

**CRISIS OF
THE CONSERVATIVE
HOUSE DIVIDED**
STEVEN F. HAYWARD

the weekly

Standard

OCTOBER 31, 2016 • \$5.99



THE NFL IN DECLINE

So is it goodbye to football?
BY GEOFFREY NORMAN

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October 31, 2016 • Volume 22, Number 8



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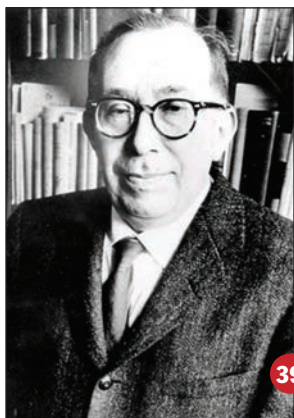


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Wall Street Hillary

Elsewhere in this issue, our colleague Mark Hemingway surveys the revelations contained in the WikiLeaks release of hacked emails from Clintonista John Podesta. Without giving too much away (see “Scandal? What Scandal?” on page 28), it will not surprise you to learn that the emails confirm two obvious points: One, Hillary Clinton is awfully friendly with Wall Street. And two, the media have no problem prostrating themselves to carry water for her. There is simply no credible way to spin what’s in these emails on either count.

Well, leave it to the *New York Times* to try denying the first point even as they confirm the second. On October 17, an above-the-fold business section article was headlined “Clinton Not That Chummy With Wall Street, Emails Hint.” Right after conceding that in Hillary Clinton’s lucrative speeches to Wall Street banks, “she does say a lot of what her audience presumably wanted to hear,” the *Times*’s financial wunderkind Andrew Ross Sorkin says that “she may be inclined to impose heavier regulations on the financial industry than is fully understood.”

The evidence for this is astonishingly thin. One is a staffer’s characterization that on a phone call Clinton was “kind of leaning toward endorsing Glass-Steagall,” the longstanding law that put a firewall between commercial and investment banking. The 1999 repeal of Glass-Steagall has since been blamed by some, unconvincingly, for helping cause the 2008

financial crisis. However, every public statement Clinton has made on the matter opposes Glass-Steagall, and reinstating it would force her to admit that her husband is responsible for the financial crisis, because he’s the president who signed its repeal.



Sorkin’s other proof consists of a Clinton staffer meeting with an adviser to Senator Elizabeth Warren, who has long been on the warpath for strict financial regulation. This probably says less about Clinton’s willingness to embrace financial regulation than about the Clinton campaign’s desire to keep Warren’s left-wing supporters from going off the reservation.

Another point Sorkin attempts to make is that Clinton spoke at length about economic fairness and irresponsibility in the financial industry to Deutsche Bank. Sorkin then

promptly undermines this by quoting Clinton speechwriter Dan Schwerin, who said he wrote that section of the speech “precisely for the purpose of having something we could show people if ever asked what she was saying behind closed doors for two years to all those fat cats.” And how’s this for straw grasping? “Mr. Schwerin’s casual reference to bankers as ‘fat cats’ . . . [is] a tiny clue about how the Clinton machine may really perceive Wall Street.” Sorkin also assures us the “vibe” of the emails is unfriendly.

Finally, he notes that emails show Clinton is flirting with making banks pay a “risk fee.” A Democratic presidential candidate wants to tax big business? With a scoop like that, Sorkin’s Pulitzer is all but assured.

Left unmentioned is that Clinton privately told her Goldman Sachs audience that she thinks Wall Street has been unfairly demonized, that the Dodd-Frank financial regulations—which she has publicly lauded for curbing Wall Street excess—were in fact bad, and that she has a “public” and “private” position on Wall Street regulation. When push comes to shove, forgive us for thinking the banks will discreetly get what they want because they gave Clinton millions in speaking fees and contributions, even as the public is being fed something altogether different.

While this story was laughably unpersuasive, we expect it accomplished its goal. This is precisely the kind of beat-sweetening coverage that will ensure Sorkin and his colleagues primo access to the Clinton White House. ♦

DAVE CLEGG

A Pat on My Own Back

Liberal pundit Jonathan Chait has a new book coming out in a few months titled *Audacity: How Barack Obama Defied His Critics and Transformed America*. THE SCRAPBOOK

doesn’t necessarily intend to plug the book, but if he’s reading this, you’re welcome. Anyway, galleys are now being sent out to reviewers, and we couldn’t help but notice that the very first person Jonathan Chait thanks in the acknowledgments

of his book is . . . Jonathan Chait:

I am not always right. But Barack Obama is a subject I believe I got right, right from the beginning. I concluded early on in the presidential campaign that he possessed a keen mind, oratorical gifts, and just

the right combination of idealism and skeptical, analytic thinking to identify the best methods to achieve those goals. I spent Obama's first campaign and two terms first as an opinion journalist at the *New Republic* and then at *New York* magazine, laying out this case as it unspooled day by day. I criticized him when I felt like he deserved it, but mostly I found myself defending and admiring what I concluded early on was an exceptional and historic presidency.

We will give Chait the benefit of the doubt that, as the title promises, he makes his case for Obama fully elsewhere in the book. But dare we say that this paragraph explains a lot about liberalism in the Obama years? Liberals decided early on that he was their champion, and no amount of failure would stop them from spending his entire presidency confirming their own biases.

However, despite maintaining a degree of personal popularity, Obama brought electoral ruin to any number of his colleagues in the Democratic party. Congressional Democrats and the Clinton campaign aren't even pretending that his signature domestic policy achievement, Obamacare, isn't on its deathbed. His major foreign policy achievement was, for reasons known only to him, a one-sided "deal" with Iran that required lying to Congress and the American people about plans to rapidly hasten the arrival of a nuclear-armed theocracy in Tehran, while funding the mullahs' terrorist activity with taxpayer dollars.

Meanwhile, the economy has seen the worst post-recession recovery since the end of World War II, and in the twilight of the Obama era, we're hardpressed to think of a time in the modern era when the country has been more politically divided and angry. What would qualify then as an Obama success? Cash for clunkers? Reinterpreting Title IX to pretend it demands an end to same-sex bathrooms and locker rooms? Unilaterally entering into climate change agreements? Forgive us if we don't see the need to



call on the muse of Gutzon Borglum and start dynamiting a new space on Mount Rushmore.

Indeed, the rush to canonize Obama while he's still in office doesn't tell us much about the success of his presidency. But as Chait has made painfully clear, it does tell us a lot about liberal America's desperate need for self-satisfaction. ♦

Sentences We Didn't Finish

Hillary Clinton's "choice of a white suit for Wednesday's debate harkened back to the not-so-distant past, when suffragists wore

white to promote their struggle to gain the right to vote,' Booth Moore, a senior fashion editor for *The Hollywood Reporter* and *Pret-a-Reporter*, told ABC News . . ." ("Clinton's Choice to Wear White at Debate Conveys Struggle of Suffragists, Says Expert," abcnews.go.com, October 19, 2016). ♦

Liberal Think Tank Freaks Out

One last story from the trove of Democratic insider emails released by WikiLeaks. This one comes courtesy of our friends at the *Washington Free Beacon*, whose headline

we just ripped off: “Emails: Liberal Think Tank Freaked Out at SNL’s Criticism of Donors.”

It seems that a *Saturday Night Live* sketch in 2008 lampooned prominent donors to the Center for American Progress (CAP), the liberal think tank founded by Clinton insider John Podesta. The sketch, it’s worth noting, also cruelly mocks George W. Bush. Of course, being laughed at on late-night TV is such a commonplace for conservatives that they take it for granted: It’s



The sketch that freaked them out

like the sun rising in the east and setting in the west. It’s such an unusual event for liberals, on the other hand, that it sent CAP into a tizzy.

Here’s the bit that got under their skin. At a mock C-SPAN press conference on the financial bailout, “Nancy Pelosi” is welcoming a parade of victims to the mike. An older couple steps up, and she says,

“This is Herbert and Marion Sandler. Tell us your story.”

HERBERT SANDLER: “My wife and I had a company which aggressively marketed subprime mortgages, and then bundled them into securities to sell to banks such as Wachovia. Today, our portfolio is worth almost nothing—though at one point, it was worth close to \$19 billion.”

PELOSI: “My God. I am so sorry. Were you able to sell it for anything?”

HERBERT SANDLER: “Yes, for \$24 billion.”

PELOSI: “I see. So in that sense, you’re not, so to speak, actual victims.”

HERBERT SANDLER (chuckling): “Oh, no. That would be Wachovia Bank.”

MARION SANDLER: “Actually, we’ve done quite well. We’re very happy.”

HERBERT SANDLER: “We were sort of wondering why you asked us to come today.”

MARION SANDLER: “Anyway, it’s delightful to see you, Nancy.” (Kisses Pelosi.)

As the *Free Beacon*’s Lachlan Markay points out, the *SNL* bit was far from unfair. The Sandler’s Savings & Loan “was among the first to sell a type of adjustable-rate mortgage that the *New York Times* later dubbed ‘the Typhoid Mary of the mortgage industry.’ The Sandler’s 2006 sale of their Golden West Financial to Wachovia for more than \$25 billion was widely seen as a primary cause of the bank’s near-collapse two years later.”

