinging from one partner to another.

The woman not his fiancée is, happily, a sleepwalking lesbian with whom he shares nocturnal missions to the basement of their apartment house. There they find a storage unit packed with rare editions of Proust and Ambrose Bierce belonging to another grotesque, a "troll-like" mobster who lives on their hall.

The witty "Padraig and Lorcan" seems weirdly prescient. A duo of down-and-out scammers alight in Detroit and set themselves up as "communal organizers," forthrightly dubbing the folks they organize "vagrants" and "bums." Hard by the Dime Building they establish a "Decider Wall," with crushed beer cans spelling out poems and uplifting slogans. Vagrant contributions are invited, literary and—more to the point—monetary. The media glom on, running fulsome reports on the "Transient Pride Wall."

Poignant, improvised, messy. This is the country of Colin Fleming, the one in which we live. ♦

Dispirit of '76

The American Revolution as seen from the other side.

BY EDWARD SHORT

In his groundbreaking history of the American War of Independence from the British standpoint, *The War for America* (1964), Piers Mackesy argued, “To understand the war, one must view it with sympathy for the Ministers in their difficulties, and not with the arrogant assumption that because they were defeated they were incompetent, and that all their actions proceeded from folly.”

Following Mackesy’s lead, Andrew Jackson O’Shaughnessy revisits the men who sought to recapture America, and finds that there was much to admire in their otherwise ill-starred endeavors. Here, in this superb study, are fascinating sketches of George III, Lord North, Lord Germain, Lord Rodney, and Lord Sandwich, as well as of the Howe brothers, Sir John Burgoyne, Sir Henry Clinton, and Lord Cornwallis. According each subject his own biographical narrative enables O’Shaughnessy to interpret events from a multitude of perspectives, giving the book a layered, novel-like richness.

Its central contention is that we can only appreciate the character and scale of the American victory if we appreciate the skill and resourcefulness of the British war effort, even though the strategic and tactical skills of Britain’s gifted commanders were finally no match for the war’s myriad logistical difficulties—or the more fundamental difficulty of trying to win back the loyalty of those convinced, as Benjamin Franklin told Admiral Howe in July 1776, that

It is impossible we should think of Submission to a Government, that

Edward Short is the author, most recently, of Newman and His Family.

The Men Who Lost America
British Leadership, the American Revolution, and the Fate of the Empire
by Andrew Jackson O’Shaughnessy
Yale, 480 pp., \$37.50



Sir William Howe

has with the most wanton barbarity and cruelty, burnt our defenceless Towns in the midst of winter, excited the Savages to massacre our Farmers, and our Slaves to murder their Masters, and is even now bringing foreign mercenaries to deluge our Settlements with Blood. These atrocious Injuries have extinguished every remaining Spark of Affection for that Parent Country we once held so dear.

Here Franklin exploded not only the myth that America was full of loyalists but the concomitant myth that if only Britain waged the war fiercely enough the colonists would surrender. George III never left off believing that the colonists “will be lions, whilst we are lambs; but if we take the

resolute part, they will undoubtedly prove very meek.” Edmund Burke might insist, “Magnanimity in politics is not seldom the truest wisdom; and a great empire and little minds go ill together.” But for the king, such magnanimity would only embolden the seditious minority tyrannizing his loyal American subjects, and he would not hear of it.

If resolve characterized George III, irresolution characterized his prime minister, Lord North, who was convinced that he was not the man to salvage an unwinnable war, even if it was crucial to Britain’s imperial prestige. O’Shaughnessy’s portrait of this ungainly, popeyed, ingenious figure is brilliant. While he takes North to task for failing to unite the cabinet around an agreed policy, he extols his management of the huge war debt, which went from £127 million in 1775 to £232 million at war’s end. O’Shaughnessy also praises North’s “unalterable suavity” in debate. As one can see from Hansard, his jousts with the opposition were marvelously deft.

The most ambivalent of the king’s commanders were the Howe brothers—Major General William Howe, who had scaled the heights of Abraham and captured Quebec in 1759, and Lord Admiral Richard Howe, who had fired the first shot of the Seven Years’ War from H.M.S. *Dunkirk* and become a pioneering expert on amphibious warfare, the one thing that might have saved Burgoyne at Saratoga and Cornwallis at Yorktown. Like Burke, the Howe brothers were convinced that the British in America were at war with their own principles. As Burke argued in his great speech, *On Conciliation with America* (1775), “Deny [the colonists] . . . participation in freedom, and you break that sole bond, which originally made, and must preserve the unity of the empire.”