But there was no laughter at the Center for American Progress. As Markay notes,

In a series of emails following the sketch, dismayed CAP staffers, including its then-president John Podesta, concocted conspiracy theories about who might be behind the skit and discussed ways to enlist elected officials to push back on its portrayal of CAP donors. . . . “Talked to Herb. They are obviously [sic] upset,” Podesta wrote of the skit. “Weird that snl should pick them out. They did soros too so maybe this is one of those right wing writers. . . . At any rate, we should figure out a way to push back,” he added.

And push back they did! Because that’s what think tanks are for, right? Writes Markay:

CAP senior fellow Laura Nichols said she planned to enlist powerful congressional staffers to push back on the *SNL* skit. “I’m going to loop in pelosi peeps as her character intro’d them and they r her constituents,” she wrote.

[CAP cofounder and executive vice president Sarah] Wartell said that she had reached out to Martin Eakes, the president of the Center for Responsible Lending, an advocacy group to which the Sandler’s had contributed.

The [email] thread ended with Wartell calling a meeting for the following morning to plot strategies for countering their donors’ satirical portrayal on a sketch comedy show.

Mamas, don’t let your babies grow up to be liberal think-tankers. ♦

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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 March, fourth week in June, and third week in August) at 1152 15th St., NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20005. 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, \$5.99. Back issues, \$5.99 (includes postage and handling). Send letters to the editor to The Weekly Standard, 1152 15th Street, NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20005-4617. For a copy of The Weekly Standard Privacy Policy, visit www.weeklystandard.com or write to Customer Service, The Weekly Standard, 1152 15th St., NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20005. Copyright ©2016, Clarity Media Group. All rights reserved. No material in The Weekly Standard may be reprinted without permission of the copyright owner. The Weekly Standard is a registered trademark of Clarity Media Group.



In My Solitude

A friend is in town for medical tests. We had a pasta lunch in the complex where he's being probed and scanned. He said he hadn't seen so many doctors since he was quarantined for tuberculosis as a child in the 1950s.

I said, "Sounds terrible."

"It was wonderful," he said. "You can't imagine."

But I could, even though TB had been vanquished by the time I was a child. The week before the start of fifth grade I developed a cough so severe my mother took me to the doctor. He diagnosed pneumonia and had me admitted to the hospital. It was nothing, my parents assured me. But it didn't seem like nothing. A priest came every morning and gave me communion. The nurses gave me shots in the bum, an indignity that I had until then dismissed as an urban myth. I watched the whole Munich Olympics through the plastic walls of an oxygen tent.

When I went into the hospital, everyone thought of me as a robust, athletic kid. When I got out, I was the 10-year-old Me-Decade equivalent of a Proustian consumptive. I still couldn't breathe. To be sure, breathing in our house was a challenge in the best of circumstances. My parents chain-smoked—Dutch Masters Presidents for Dad, Viceroy's for Mom. Since middle-class families seldom went out in those days, there was no chance for me to go anywhere where the air might have been purer—a strip joint, perhaps, or a pool hall.

Tests had shown asthma and allergies to pretty much everything, but especially cats and dust. We had a cat named Bruce*. Our house was one of

those 1960s split-level colonials—with dust-catching wall-to-wall carpeting and cheap baseboard heating registers that blew a simoom of lip-blistering, eye-irritating, scurf-raising air from room to room. Since my parents were not going to panic or resort to desperate measures—like getting rid of Bruce, say, or not smoking in my bedroom—we came up with stopgaps. A humidifier stood next to my bed. It ran at such a high setting that algae grew



on the ceiling. Nearby was a pint-sized plastic tub of Vicks VapoRub, a kind of mentholated napalm which could be scooped into the machine a tablespoon at a time, sweetening the air, or smeared directly onto one's chest and neck, after which it could be deeply inhaled out of one's cupped palms. I had piles of cough drops and gums in fruit and herb flavors, and bottles of red expectorants and pink and green elixirs. What I didn't have was the breath to go to school for more than a couple of days at a time.

That was also the year my 65-year-old grandfather retired from the leather tannery where he had worked since the Harding administration. He took care of me. Half the time he

would tell me stories. Half the time we would watch *Three Stooges* reruns on Channel 38, during which I could get through a box of cinnamon-frosted Pop-Tarts. ("He doesn't appear to be wasting away," one of my mother's crueller friends remarked.) I went through every single sports biography in the public library, from Robert B. Jackson's *Thirty-one and Six: The Story of Denny McLain* to Tom Cohen's *Roger Crozier: Daredevil Goalie*—a decade-old account of the Detroit Red Wings great's struggle with ulcers.

This may sound like a sad and solitary exile from the education I ought to have been getting. It wasn't. There was not, at your typical American suburban public grammar school in the 1970s, much of an education to be had. Mine was an accidental kind of home schooling, and it vaulted me ahead of my friends, for better and for worse. Reading prose written by adults, even if they were only hockey reporters, interrogating my self-taught but extremely well-read and patient grandfather about the politics and culture of the 1920s, '30s, and '40s—this was so much more advanced, intellectually, than what teachers were allowing my 10-year-old friends to do that, by the time I stopped being sick, a couple of years later, the library had become indispensable. Solitude had made me a different person.

Not without some social cost. Kids were tacking towards adulthood and re-sorting themselves into cliques along lines I was not able to understand. Fifth grade was the year all my friends mastered basketball, a sport from which I've never been able to draw the slightest enjoyment, as either a player or spectator. By the following year, when my friends started having dance parties with girls, I had been stuck in a different class and was not there to join them. I never did learn to do the Bump. It may have been a price worth paying.

CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL

JORI BOLTON
*A pseudonym, of course. Given the way security questions are used in e-commerce, there is today no piece of information more private than the Name of Your First Pet.

The Loser

The two major party conventions, the three presidential debates, and various scandals large and small—all these features of the 2016 presidential general election have come and gone. Now the campaign draws to a close. And one outcome seems increasingly likely: Donald J. Trump will lose.

We put it that way because Trump—after his impressive and even unprecedented outsider victory in the Republican primaries—has done more to lose the general election than his opponent, Hillary Clinton, has done to win it. It's also prudent to note that with two weeks left in an unpredictable political year, we could be surprised. But if history is any guide, a candidate who has never been ahead in the general election campaign and now trails by about six points (if not more) in the polls—and who has a 60 percent or so unfavorable rating—will not prevail on November 8. On that evening, Donald Trump will stand before us as a loser.

Not that there's necessarily anything wrong with that. Winston Churchill taught his fellow citizens that we could only act so as to deserve victory. Leo Strauss remarked in a letter to *National Review* that “The argument which is concerned exclusively with calculations of success, and is based on blindness to the nobility of the effort, is vulgar.” History is replete with undeserved losses and noble defeats.

Trump seems not to understand this elementary fact of the human condition. Perhaps for that reason, “loser” is one of his favorite epithets. And those of us who do not admire him will—let's be honest—enjoy bestowing this sobriquet on him. But of course we should remember, “let us judge not that we be not judged.”

What we can and should judge are the intimations from Trump that he intends to be a sore loser, a very sore loser, a big league sore loser. That's no surprise. On the other hand, maybe it's all a head fake. Trump may be setting the bar low in order to get untoward credit for anything resembling a normal concession speech on the evening of November 8.

In either case, the republic will survive. It will do so with less damage if Republicans, especially those who are Trump supporters, repudiate ahead of time his lame excuses for losing, his invented claims of a rigged result, his willingness to break long-established norms of appropriate public behavior. There is one civic task Republicans can perform for our country in the final two weeks of this

campaign: trying to ensure that Trump the loser stands alone, that his complaints fall on deaf ears, that his rabble-rousing fails to rouse the usual rabble.

But there is more that can be done in these next two weeks to help the country. Republicans still have some chance to hold the Senate and decent odds of holding the House. As Fred Barnes explained in this space last week, voting for the down-ticket Republicans would be a service not just to conservatism but to the country. The last thing America needs is President Hillary Clinton, Speaker Nancy

Pelosi, and Majority Leader Chuck Schumer riding roughshod for two years over free markets, individual liberties, and civil society.

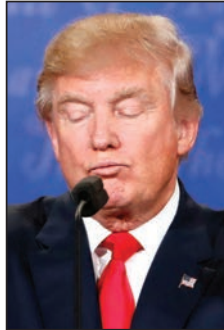
The task of the next two weeks is simple: Save every salvageable Republican candidate for the Senate and the House from being dragged under by the dead weight of a sinking Trump. This means the national party and the candidates themselves have to stop being coy about what they expect the outcome of the presidential race to be. They need to make clear that Hillary Clinton is likely to be our next president. They

need to paint as vivid a picture as they can of what it would mean for our society if she's complemented by a Democratic Congress, not checked and balanced by a Republican one.

The American people should be reasonably receptive to such a message. In the presidential elections since 1952, voters have returned a divided government to Washington more often than not. The case for doing so again should resonate strongly when the next president is viewed as unfavorably as Hillary Clinton is. A majority of Americans really did believe in hope and change in 2008 and were happy enough to give Barack Obama a Democratic Congress. A majority of Americans aren't thrilled at the prospect of President Hillary Clinton. For that matter, her slogan—“Stronger Together”—lends itself perfectly well to bipartisanship in Washington. Let her be stronger together with Speaker Paul Ryan and Majority Leader Mitch McConnell.

It's going to be a tough four years, but it won't be quite as tough with GOP control of one or both houses of Congress. It's also going to be a wild and woolly time for Republicans and conservatives, as they struggle to craft a politically attractive agenda for the future. Meanwhile, the task in the short term is to mitigate the damage. Trump will be a loser. America doesn't have to be.

—William Kristol



As Joe Heck Goes . . .

So goes Republican control of the Senate?

BY FRED BARNES

Brigadier General Joe Heck, U.S. Army Reserve, spent last week on active duty at the Pentagon. A doctor, he was assigned to the Joint Staff surgeon's office. In 2008, he was deployed to Iraq, where he ran an emergency room in a combat hospital outside Baghdad.

Heck, 55, may not have stood out at the Pentagon, where generals are a dime a dozen. But in his full-time job, he's the most important Senate candidate in the November 8 election. If he wins the Nevada Senate seat of retiring Democrat Harry Reid, Republicans hope of keeping control of the Senate will brighten. If he loses, Republicans may be doomed.

Here's the math: Republicans control the Senate, 54-46, today. If Heck wins, they'll have 55 seats, allowing them to lose four seats and still survive with a majority. Republicans may indeed lose four seats, perhaps more, since the deck is stacked against them. They have 24 seats at stake in the election, Democrats only 10.

Heck's role is pivotal because he's the only Republican with a chance of capturing a Democratic seat. Being called to active Army duty and away from the campaign didn't help. Heck hasn't complained. "That's what happens when you have a lot of competing duties," he told me.

Eight GOP seats are in play. Ohio once was, but Rob Portman is now a cinch for reelection. Republicans trail in Illinois (Mark Kirk) and Wisconsin (Ron Johnson). Johnson has rallied, and a comeback is possible, but those two seats are counted as losses for now, reducing Senate Republicans

to 52 seats. In Florida, Republicans expect Marco Rubio to be reelected, all the more so now that national Democrats have canceled TV ads for Rubio's opponent. Missouri (Roy Blunt) is probably too Republican for Blunt to lose.



Above, Joe Heck at his campaign office in Henderson, Nevada; below, Catherine Cortez Masto at a union rally in Las Vegas



That leaves four seats—two of which Republicans could afford to lose if Heck wins. In Pennsylvania (Pat Toomey) and New Hampshire (Kelly Ayotte) both incumbents "are swimming into a strong Trump current," a Republican strategist says. He's referring to an anti-Trump tide. In North Carolina (Richard Burr) things have not gone as well as expected. One poll shows Burr up seven points, another has him tied with Democrat Deborah Ross. In Indiana's open seat, Todd Young is tied with former Democratic

senator and governor Evan Bayh. Young is rising. Bayh isn't.

With Donald Trump at the top of the ticket, nothing is assured. But if all goes reasonably well—a very big "if"—and Republicans hold on to two of those four seats, then Heck can be the savior. The assumption here is that Hillary Clinton is elected and thus a 50-50 Senate would be controlled by Democrats.

Does that sound complicated? It should, because it is. What helps Republicans is their candidates have plenty of money. And in many races, the Republican candidate is superior to the Democrat.

That's true in Nevada. Heck's Democratic opponent, Catherine Cortez Masto, is the former Nevada attorney general. But she's not the biggest roadblock Heck must overcome. That's Harry Reid, one of the meanest and shrewdest politicians in America. His goal upon retirement is to leave behind a Democratic-led Senate. His political machine has the task of taking out Heck and electing Cortez Masto.

Heck is finishing his third term as a House member. His district covers a chunk of Las Vegas plus surrounding areas of southern Nevada. As a reservist, he commands a Medical Readiness Support Group in six western states. And now he's running for the Senate. His hands are full.

Until 2014, Nevada had been trending Democratic. It voted twice for President Obama, and Reid turned aside a major Republican effort to oust him in 2010. He's never been terribly popular, but he is effective. He has successfully drawn a growing number of Hispanics into the Democratic party. His reputation as a tough guy, politically speaking, was well earned, both in Nevada and in Washington.

Then came the humiliation of 2014, when Republicans won practically everything in Nevada, including all six statewide offices. Governor Brian Sandoval was reelected with 70 percent of the vote and Republicans took over both houses of the

Fred Barnes is an executive editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

legislature. Heck won reelection by 24 points in his swing district.

The Democratic bench of younger candidates was nearly wiped out. Cortez Masto, 52, was fortunate to have been term-limited after two AG terms. She wasn't tainted as one of the victims in the 2014 slaughter. Her successor as attorney general is Adam Laxalt, grandson of Paul Laxalt, the former Republican governor and senator.

Cortez Masto relies on three issues against Heck: Trump, Trump, Trump. "She has nothing else to run on," Heck says. In a televised debate on October 14, she said Heck was "Donald Trump's biggest supporter" until he disavowed Trump after the "locker room" video became public. "Donald Trump's ship is sinking and Congressman Heck is scurrying off in it in a desperate attempt to save his career."

Not only that, but Trump is a "national security risk." And "at the end of the day, [Heck] is supporting Donald Trump"—that is, even after he repudiated Trump. Cortez Masto was the aggressor in the debate. But her fixation on Trump didn't thrill a focus group, which voted 10-1 that Heck had won the debate.

Heck says he endorsed Trump because he'd promised to back the Republican nominee. He has never met Trump, spoken to him, or campaigned with him. "It was a very personal decision," he says, to urge Trump to drop out of the race. His wife was "a victim of domestic abuse in a prior relationship," he explained in the debate.

Her preoccupation with Trump is part of Cortez Masto's cookie-cutter approach to the campaign. She favors "common sense solutions" reached through "bipartisan problem solving." Heck, she says, is a "typical Washington politician" who delivers "typical Washington talking points."

He may be typical but he has a slightly better chance of winning than she does. Scott Reed, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's political boss, says Heck is the best Republican recruit of the campaign. If he wins, Republicans may keep the Senate and thwart Reid's last attack. That's a double whammy. ♦

GARY LOCKE

Down-Ballot Blues

The outlook for Congress.

BY JAY COST



The Framers of the Constitution envisioned Congress as the keystone of our political architecture, but Americans today do not see it that way. For the last 100 years or so, people have tended to pay almost exclusive attention to the executive. In presidential election years, this means people have little interest in the race to control the branch of government the Founding Fathers tied most closely to the people.

The Trump candidacy has exacerbated this bad civic habit. These days,

Jay Cost is a senior writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

we cannot have a conversation about anything other than Trump (which seems to be just the way the Republican nominee likes it), so there is even less talk of the House and Senate than usual. Still, there is a congressional election just weeks away, whether people have noticed it or not.

The Republicans control both chambers of Congress at the moment. What are the chances they retain their majorities? Inevitably, that question entangles us with Trump, who creates unique problems for electoral prognosticators.

Usually, presidential elections come down to a handful of big-picture questions. How long has the incumbent party been in office? How popular is the sitting president? How is the economy doing? Is there a war that is going badly? Political scientists can predict many elections by knowing the answers to these questions—not just forecasting the winner, but also how big the margin of victory will be. Then, based on where the presidential race seems likely to head, they can get at least a baseline estimate for what the congressional results will be.

Most of the time, the particular candidates for president, or the campaigns they have run, are not a decisive factor. It is not because they do not matter, but because the two sides usually nominate the same sort of people to run for president, and they run campaigns that rely on the best practices of political professionals. Thus, campaign effects tend to cancel each other out.

Trump is a striking exception to this general rule. Presidential forecasts that rely on the big picture would suggest a very close race, with many giving an edge to the Republican party—and for good reasons. Voters tend to want change after two terms of the same party in the White House, and the

economy remains weak relative to historical trends. An average Republican nominee would have been favored by this set of circumstances. But Trump is far from average, and he looks likely to underperform these predictive models by 5 to 10 points.

This is obviously disappointing for conservatives, who a year ago had justifiably high hopes for retaking the White House. But it does not suggest a strong pro-Democratic sentiment in the country. The macro conditions present in previous Democratic waves—in 2008, 2006, and 1974—are simply absent. The people are set to cast a vote *against* Trump, not necessarily against all Republicans or for all Democrats.

Still, Trump is likely to have a

negative effect on Republicans down the ballot. His rise to the top of the GOP heap, back in February, coincided with a sharp turnaround in President Obama's job-approval numbers, giving the flagging Democrats a boost. Moreover, Republican congressional candidates have been forced to tap dance around questions about their nominee—neither denouncing nor embracing him, for the most part, lest they alienate one group of voters or another. This has given Democrats plenty of openings.

So the real question for the congressional results is how big the down-ballot Trump effect will be. It will no doubt cost the GOP in both chambers of Congress, as well as in state legislative seats. It was always going to be a tough year for the Republicans to defend their Senate majority, and Trump has made it that much harder. The House, where their margin is greater, looks somewhat safer.