When the Howe brothers arrived in New York, their chances of victory were hardly negligible. With 32,000 troops to George Washington’s 19,000, they certainly had numerical superiority. General Howe was initially successful in the Battle of Long Island in August 1776, but shortage of food and

supplies prevented him from following up the victory. Howe also claimed that he held back to avoid estranging what he thought was the loyalist majority in America. Yet it was not British might but British plunder that turned Americans against the redcoats and gravely undermined the professional standards of Howe and his colleagues. When Franklin upbraided the British for their “bar-

whose political views were animated by “sophistry and frenzy,” but they exhibited “great ability” in the field, especially when they transformed their militiamen into marksmen whose accuracy was a continual bane to the more conventionally trained British. The colonial amateurs also brought an extraordinary pertinacity to their warmaking, which was part and parcel of their devotion to liberty.

ity would prove the “pivot upon which everything turned.” Had Lord Rodney prevented the Comte de Grasse from controlling the Chesapeake Bay, Cornwallis would never have been trapped at Yorktown.

Apropos the loyalists who were such a linchpin of British strategy, O’Shaughnessy conjectures that only 16 percent of the colonists could be described as loyalist, hailing mostly from the Hudson Valley, southern Pennsylvania, New York, and the southern frontier between Georgia and Virginia. Still, they were a sizable contingent in an imperial war that often resembled a civil war, and during hostilities, some 19,000 loyalists fought for the British.



‘Surrender of Lord Cornwallis’ by John Trumbull (1817)

barity and cruelty,” he was attacking those professional pretensions at their tenderest point.

This reveals an interesting irony. If there was one thing that united the disparate commanders of the British Army, it was pride in their professionalism. Lifelong students of warfare, many went on to distinguished military careers after their defeat in America. In hindsight, their contempt for amateurism is surprising; after all, in nearly every field of endeavor, Georgian England teemed with outstanding amateurs. Yet it was not until Britain’s professional commanders met the Americans in the field that they began to appreciate how amateurs could revolutionize the waging of war. For General Burgoyne, the consummate professional, the colonists might be led by “profligate hypocrites,”

As General Nathanael Greene was fond of saying, “We fight, get beat, rise, and fight again.”

Lord George Germain, who succeeded Lord Dartmouth as colonial secretary, was intent on winning the war before the French entered it by isolating revolutionary New England and moving the conflict south, where he expected large numbers of loyalists to help him secure and extend his victories. If the southern campaign failed, Germain feared, France might install Washington at the head of what would amount to a French dictatorship.

As it happened, Britain’s imperial commitments in Canada, Ireland, and the British Caribbean prevented her from giving her commanders the troops and supplies they needed to repulse this decisive French factor. Moreover, as Washington recognized, naval superior-

Since the British Army never accorded loyalists equal status, however, their loyalty was always questionable, even if they were prepared to defy the retaliatory wrath of their rebel neighbors. They also resented Britain’s enlisting Indians and slaves, and thought the crown’s soldiers irreligious. Even in the 18th century, the “Bible-faced Yankees” took their religious faith seriously.

Germain’s appointment of Sir Henry Clinton as Howe’s successor was misguided: He ought to have chosen someone with more daring. An overly cautious, querulous man, Clinton was convinced that he had been set up for failure. This obsessive defeatism was exacerbated by feelings of resentment towards Cornwallis, who treated his colleague with seigniorial disdain. Still, Clinton orchestrated a brilliant siege of Charleston, which gave the British one of their greatest victories. Later, he would regret not resigning after Charleston: Had he done so, he would have been known as Britain’s greatest commander in America. Instead, he sailed for New York and left Cornwallis in charge of a southern command that would culminate in disaster.

O'Shaughnessy's portrait of Lord Cornwallis is riveting. Here we see that, prior to his defeat at Yorktown, the ruthless general had an impressive victory at the Battle of Camden, at which General Horatio Gates lost 1,000 men to Cornwallis's 68 killed and 256 wounded. Weeks before Yorktown, Cornwallis was still the most feared of all Britain's commanders. Yet, like so many of his colleagues, he could never keep what he conquered. Indeed, he even described himself in one letter as "quite tired of marching about the Country in Quest of Adventure."

Then, too, he showed a pathological disregard for his men, ordering them to divest themselves of their packs, which left them not only without food and tents, but boots! That he meant to transform them into a light force to prevent Nathanael Greene from teaming up with the legendary Daniel Morgan hardly justified this sadism. Henry Clinton rightly complained that his colleague was behaving "like a barbaric Tartar." In 10 weeks Cornwallis lost 4,000 men. When it came to what the French called *la petite guerre*, or warfare by small skirmishes where the object was to wear down the enemy, the Americans always proved the superior force.