Let's start with the Senate. A few weeks ago, battle for control of the upper chamber appeared to be a genuine toss-up. The Republicans hold a 54-46 edge, and can afford to lose three seats (assuming a 50-50 tie will be broken by Vice President Tim Kaine). Republican Mark Kirk of Illinois is likely to lose to Democrat Tammy Duckworth, and Ron Johnson of Wisconsin will probably be defeated by Democrat Russ Feingold. The GOP can afford to lose one more seat and still maintain control. The true toss-ups at that point appeared to be Indiana, Pennsylvania, Nevada, and New Hampshire—three seats controlled by Republicans and one by Democrats.

Since then, the party's condition has worsened. Republicans Roy Blunt of Missouri and Richard Burr of North Carolina are looking shaky, while Democrat Catherine Cortez-Masto has built a small lead over Republican Joe Heck in the race to succeed Harry Reid in Nevada. In Indiana—where Republican Dan Coats is retiring—Democrat Evan Bayh appears to have a small but durable lead over Republican Todd Young. On the plus side, Rob Portman in Ohio still looks safe against Democrat Ted Strickland, and

Marco Rubio has held a steady lead over Patrick Murphy in Florida.

Conditions can always change, but as matters currently stand, the Republicans face a very stiff challenge to retain control of the Senate. If the Democrats take Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin while holding Nevada, then the GOP must hold Missouri, New Hampshire, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania. The current *Real Clear Politics* averages have Republicans leading in all these states, but none by more than 3 points, and their levels of support are still stuck in the mid-40s.

In some of these races, even a small Trump effect could prove devastating. Trump is set to lose New Hampshire and Pennsylvania by large margins, putting enormous pressure on Kelly Ayotte and Pat Toomey, respectively. They are going to need substantial crossover support from people who may otherwise be favorably disposed to the Republican party but are voting for Hillary Clinton. Some voters will no doubt split their tickets, but will enough do so?

So the Republicans retain a clear path to retaining the Senate but now have no room for error.

The odds of Republicans holding their House majority appear to be much better. They start with a larger majority—247-188—meaning they can lose a net 29 seats and still retain control. That is a solid cushion.

And it does not appear at this point that Democrats have put enough seats in play. The Cook Political Report lists 201 seats as being solidly in control for Republicans, while 46 are competitive. The Democrats, on the other hand, are playing defense of one sort or another in 11 seats.

At first blush, this might seem like a dangerously large number of seats for Republicans to defend, but consider where things stood in the last two wave elections that swept the majority party out of the House. In 2010 the Democrats had a majority of 256 seats heading into that election, about what the GOP has now. By mid-October, the Cook Political Report identified a whopping 105 Democratic

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP,
MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION
(Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685)

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| Publication Title: The Weekly Standard | | |
| Publication No.: 1083-3013 | | |
| Filing Date: 10/14/16 | | |
| Issue Frequency: Weekly, except the first week in January, the fourth week in March, the first week in July, and the fourth week in August. | | |
| Number of Issues Published Annually: 48 | | |
| Annual Subscription Price: \$119.00 | | |
| Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication: The Weekly Standard, 1152 15th Street, NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20005 | | |
| Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher: The Weekly Standard, 1152 15th Street, NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20005 | | |
| Full Name and Complete Mailing Addresses of Editor, and Managing Editor: Editor: William Kristol, The Weekly Standard, 1152 15th St., NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20005; Managing Editor: Richard Starr, The Weekly Standard, 1152 15th St., NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20005 | | |
| Owner: Clarify Media Group, LLC, 555 17th St., Suite 700, Denver, CO 80202 | | |
| Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities: none | | |
| Extent and Nature of Circulation | Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months | No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date |
| TOTAL NO. COPIES | 84,884 | 77,620 |
| PAID AND/OR REQUESTED CIRCULATION | | |
| Paid/requested outside-county mail subscriptions stated on form 3541 | 70,380 | 61,054 |
| Paid/requested in-county subscriptions stated on form 3541 | 0 | 0 |
| Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors, counter sales and other non-USPS paid distribution | 2,086 | 2,775 |
| Other classes mailed through the USPS | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL PAID AND/OR REQUESTED CIRCULATION | 72,466 | 63,829 |
| FREE DISTRIBUTION BY MAIL (Samples, complimentary, and other free) | | |
| Outside-county as stated on form 3541 | 0 | 0 |
| In-county as stated on form 3541 | 775 | 788 |
| Other classes mailed through the USPS | 0 | 0 |
| FREE DISTRIBUTION OUTSIDE THE MAIL (Carriers or other means) | | |
| | 10,958 | 12,603 |
| TOTAL FREE DISTRIBUTION | 11,733 | 13,391 |
| TOTAL DISTRIBUTION | 84,199 | 77,220 |
| COPIES NOT DISTRIBUTED | 685 | 400 |
| TOTAL | 84,884 | 77,620 |
| PERCENT PAID AND/OR REQUESTED CIRCULATION | 85.4% | 82.2% |
| I certify that all information furnished above is true and complete. Richard Trocchia, Circulation Director | | |

seats as being in play, while the Republicans were vulnerable in only 15. In mid-October of 2006, when the GOP was defending a 232-seat majority, the *Cook Political Report* found 66 Republican seats in play, compared with 19 Democratic seats. By this point in 2006 and 2010, the general consensus among experts was that the House was going to flip sides, while most now agree the GOP will probably retain control of the lower chamber.

The dynamic in the House appears to be opposite that of the Senate. In the upper chamber, the GOP will have to run the table to retain control, while the Democrats will have to run the table to take control of the lower chamber.

The Republicans' relatively strong position in the House has a lot to do with the surprise of the Trump nomination. A year ago, nobody thought Trump would be the nominee, and nobody thought for a second that the Democrats had a snowball's chance of taking the House. So very few vulnerable Republican incumbents elected to retire. By the same token, Democratic recruitment was far from stellar this cycle, so the Democrats are left fighting entrenched GOP incumbents with underwhelming challengers.

The effect of gerrymandering cannot be overlooked, either. The GOP surge in 2010 enabled the party to draw most of the House district lines throughout the country, giving the lower chamber a decidedly Republican tilt. Compounding this is the fact that Democratic voters tend to be concentrated in large cities, making it harder to distribute them across congressional districts. Moreover, the 1982 amendments to the Voting Rights Act have been interpreted as a mandate to draw minority-majority districts, further complicating Democratic efforts to spread their loyal nonwhite voters across districts to maximize gains. In 2012, though Mitt Romney won just 47 percent of the vote, he won a larger share than Barack Obama in 224 House districts.

Still, there are warning signs for House Republicans. The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee pulled in an impressive \$21 million



Pat Toomey, left, chats with supporters in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, July 19; below, Kelly Ayotte talks with a voter in Stratham, New Hampshire, September 10.



in September—suggesting donors are waking up to the possibility that the House could be in play. In addition, the GOP standing in the “generic ballot” is less than spectacular. This is the poll question that asks voters whether they plan to vote for a Republican or Democrat for Congress. It is not a very precise question, but it is the easiest way to gauge sentiment among the electorate. The Republicans are behind in the generic ballot by about 4 points. This is not a terrible place to be—at this point in 2006 they were down by 15-20 points.

Still, this suggests the House majority cannot be taken for granted.

The size of the Trump effect is the great imponderable in this analysis. Who is to say how many voters will either not show up on November 8 or will decide to punish the entire Republican party? That they have not yet made that decision does not mean they will not.

As bad as they are right now, matters may still get worse for the congressional GOP. Trump has done enormous damage to the Republican party, and he may not be finished yet. ♦

The Veneration of Cool

Who dumbed down America?

BY PHILIP TERZIAN

It may well be, as *Vanity Fair* editor Graydon Carter suggests, that Donald Trump represents “the final stage of a dumbed-down America”—a process that seems to have begun, by Carter’s reckoning, with George W. Bush. Trump, writes the novelist Richard Ford in the *Times Literary Supplement*, is “a gaudy, tarnished symptom of our American disease. . . . I could *not* have dinner alone with Mr. Trump in my favorite restaurant in Paris.” And Ford may be right as well.

The problem is that Richard Ford and Graydon Carter are not so much prescient as predictable: The dumbing-down of America is one of the oldest laments in the history of the republic, running in a direct line backward from Gore Vidal to H.L. Mencken to Mark Twain and before. When the Irish poet Thomas Moore paid a visit to the White House in 1804 and met the incumbent president, he was gravely disappointed—and suitably horrified by Washington, as well, where *naught but woods and Jefferson they see / Where streets should run, and sages ought to be*.

The contemporary version of this was neatly packaged in an influential volume entitled *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (1985) by a New York University professor named Neil Postman, who chronicled the familiar downward trajectory and blamed the media. Modern means of communication, he believed, were incompatible with serious ideas, and so consumers of mass media—those dumbed-down Americans—craved distraction, not

enlightenment. It was no coincidence, he asserted, that the president who happened to be in office when his book was published (Ronald Reagan) was an ex-movie actor.

Postman might well have been on to something. It would be difficult to



Above, Bill Clinton with Arsenio Hall, 1992; below, Barack Obama with David Letterman, 2015



argue that the president who succeeded Reagan (George H.W. Bush) was the charismatic entertainer-type Postman had predicted would dominate national politics. But when, in 1992, the stodgy 68-year-old World War II veteran Bush was supplanted by the 46-year-old draft-dodging baby boomer Bill Clinton, something like Postman’s vision of the future was realized. Except that the quality represented by Clinton—our first presidential candidate to appear,

wearing sunglasses and playing the saxophone, on a late-night talk show—was not entertainment but “cool,” that vague combination of celebrity, urban sophistication, and sex appeal largely unseen in American politics.

And whose fault was that? Not the dumbed-down American electorate, which generally resisted the allure of cool, but modern media: Bush was derided in the press for his age, awkward manner, evident estrangement from pop culture, and personification of noblesse oblige. Clinton’s appeal, in that sense, echoed the media embrace in 1960 of John F. Kennedy, another amorous fortysomething whose philistine tastes and gaudy show-biz connections (courtesy of his mildly sinister father) were mistaken for sophistication; and, of course, were favorably compared—are still favorably compared—with his unglamorous predecessor Dwight D. Eisenhower’s blunt wisdom and devotion to duty. When the *Washington Post* followed Bill Clinton and his running mate Albert Gore around the country, it chose a headline adapted from an adolescent buddy film of the day: “Bill and Al’s Excellent Adventure.”

Indeed, difficult as it may be in retrospect to realize, there was a time when Jimmy Carter was celebrated in the press as distinctly “cooler” than the earnest, unglamorous Gerald Ford, butt of *Saturday Night Live*’s weekly sketches and successor to the dour Richard Nixon. When Carter was elected, in 1976, the transition period featured a months-long series of celebrity pilgrimages to his hometown in Georgia, a swarm of admiring journalists, pop musicians, arbiters of fashion, and Norman Mailer. This critical mass of pseudo-sophistication seems normal today. But 40 years ago, it was a novelty and harbinger. To be sure, the pilgrims misconstrued nearly everything they saw—Carter’s rustic cynicism was regarded as “authentic,” his self-destructive brother was depicted as a wise fool—but in the media, the primacy of cool had been established.

Which has proved beneficial to his Democratic successors. Press reaction

Philip Terzian is literary editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

TOP: REED SAXON / AP; BELOW: NEWSCOM

to Bill Clinton's serial sexual misconduct, for example, was revulsion—at critics of Clinton's behavior. And the media villains of the Clinton sexual scandals were not Clinton and his allies but the women who claimed to have been harassed.

This was partly a function of partisanship, but largely the consequence of a cultural divide where the press is resolutely ranged on one side. And the principal beneficiary of this trend, in our time, has been Barack Obama: Google "Barack Obama" and "cool," and you get 22 million hits extolling not the president's intellectual acumen or governing talent but his wardrobe, his manner, his multiple appearances on *The View* or Stephen Colbert, his fondness for hanging out with athletes and actors, his taste in restaurants, his voice, his favorite pop tunes, innumerable fawning profiles in the *Washington Post* and *New York Times* and *New Yorker* and *Vogue*, and celebrity endorsements beyond counting.

Poor old John McCain, stoical war hero, and wonky Mormon Mitt Romney clearly had no chance.

Is this the "final stage of a dumber-down" America? The evidence is not conclusive. Voters have tended to be more discerning than not: They very nearly resisted the appeal of Kennedy against the uncool Nixon, and two years after Watergate, Carter barely managed to squeeze by Ford. Clinton was elected with 43 percent of the vote, and even the supremely cool Obama gained a bare majority of the popular vote in 2008 and 2012.

The candidacy of Donald Trump, and his success in a crowded primary field, may represent a crisis of confidence in the Republican party; but it is difficult to extrapolate very much beyond that. One conclusion, however, may safely be drawn: While the great lumbering mass of Americans remains an enigma to the chattering classes, the media—with their emphasis on politics-as-carnival, prejudice disguised as professional integrity, laser-like emphasis on trivial pursuits, above all their adolescent crush on the virtue of "cool"—might charitably be described as dumber-down. ♦

The Uncomfortable Truth

College should be about broadening horizons, not enforcing dogma. BY ZACHARY R. WOOD

'Zach Wood may look black but as far as I'm concerned, he's white." This was one of many disparaging comments posted on Yik Yak when I invited Charles Murray to speak at Williams College last spring.

Sadly, it wasn't the first time a peer had questioned my blackness on social media. As president of Uncomfortable Learning, a student group that brings controversial speakers to campus to

when a student wrote on social media, "I bet Zach would invite Trump to speak at Williams too. That's why he needs Jesus."

Some black student activists quietly resent me, others revile me with pleasure. But what bothers me most is knowing that many of the same students who elected me communications director of the Black Student Union my freshman year now view me as "colonized," "self-hating," and "anti-black," as an impediment to the fulfillment of Dr. Martin Luther King's dream.

To them, I am not authentically black because I believe that speakers with views held by some to be wildly racist should be invited to campus.

I've criticized black student activists for exaggerating the scope of racism on campus. I've cautioned them against presuming bigoted intent without hearing out their peers and faculty who've offended them. I've argued that intellectual value can in fact be gained from reading the work of thinkers who make controversial claims about the relationship between race and IQ.

I've turned to them after the death of Freddie Gray and said that racial patriotism and black solidarity should not make us uncritical of each other. We need to engage opposing views of race, to probe our reliance on narratives of oppression and step outside of the echo chamber that comforts us.

To most of the black student activists I know, this approach to controversy is infuriating because it's incongruous with firmly held expectations of how African Americans should think and act based on the color of their skin. When I challenged this way of thinking, a black student commented on Facebook, "We need the



Williams College

broaden dialogue around pressing issues of our time, I've rankled many black student activists. Last October, I invited Suzanne Venker to speak on antifeminism but had to rescind the invitation shortly after due to extreme backlash from student activists, a few of whom made implicit threats of physical violence. In February, I invited John Derbyshire to speak at Williams, but the event was canceled by administrative decree.

The morning after the second presidential debate, I was reminded of how some of my peers reacted to my work with Uncomfortable Learning

Zachary R. Wood is a political science major and president of Uncomfortable Learning at Williams College.

oil and the switch to deal with him.”

The recent treatment of nonconformists like Condoleezza Rice, Jason Riley, and Ayaan Hirsi Ali highlights how this strict brand of conformity represses the liberty essential to living in a free and open society.

To black student activists who have derisively called me “Ben Carson,” my defense of free speech is antithetical to being a black American. I find this problematic.

Beyond stifling debate on campus, being made to feel that I have a certain racial obligation to serve my people and represent them in a particular fashion undermines the agency and individuality we all value. It rejects the kind of critical thinking that draws insight and wisdom from unfamiliar and unsettling perspectives. The message these ad hominem attacks send to black students like myself is that racial pride and black authenticity hinge on uncritically supporting safe spaces, trigger warnings, and Black Lives Matter protests. I’ve been told, “If you can’t see what’s wrong with you for inviting a white supremacist to campus, then you’ll keep empowering white men who think that black people are stupid, ugly, and low. That has no place here and neither do you.”

Statements like that needlessly alienate people who might otherwise be allies. Diversity and inclusion on campus can’t be achieved if student activists don’t recognize that unpleasant ideas and attitudes will be—and should be—a part of any college community. You can’t erase them. The only way to achieve meaningful change is to engage them.

College is all about broadening intellectual horizons, exploring new academic frontiers, and developing voices that accent students’ varied identities and perceptions of the world. None of this is possible when students are vilified and ostracized for trying to transcend the confines imposed on them by the color of their skin. We should encourage students to see college as the time and place to engage the complexity, ambiguity, and diversity of opinion that surround the issues we care about most. ♦

Thailand’s Royal Mess

An apple falls far from the tree.

BY DAVID DEVOSS

In the spring of 1975 the dominoes were falling in Southeast Asia: The Khmer Rouge were exterminating Cambodia’s urban populations and Saigon fell to the North Vietnamese. By the end of the year Lao king Savang Vatthana was under house arrest.

Thailand was expected to fall next, yet didn’t. Thailand not only survived but would become one of the most prosperous countries in the region thanks to Bhumibol Adulyadej, the Chakri dynasty’s ninth king, or Rama IX. He died this month at age 88.

Born in Cambridge, Mass., Bhumibol was slight, bespectacled, and blind in one eye. He became king in 1950 after the mysterious death of his brother, Rama VIII. Chakri dynasty monarchs were considered “Lords of Life” and from his earliest days on the throne Bhumibol’s subjects regarded him as a *bodhisattva*, a spiritual being who delays ascension to Nirvana in order to remain on earth to help humanity.

He earned his demigod status in part from his commitment to rural development, road and school building, and his personal determination to see projects through to completion. In the years after the fall of Indochina, Bhumibol spent much of his time in the poorest parts of his kingdom leading convoys of Land Rovers packed with civil engineers, agronomists, and irrigation specialists whom he charged with transforming slash-and-burn opium fields into orchards, vegetable gardens, and fish farms.