In retrospect, Yorktown seems not so much a miscalculation on the part of a hapless commander—surprised by a joint American and French land and naval force that outnumbered him two-to-one—but a kind of providential delivery. In his memoirs, Clinton claimed that Cornwallis did not do enough to save himself at Yorktown, a classic siege that would have delighted Laurence Sterne's Uncle Toby. Cornwallis countered that he chose not to fight his way out at Yorktown because he was waiting for relief from Clinton—which, of course, never came. (And, after all, it was Clinton who had ordered Cornwallis to capture the tobacco port in the first place.)

Yet the likelier explanation might be that this bedeviled man had had enough and yearned to be extricated from an impossible war. As the French mortars exploded over

his head, he might have said to himself what another British officer had told a newspaper earlier in the war: "Human exertion is a limited thing. Remember . . . we do not contend with an army but with a country." And in Cornwallis's case, the enemy included the Comte de Rochambeau, who had marched 400 miles down from New York with 7,800 troops, including some of the cleverest artillery officers in Europe.

After nine days of incessant artillery fire—and 156 dead, 326 wounded—Cornwallis capitulated. Although some in the colonies thought he should be executed for war crimes, Cornwallis was allowed to return to British headquarters in New York.

Before departing, however, he was sumptuously fêted by his American conquerors, who vied with one another to host their defeated adversary. Even in the newly independent America they loved a lord. That Cornwallis received a hero's welcome when he returned to England proved that this was a love shared by his countrymen. He would go on to become both governor-general of India and lord lieutenant of Ireland, and, after his death, the *Dictionary of National Biography* summed him up as one of the most successful proconsuls of Britain's second empire: "If not a man of startling genius, he was a clear-sighted statesman and an able general, as well as an upright English gentleman." ♦



Mystery Partner

In search of an early Balanchine 'muse.'

BY PETER TONGUETTE

When balletomanes consider the dancers who stirred the creativity of George Balanchine (1904-1983), they might think of Maria Tallchief (his third wife) or Tanaquil LeClercq (his fourth) or Suzanne Farrell and Allegra Kent (his muses). One name that probably does not spring to mind is Lidia "Lidochka" Ivanova, who befriended the young Balanchine (then known as Georgi or Georges Balanchivadze) when they were students at the Imperial Theatre School in St. Petersburg and appeared in several of his earliest creations.

In Bernard Taper's *Balanchine: A Biography* (1984), as well as Robert Gottlieb's more recent *George Balanchine: The Ballet Maker* (2004), Ivanova merits only a handful of passing references. But while this prodigiously researched study succeeds

Peter Tonguette is at work on a book about Peter Bogdanovich.

Balanchine and the Lost Muse

Revolution and the Making of a Choreographer
by Elizabeth Kendall
Oxford, 304 pp., \$35

many times over in fleshing out the record, our expectations that Ivanova will turn out to be a muse in the mold of Maria Tallchief and company are short-circuited right off the bat. In the introduction, we learn that Ivanova "wasn't George's personal muse" at all; instead, she was his preternaturally gifted classmate and occasional onstage partner before she died mysteriously in 1924. Misleading title aside, the book succeeds as a detailed study of the pair's upbringing and training rather than as an argument for Ivanova's supposed influence on Balanchine's great ballets.

To be sure, Elizabeth Kendall, who evokes dance beautifully on the page,

argues that elements of Balanchine's 1934 *Serenade* (to name one) took inspiration from Ivanova's death. But while Kendall is persuasive when she writes that the ballet's female corpse that "enters heaven vertically, in a ray of light" is meant to echo "the ray of light Lidochka once died in onstage in *Valse Triste*," she is on far more tenuous ground when she tries to relate the

Even if Kendall's premise falters, however, her fresh research into Balanchine's initial entree to ballet—via performing, not choreographing—makes for fascinating reading. Unsurprisingly, given the religious dimension of *Serenade* (not to mention the biblical basis of *Prodigal Son*, his 1929 dance for Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes), Balanchine's first child-

Did he pause tactfully to let the mother detach the child from her embrace? Did Georgi glance down one last time as he climbed the stairs to the boys' quarters? Did she turn back to look up at him?

Here, the intent is poetic, but elsewhere, Kendall—faced with incomplete records in archives scattered across countries—frankly admits that she simply does not know the answers, as when she wonders about two dances in which a 14-year-old Balanchine is purported to have appeared: "Or at least he was listed—in a surviving program, both numbers are crossed out. Were they canceled?" We appreciate Kendall's candor, but the cumulative effect of such questions is to make a hard-to-follow book—which tells its story with the Russian Revolution and its aftermath hovering in the background—even sketchier. As Kendall, writing of the influence of Ivanova's father on the dancer's life, puts it, "Answers can only be suggested."