Dressed in a safari suit with a roll of topographical maps under his arm and a camera dangling from his neck, Bhumibol would spend hours talking with farmers; he would return to make sure

provincial officials used development funds wisely. By 1982, the bicentennial of the Chakri dynasty, the north was crisscrossed with farm-to-market roads. Strawberries and lettuce had become major cash crops.

Bhumibol’s wife, Queen Sirikit, accompanied him on many development trips, working with rural women to start silk-weaving cooperatives and other handicraft industries. Often they were joined by their daughter Sirindhorn, the third of four children; Thais call her “Princess Angel” because of her easy rapport with farmers and support for numerous charities. In 1977, during his birthday celebration, King Bhumibol elevated Sirindhorn in rank to ensure his daughter could serve as a crown princess in the event of an emergency. Years later, in a private conversation with U.S. ambassador to Thailand Ralph Boyce, Bhumibol said of his daughter, “I have four children but she is the only one who kneels on the ground with the people.”

The heir conspicuously absent from the meetings with farm families was the king’s son, Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn. Devoted to fast cars, beautiful women, and airplanes, Vajiralongkorn has evidenced little interest in rural development or the ceremonial duties required of the royal family.

A career army officer and fighter pilot, Vajiralongkorn spends much of his time in southern Germany, where he owns two villas. Now back in Bangkok, Vajiralongkorn will observe a hundred-day mourning period. His formal coronation as king is expected to occur after a year, but most Thais doubt he will ever acquire the virtues of monogamy, thrift, and Buddhist piety exhibited by his father.

In a 1981 news conference in Houston, Queen Sirikit admitted her son might be unsuited to be Thailand’s

David DeVoss spent seven years in Thailand reporting for Time magazine.

Rama X. “My son the crown prince is a little bit of a Don Juan,” she said. “He’s a good student, a good boy, but women find him interesting and he finds women even more interesting. . . . If the people of Thailand do not approve of the behavior of my son, then he would either have to change his behavior or resign from the royal family.”

Thais have a relaxed attitude when it comes to sex. King Chulalongkorn, Rama V, had 77 children, 7 of whom he didn’t even bother to name. But Rama V’s couplings occurred behind palace walls. Vajiralongkorn’s relationships are often uncomfortably public.

He left his first wife, Soamsawali, pregnant after one year of marriage and began a lengthy relationship with an aspiring actress who bore him four sons and a daughter. After divorcing his first wife, he married his mistress, but that relationship also ended in acrimony. In 2001, Vajiralongkorn married wife No. 3, a Thai beauty named Srirasmi. She gave him a son, who joined his father as the only other male heir to the Chakri throne.

The couple drew unwanted notoriety in 2007 when a grainy video circulated showing them celebrating the birthday of their white poodle, Foo Foo. Clad only in a G-string while attended by white-gloved waiters, Srirasmi serves her little Foo Foo cake. If the dog seemed excited it probably was because it had recently received the rank of air chief marshal in the Thai military. (Many of the most embarrassing revelations about the Crown Prince, it should be said, are owed to the reporting of the Scottish journalist Andrew MacGregor Marshall.)

Vajiralongkorn may now keep his extracurricular cavorting hidden, but reining in his less temperate impulses will be more difficult. A 1987 state visit to Japan began inauspiciously when he left his wife at home and insisted a mistress be welcomed with

honors. Tokyo refused, citing diplomatic protocol. Vajiralongkorn went anyway but left in a huff three days early following a series of perceived slights. Nor was that the last crisis requiring diplomatic intervention. In 2007, Vajiralongkorn canceled a trip to China when Beijing denied his request for “special VIP treatment.”

Some observers who closely fol-

lows unity from Muslim separatists in Thailand’s south and young republicans in the northeast who want Bangkok royalists to share a larger slice of the economic pie.

Also left unresolved is the future of Thailand’s Crown Property Bureau, a royal trust that controls more than \$37 billion in assets that annually produce hundreds of millions in revenue. In a country where per capita GDP barely tops \$16,000, Chakri wealth was never an issue during Bhumibol’s reign. But crown property money that can only be spent “at the king’s pleasure” could face demands for more transparency under a different monarch.

Thailand makes it difficult to discuss succession: The strictly enforced *lèse-majesté* law punishes with up to 15 years in prison anyone who defames or insults the royal family. The law has caused friction with the United States. Late last year, American ambassador Glyn Davies gave a speech at the Foreign Correspondents’ Club of Thailand criticizing “the lengthy and unprecedented prison sentences handed down by Thai military courts against civilians” convicted of defamation. Thailand signaled its displeasure by ordering police to investigate Davies despite his diplomatic immunity. Given the Philippines’ recent pro-China tilt,

Washington risks alienating its most reliable ally in the region if it again lectures Bangkok on domestic issues.

Thailand’s constitutional monarchy is the center of gravity that holds Thai society together. The king’s portrait adorns every schoolroom, hotel lobby, government office, and bank note. No military junta or political party can stand without the king’s tacit approval. At least that was the case under Rama IX. Thailand and the United States are entering a period of uncertainty not experienced for decades. ♦



Above, a Bangkok woman in black mourning clothes walks past portraits of the late king and his son; below, Princess Srirasmi with Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn, in 2007.



low the royal family doubt the crown prince really wants the responsibility that comes with being king. Although his father had been hospitalized with Parkinson’s and depression for a number of years, it was not until the day before his death that Vajiralongkorn returned home.

An old prophecy holds that the Chakri dynasty will last only nine generations, making Bhumibol the last of his line. Most Thais, however, aren’t ready to give up their monarchy, given the growing threat to national

TOP: NEWSCOM; BELOW: PATRICK AVENTURIER / GAMMA-RAPHO / GETTY

The NFL in Decline

So is it goodbye to football?

BY GEOFFREY NORMAN

The game wasn't much fun to watch. It was one of those blowouts with things pretty much settled long before the fourth quarter was over. There were the usual penalties, with the officials meeting to discuss whodunit and what to call. These provided opportunities for what are described by the announcers as a "break in the action." Those would be commercials for everything from Viagra to life insurance. For some reason, there don't seem to be as many beer commercials as there once were. Beer and tires propped up the NFL on television for many years. Perhaps the same guys who used to buy the beer and tires are now thinking Viagra and life insurance.

When there was action on the field, it was often lackluster and sloppy. There was one play that seemed to sum it up. A receiver for the San Francisco 49ers shook loose and was wide open downfield. The Buffalo Bills' defense was guilty, of course, of what the announcers call "blown coverage," and the play should have gone for an easy touchdown. The quarterback, however, underthrew the ball so badly that the receiver was obliged to stand still and wait for it to come to him. He might have been a center fielder parking himself under a high pop fly. He could have read a newspaper in the time it took the ball to reach him. When it did finally arrive, so had one of the Buffalo defenders. The play went for a big gain but was aesthetically unsatisfying. As was almost everything about the game.

And then there was the political stuff. The quarterback who launched that wounded duck of a pass was Colin Kaepernick. He had just missed winning a Super Bowl three years ago. These days, he is a backup. But he had

started this game against the Bills, because the 49ers had lost four games in a row. So Kaepernick started against the Buffalo Bills because . . . well, probably because the coach thought, "Why not? He can't do any worse."

Before that, when he was still on the bench, Kaepernick had managed to make himself more conspicuous than just about any professional football player, with the possible exception of the New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady, who returned in glory from his four-game suspension (about which we all have heard enough) throwing the ball (properly inflated, no doubt) as accurately as ever. Kaepernick, who doesn't have Brady's arm, had been making news by making a political statement. When "The Star-Spangled Banner" was performed before kickoffs, he would sit or "take a knee," instead of standing. "I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of color," he said. It was a protest, a gesture of solidarity, a statement . . . and so on and so forth.

It was also a possible suspect in the whodunit that has consumed professional football this year. Namely, what has happened to the NFL's TV ratings? To say that the NFL is the top-drawing sport on the small screen is an understatement. Last season, NFL games, starting with the Super Bowl (114 million viewers), accounted for 14 of the 15 most-viewed sporting events. (The college football championship game sneaked in at No. 7.) Indeed, the NFL accounted for 34 of the top 40 televised games. The remainder were college football bowls, the women's World Cup soccer finals, at No. 26, and Game 6 of the NBA basketball finals—aka the LeBron James-Stephen Curry show—at No. 40.

This fall, though, the NFL's popularity has declined enough to be cause for notice and alarm. When ratings slide, the NFL takes a hit not only in its bottom line—which it can afford—but also in its sense of inevitability, which is more dangerous to its psyche. The National Football League aspires to own the entertainment sphere—to "dominate," as



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BRIAN BAHY / GETTY

sports lingo would have it. So when ratings declined 11 percent early this season, NFL headquarters sent out a dispatch to all commands, seeking to explain and reassure.

The NFL's explanations were mostly evasions, which we shall come to in a moment. But first let us separate the short term from the long term in this discussion. As John Maynard Keynes so pungently reminded us, "In the long term we are all dead." The only question is: "How long is . . . well, *long*?"

For the NFL, not very, according to some who have studied the question. There have been signals that the NFL—and all of football—may soon be in for hard times. The game is increasingly brutal, and that brutality is not some fixable flaw. Football is violent by nature, and if you take away the violence, you have soccer without the grace. There is undeniable evidence of brain damage among former football players, some of whom suffer dementia and a few of whom have committed suicide, the reasons for which are unknowable but might plausibly include the beatings they took from the game. Improvements in equipment and changes in the rules might make the game marginally safer, but perhaps not by enough to keep the lawyers outside the ramparts or, more important, persuade parents that they should let their children play the game. Even without the prospect of lasting brain damage, the game is too rough for many with today's tender sensibilities.

But that is long term. For now, the supply of eager players seems adequate to the needs of the game. And the fans don't seem to mind the big hits. Not, that is, until they are *too* big. Occasionally, a player has to be strapped to a board before he can be carted off the field to receive medical attention and learn if—as occasionally happens in football—he has been injured in a way that will leave him paralyzed for life.

Still, the violence and the injuries are threats to the popularity of the game down the road and don't seem to have accounted for the precipitous falloff in this season's television ratings. So there are several other theories advanced to account for this drop. Among the least plausible would seem to be the one put forward by the NFL in its memo from the head office to its various franchises—namely, that it is an election year and people have been distracted by politics.

To which one says, huh? An election year might distract people from their normal interests. That's plausible. But *this year*? If the competing attraction is Clinton vs. Trump, then it would seem any football game—any athletic

event from golf to rollerblade—would be a welcome distraction. Now it might be that the campaign is so demoralizing to some people that they cannot respond to even the normal stimuli: that the world has turned monochromatic, that they cannot taste food or respond to a child's laughter and are content to simply stay inside and stare at the walls. But there can't be that many of them. For most reliable NFL fans, even a mediocre game would seem preferable to dwelling on the state to which American political life has been reduced this year.

Millions, certainly, who tuned in to watch the Jacksonville Jaguars battle the Indianapolis Colts in London at 9:30 A.M. one recent Sunday must have felt some relief that



they had an alternative to *Meet the Press*. It was a lousy game, as those London games usually are. But it was better than Chuck Todd grilling Chuck Schumer or whomever.

To extend the argument that the decline in football ratings is the result of an intrusion by politics, there is the matter of Kaepernick and his refusal to stand for the national anthem. It's been argued this may have turned some people off the game. They are purists, perhaps, and resent the intrusion of any politics into the game. Or they are patriots and despise gestures of disrespect to flag and country by millionaire, prima donna athletes. Football fans tend to be traditionalists that way.

It could be that some former fans have abandoned the games as the p.c. virus has slowly infected the NFL. One suspects there are plenty of people who quit watching the Academy Awards because they couldn't stand listening to political speeches that pegged the needle in both sanctimony and stupidity.

On the other hand, with football you can let the offenders know how you feel, and this may be an incentive to go

to the stadium and do what the good people of Buffalo did as their team annihilated Kaepernick's 49ers. They booed him mercilessly, and good for them.

There may have been a few people out in television land who decided not to tune in and watch the game because they were turned off by Kaepernick and his "protest," but not enough, one would think, to account for more than a point or two in that ratings falloff.

One suspects, in the end, that the problem is much less to do with politics than with the games themselves.

This is an increasingly common complaint among disaffected NFL fans, and it struck me with particular force once the Bills had put the 49ers out of their misery, 45 to 16, in a game with five fumbles on a dry field and a combined 13 penalties. After the game, Kaepernick made one of those statements of conscience, saying, 'I don't understand what's un-American about fighting for liberty and justice for everybody, for the equality this country says it stands for. To me, I see it as very patriotic and American to uphold the United States to the standards that it says it lives by.'

But millions of fans had, by then, changed channels and were watching the Dallas Cowboys play the Green Bay Packers. This game was played in Green Bay, which is a small, blue-collar city in Wisconsin. It's one of those places on the perimeter of the Great Lakes where the Industrial Revolution sowed seeds that sprouted into thousands of factories and a tough, working-class culture of the sort that is dying off so painfully today. Professional football was a product of these towns and cities, and Green Bay might be the most pure of all football franchises. The town, which has a population of just over 100,000, famously, and uniquely, owns the team.

And the citizens are not passive owners. They care about their Packers, they are emotionally invested in them, and the team has paid dividends for years. So many great players. So many championships. So many memorable games.

One of the most memorable was played against the Dallas Cowboys, who were newcomers to the NFL, on the last day of 1967. The game was known forever more as the "Ice Bowl." The temperature at kickoff was -13 degrees (-48 windchill). The whistle blown by the official to signal the start of the game froze to his lips. When he removed the whistle from his mouth, skin from his lips came with it. The blood did not clot; it froze. He spoke through the scabs for the rest of the game.

NFL games take too long, and too many are indifferently played by teams that don't really seem to be teams so much as collections of random players who might as well have been selected in a session of 'choose up.'

This was watched by more than 50,000 people in the stands of an open-air stadium on seats that did not, many of them, have backs. Four of these fans had heart attacks. Many more were treated for exposure. The Packers came from behind and won on a last-minute, one-yard sneak by a quarterback named Starr whose parents must have known he would one day grow up and find glory on the football field and so called him Bart. A century earlier, he would have been the sheriff of Tombstone.

It was a game for the ages and none who watched in person, or on television, would ever forget it or have described it as "entertainment." You don't sit outside for three hours in subzero weather to be "entertained," no matter how much schnapps you have in your thermos. Certainly none of those 50,000 Packers fans who sat in the Arctic cold would have called the game entertaining. They might have fallen back on the old line about how it wasn't life or death; it was a lot more important than *that*.

The Packers fans who watched this season's game against the Cowboys, almost half a century after the Ice Bowl, actually booed the team they own. The Packers' play was that much of a mess, and the Cowboys handled them easily. And if watching in person was painful for a Packers fan, watching on the television was, too. Painful even if you didn't have a dog in the hunt.

There were so many commercials, for one thing. The NFL and the networks have crafted a way to squeeze the maximum number of ads into the broadcast of a single game, causing viewers to lose interest even as they watch. According to some studies, the average football game, during which the clock runs for precisely 60 minutes, consists of a mere 11 minutes of action. And this is stretched out over almost four hours of broadcast time. The networks are wearing down the stamina of their viewers. Their most aggravating tactic is to cut to a commercial after a score, return to "the action" for the kickoff that more and more these days is a mere formality. The kicker boots the ball through the end-zone. It is then placed on the 25-yard line, and before the opposing team takes over there, they cut to yet another commercial. If you cared about the game before the first commercial break, the second one will test your commitment as a fan.

This commitment has probably already been strained by the poor quality of the play. The Packers fans did not boo simply because their team was losing. Even good teams get beat. They booed because the Packers were playing consistently sloppy football.

And why was this? It's hard to say. But it can't help that the games are too long and that the rhythm of play is disrupted, over and over, by the networks' need to "take a break from the action." And then, the team rosters change almost constantly. Players are out for injury, lost to free agency, suspended for one reason or another. Teams do not stick together and operate as a unit the way they once did. A Green Bay fan could name every starter on that 1967 championship team (and many still can to this day). The lineup had not changed very much from the year before or the year before that. Teams today are put together on the fly. Season to season. Game to game. Even within the game. There is no continuity. No real sense of "team."

And then there is the officiating. So many penalties and so many replays, many of which don't really settle anything. They do, however, slow things down.

The long and the short of it is that the games take too long, and too many are indifferently played by teams that don't really seem to be teams so much as collections of random players who might as well have been selected in a session of "choose up."

And yet, as the quality of the product declines, the NFL seeks to expand the brand. There are those games

abroad, in London and Mexico City. There is talk of other venues to which American football might be exported. And all of this "marketing" goes on even as the "base"—that core consumer in Green Bay and elsewhere, who understands the game and brings his own kind of commitment when he watches his team play—grows increasingly disaffected. The NFL, it sometimes seems, is determined to ape the decline of NASCAR, which sought to expand its reach to venues where stock car racing was a novelty—"entertainment"—at the expense of those places where it was in the blood. Loudon, New Hampshire, will never be Darlington, South Carolina, any more than London, England, will ever be Green Bay, Wisconsin.

Perhaps there is a grand strategy at work here. Maybe the NFL calculates that the game's own violence will drive it to extinction sooner rather than later. And before that happens, they intend to take advantage of every last commercial minute and each and every untapped venue. The seasons will get longer, games will be played in more and more exotic locations, the number of timeouts will increase, and Viagra sales will be maximized—all before those life insurance policies pay out.

"That's entertainment," as they say. And more and more fans will no doubt respond by saying, "Well, if that's entertainment, I say the hell with it." ♦

When Disaster Strikes, Businesses Rise to Help

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

U.S. businesses have played a crucial role in recovery efforts following several recent natural disasters, including Hurricane Matthew and historic flooding in southern Louisiana. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation Corporate Citizenship Center (CCC) is proud to help marshal business resources and coordinate these efforts.