Kendall is no less speculative in wondering what brought about the demise of Ivanova, who had evolved into a fetching ballerina with plans to leave the country to tour with Balanchine and several other members of their Young Ballet troupe when she went on a deadly motorboat ride. Was it an accident or murder? If murder, was it orchestrated by a rival ballerina or the Soviet secret police?

In the end, though, Kendall is at her best writing about ballet, not Bolsheviks, which makes me regret the limited scope of the book. There is no doubt that *Balanchine and the Lost Muse* is the last word on this period of Balanchine's life, but there is something inapposite about its Russophile tone. While Balanchine was indebted to his homeland, it was the United States that gave him his most memorable artistic stimulation. This is a man, after all, whose *Stars and Stripes* incorporates a mammoth American flag into its scenery; whose *Western Symphony* delights in the sauntering sexiness of its dancing cowgirls; and whose final muse was not an ill-fated Russian but a teenager from Southern California called Darci Kistler. ♦



George Balanchine, Allegra Kent, 1958

ballet's use of Tchaikovsky's *Serenade for Strings* back to Ivanova. True, Ivanova once performed to that same music, but Kendall loses us when she writes, "And all of Lidochka's friends knew how she felt about Tchaikovsky." Since when is liking Tchaikovsky a novel opinion?

Furthermore, while Kendall suggests that Balanchine was still referencing Ivanova in various ballets for the rest of his career, it is worth remembering how promiscuous the choreographer was when it came to his muses. It is hard to imagine that Balanchine was still pining over Ivanova when the choreographer himself suited up in the titular role in his version of *Don Quixote*, a famously public display of his affection for Suzanne Farrell (who appeared as Dulcinea).

hood "performances" were religious in character: "He made up games in which he was a priest, with two chairs serving as altar. He blessed small objects. He imagined himself as a holy figure in church robes."

His older sister Tamara was supposed to be the dancer in the family, but it was Balanchine who impressed the higher-ups at the Imperial Theatre School, to which he was shipped off at age 9. The daily routine of the school, with its separate floors for boys and girls, is painstakingly reconstructed by Kendall. In describing the desperately sad separation of Balanchine from his mother, though, Kendall falls back into one of her most frustrating habits: asking questions instead of making statements.

Thing of Beauty

Ava Gardner as metaphor.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

In 1941, a girl climbed off a train in Los Angeles. She was the daughter of a North Carolina farmer and a housekeeper, had grown up bitterly poor, and had few prospects in life. But her older sister had married a man who owned photo shops in New York City. He had taken a picture of the girl and put it in the window of his Fifth Avenue store. An MGM office boy spotted it; she got a \$50-a-week contract at the studio and a train ticket to the West Coast.

That photo appears in a strange new book called *Ava Gardner: The Secret Conversations*, which has a joint byline from the afterlife—the titular movie star, dead these 23 years, and a writer named Peter Evans, who passed away last year. The book is Evans’s account of an aborted effort to ghostwrite Gardner’s memoirs in the late 1980s. (Evans speculates that she was handsomely paid by her ex-husband Frank Sinatra to give it up.) Like that project, *The Secret Conversations* is unfinished, because Evans died in the midst of it.

Ava Gardner was 18 when her photo was taken, and she was garbed as an 18-year-old in 1940 would have been—in a floral dress and straw hat tied under her chin. But she doesn’t look like any 18-year-old beauty today would, which is something that can be said as well of most starlets from Hollywood’s Golden Age. Their glamour shots were explicitly designed to convey mysterious sensuality, and the message is unmistakable: Sexuality is a *womanly* thing.

The subjects of the pictures may have been barely out of their teens, but to the 2013 eye, they look much older. And they sound much older as well.

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

Ava Gardner

The Secret Conversations
by Peter Evans and Ava Gardner
Simon & Schuster, 304 pp., \$26

Listen to them speak in YouTube clips and on Turner Classic Movies, and you will notice that (under the tutelage of vocal coaches at the studios) their voices shaded toward deeper tones.

Girls they may have been in fact, but this was not what Hollywood wanted audiences to see. Girls were cute: They wore pigtailed and had loads of goofy energy and spoke with squeaky voices. Women had had a few go-arounds with life: They knew things; their mature faces and mature bodies and mature voices testified to that. They were people to reckon with. Girls were pre-sexual; women embodied sex.

Ava Gardner wasn’t in Los Angeles 24 hours when she found herself being introduced to the biggest (and smallest) star in Hollywood—Mickey Rooney, all 5-feet-2-inches of him. Rooney tracked her down that night, and, partly because she would not sleep with him otherwise, they were married within a few months. Their nuptials came over the objections of the tyrannical head of MGM, Louis B. Mayer, for whom Rooney’s box-office value came from the public impression that he was a cute, hyperactive, desexualized boy. Marriage endangered that image, because marriage would mean Rooney was a man, not a boy. Marriage meant sex, especially when your wife was someone as implicitly womanly as 19-year-old Ava.

Today’s starlets, from Miley Cyrus twerking on an awards show to the casts of shows on the CW network and ABC Family, convey a sexuality of their own—and the contrast to Gardner and

her contemporaries is striking. They are Humbert Humbert’s fantasy gone viral; Humbert, who finds the 35-year-old Charlotte Haze revolting in his obsession with her 12-year-old daughter, the “nymphet” whose body has yet to manifest the womanliness that so repels him, whom he calls “Lolita” even though her real name is the very plain Dolores. Today’s starlets are encouraged by the culture to associate their girlishness—high voices, open faces, giggly personas—with sexuality. Even Vladimir Nabokov, with his great satirical eye, could not have imagined it coming to this.

Another difference between the pop-culture conception of beauty and sexuality of Gardner’s halcyon days and Miley Cyrus’s booty-shaking times has to do with scarcity and abundance. If you were knocked out by Ava Gardner in a movie in 1946, the only way you would get to see her again was to *wait*. Wait until the next one. She was, by definition, a scarce commodity, made all the more valuable by that fact.

Now, if you develop a thing for Jennifer Lawrence, who is all of 23, you can watch YouTube clips of her all night. You can download her movies and have them on your hard drive. You can put a Google Alert on her name so that every mention of her anywhere in the media comes right into your email. This makes Lawrence more accessible, and also means her fans are going to get sick of her. Stardom, like sexuality itself, needs a little mystery. Ava Gardner always had it. No one can have it today.

This odd, depressing book is really about what happens to someone beautiful and famous when she ends up with nothing and no one—only painful memories that are of value because they involve people about whom the world loves to hear gossip.

She was world-famous, loved by millions. And yet there’s a very real sense that if that boy from MGM hadn’t spotted her photo in that window, and she had gone to work as a secretary while attending the college to which she’d gotten a year’s scholarship, Ava Gardner would have led a more satisfying and more productive life—instead of ending up bitter, broke, and alone. ♦

"Donald and daughter Ivanka Trump will consider acquiring FBI headquarters"

—Washington Post headline, September 11, 2013

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SEPTEMBER 23, 2014

washingtonpost.com • \$1.25

FBI to share Hoover Building with new Trump casino hotel

CLYDE TOLSON SUITE UNVEILED

'From G-Men to G-String Divas, this place has it all!'

BY JONATHAN O'CONNELL

At a ribbon-cutting ceremony amid showgirls, acrobats, white Bengal tigers, and Carrot Top, Donald Trump reopened the J. Edgar Hoover Building as the Trump Plaza J. Edgar Hoover Building Casino Hotel & Towers. And while the first four levels will still be occupied by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the remaining floors will feature a hotel, casino, spa, theater, circus, and revolving restaurant.

"This city's got power and might," said Trump. "But where are the hand-tufted rugs, Austrian crystal chandeliers, and endless buffets? Where's that touch of class? It's right here at the Trump Plaza J. Edgar Hoover Building Casino Hotel & Towers." Trump added that everything and anything imaginable can be found at the hotel. "Three-ring circus? Check. Zumanity? Check. Chai tea mud masks? Check. From G-



The Trump name and revolving eatery atop the FBI headquarters

Men to G-String Divas, this place has it all!"

District delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton spoke glowingly of Trump's neon-lit redesign, noting the 24-hour buffet is particularly sumptuous. "In the mood for stone crab?" asked Norton. "You'll find it at the Hoover Buffet, just one floor above the fingerprint lab." (The delegate was recently named director of food and beverage service.)

Trump said the combination of a casino hotel and the F.B.I. was ideal. "If those agents want to blow off some steam, they can take the elevator to the top floor

and dance the night away at Al Capone's Vault—the classiest joint in town." The former Republican presidential candidate also couldn't resist a political dig: "The only thing progressive here are the slots," he said with a wink.

Perhaps most stunning are the luxury suites available to heads of state, high-rollers, and former mayor Marion Barry. According to casino spokesman David Gergen, the J. Edgar Hoover Suite is the most expensive, followed by the adjoining Clyde Tolson

SUITE LIFE CONTINUED ON A6

the weekly
Standard

SEPTEMBER 30, 2013