When disaster strikes, CCC activates its disaster assistance resources, including the Disaster Help Desk, which is sponsored by the Office Depot Foundation. Any business can call the Help Desk at 1-888-MY-BIZ-HELP for support in navigating the recovery process. CCC also promotes coordination between emergency management officials and companies involved in the response.

Many companies not directly affected by the disaster spring into action by

donating money, time, and resources. For example, following Hurricane Matthew, Anheuser-Busch donated 450,000 cans of water, Walmart gave \$2 million worth of cash and products, and dozens of others made similar donations, which you can check out with the corporate aid trackers on uschamberfoundation.org.

While short-term disaster response is critical, the business community continues to help long after the storms have fallen out of headlines. Communities often remain deep in the recovery process for months or even years. This is why CCC is leading a corporate delegation trip to Baton Rouge next week to introduce business leaders to nonprofits, chambers, disaster assistance centers, and other community organizations leading the long-term recovery following the August flooding.

These efforts are essential to rebuilding lives, businesses, and communities. If businesses don't recover, communities don't recover—and sadly, an estimated 25% of companies permanently

shutter after a major disaster. This means lost jobs and opportunities for individuals who may already be facing great personal hardship in the aftermath of the storms. The goal of the U.S. Chamber is to ensure that every impacted business not only survives but continues to grow, hire, and drive their local economies.

It is often in the face of adversity that the very best of business is on display. Hundreds of companies have answered the call to help those affected by the devastation of these recent storms. Hundreds of others have rolled up their sleeves and begun the hard work of getting back to business. But that's what businesses do every day all across the country. They serve their communities, create opportunities, lead with solutions, respond to problems, and stand up and help in times of need.



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Crisis of the Conservative House Divided

A pre-mortem

BY STEVEN F. HAYWARD

“But free government would be an absurdity did it require citizens all like Abraham Lincoln; yet it would be an impossibility if it could not from time to time find leaders with something of his understanding.”

—Harry V. Jaffa, *Crisis of the House Divided*

For months it has been clear that in one vital respect Donald Trump’s fate in the presidential election does not matter. Win or lose, he has divided and may yet shatter the conservative movement, a fact that was evident before the *Access Hollywood* tape gave us a TMI moment barely suitable for TMZ. Who could have foreseen that the Great Pumpkin candidate would turn out to be a Black Swan event for conservatism?

I have good friends who are enthusiastic pro-Trumpers and good friends who are adamant Never Trumpers, and I’m doing my best to stick with my friends. I’ve always been a fusionist conservative, finding merit and insight in every corner of the right-wing galaxy and often acting the diplomat in trying to reconcile the competing kingdoms in our ideological game of thrones. I have argued to the neocon followers of Leo Strauss, for example, that they should pay more attention to Roger Scruton’s traditionalism and to economist Friedrich Hayek’s congenial work. I tell libertarians and apolitical traditionalists to be less disdainful of politics if they ever hope to prosper in actual elections. And I’m always trying to explain everything about politics

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Harry Jaffa, Walter Berns, and the Arguments that Redefined American Conservatism (forthcoming from Encounter Books), from which this article is adapted.

to economists, some of whom, I assume, are good people.

Trump’s political balance sheet is by now thoroughly known, even if his financial balance sheet isn’t. The main political arguments for him—his victory will be a rebuke to the media and political correctness; he’ll keep the Supreme Court nominally in Republican control; his economic policy is vastly preferable; he’s serious about immigration control; *he isn’t Hillary Clinton, full stop*—are all plausible. His doubtful character, uncertain ideology, inexperience, inconsistency, rhetorical deficiencies, short attention span, and the prospect that a Trump administration might destroy the GOP for a decade or more are considerable reasons to withhold a vote.

Everyone has his own perspective on these factors, and I won’t try to audit them again nor reproach anyone on either side of the divide. The air is thick with attacks and recriminations already. Lots of Trump sympathizers are mad at THE WEEKLY STANDARD, *National Review*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the Washington-based conservative think tanks, and nearly every Republican congressional leader. Trump skeptics are equally antagonistic toward Breitbart, Fox News, and the so-called alt-right. But it is the stance of one corner of the right that is raising eyebrows and puzzlement all around: the writers associated with the Claremont Institute—aka the “Claremonsters”—and their fellow travelers.

Several Claremont eminentos appear prominently on the recent list of “Scholars and Writers for Trump,” including Charles Kesler, Larry Arnn, Thomas West, Hadley Arkes, Brian Kennedy, and John Eastman. Good friends all, as is “Publius Decius Mus” of “The Flight 93 Election” fame. In fact, the pseudonymous writer previewed a draft of that notorious *Claremont Review of Books* essay on the deck of my house that overlooks the Pacific Ocean, accompanied by a fine bottle of Bordeaux that “Decius” thoughtfully brought along. (I mention this gratuitous detail only to preserve our smug coastal elite street cred.) It is also worth adding that the Claremonsters on this list are typically at odds

with many of their fellow signatories who hail from the “paleocon” and libertarian neighborhoods of the right—another indication of the extraordinary ideological scrambling effect of the Trump campaign.

Knowing my own deep Claremont roots—I earned a Ph.D. from the Claremont Graduate School while working at the Claremont Institute in the 1980s—several people have asked me to explain: “How is it that a group known for its emphasis on the idea of high *statesmanship*, and on the importance of serious political rhetoric, can champion Trump?” After all, one person noted, the full name of the Claremont Institute, publisher of the *Claremont Review of Books*, includes “for the Study of Statesmanship and Political Philosophy.” This circumstance seems like one of those old SAT questions about which term doesn’t belong with the others: “Lincoln, Churchill, *Trump*.”

Claremont stands out for its defense of the idea that statesmanship is a political concept that can be understood intelligibly and rigorously, which mainstream political science, swallowed up by value-free quantitative methodology, rejects. “Statesmanship is not much respected,” the late Herbert Storing wrote; it “is almost un-American. The word has an elitist and obsolete ring.” Claremont-trained thinkers believe questions of character, insight, and prudence (as Aristotle understood it) ought to be the primary focus of a political science centered on cultivating statesmanship. Harry Jaffa, rightly regarded as the founder of the Claremont school with his magisterial study of Lincoln’s high statesmanship, *Crisis of the House Divided*, wrote that “political science, properly so-called, would have at its heart the study of the speeches and deeds of statesmen.”

For someone of this orientation, political rhetoric is not mere marketing. Indeed, one of the first academic books the Claremont Institute published in the 1980s was on the importance of recovering the older tradition of serious oratory and its essential connection to political leadership. Glen Thurow, the editor of *Rhetoric and American Statesmanship*, wrote that “political speech cannot be judged solely by how well it appeals to its audience. Political speech must serve the ends of statesmanship. . . . A political speaker never aims, like a pedagogue or entertainer, simply to instruct or amuse his audience.” Cue Donald Trump, the most inarticulate presidential candidate ever. Trump’s obvious inability to sustain even the simplest political arguments suggests the unlikelihood of high statesmanship from a Trump presidency, let alone a leader who can persuade Americans of the work necessary to reshape the republic.

Still, the Claremont sympathy for Trump needs to be better understood, because it differs fundamentally from the typical candidate scoring mentioned above. If Trump can’t live up to the idiosyncratic Claremont understanding of the meaning of his candidacy, the Trump phenomenon nonetheless opens a window onto the failures of conservatism that made Trump’s candidacy possible and perhaps necessary. Even if you reject Trump, there are vital things to be learned from him if we are to confront the crisis of our time.

What is that crisis? It’s not the litany of items that usually come to mind—the \$20 trillion national debt, economic stagnation, runaway regulation, political correctness and identity politics run amok, unchecked



immigration that threatens to work a demographic-political revolution, and confused or unserious policy toward radical Islamic terrorism. These are mere symptoms of a much deeper but poorly understood problem. It can be stated directly in one sentence: Elections no longer change the character of our government.

Understanding what this means requires first clearing away a popular confusion. A number of critics on the left and right, such as Michael Brendan Dougherty of the *Week*, Jeet Heer of the *New Republic*, and Sam Tanenhaus this week in the *New Yorker*, see the Claremonster enthusiasm for Trump as another manifestation of the split between the “West Coast” and “East Coast” Straussians. Claremont, the center of West Coast Straussianism, is supposedly fascinated with “Caesarism” and “cataclysmic moments” in U.S. history—crises that only the “great man” can address. It is hard to decide whether this caricature is grotesque or cartoonish.

The unwritten rules of Straussian fight club are no doubt

opaque to liberal observers and many conservatives too; as in the film *Fight Club*, the participants don't talk about it clearly to outsiders. Leo Strauss wrote very little about American politics, but the late University of Chicago professor's many gifted students have written a lot, naturally falling into recondite arguments about theoretical issues related to the character of the American Founding and the nature of philosophic inquiry. Jaffa and his West Coast followers think America is close to the classical ideal of the best regime emphasizing human virtue and excellence, while the East thinks America is a "solid but low" regime of self-interested Lockean individualism. These disputes have little if any bearing on the question of Trump. Most of the so-called East Coast Straussians share the West's abiding interest in Lincoln, Churchill, and the centrality of statesmanship.

The closer source of the Claremont sympathy for Trump (though it should be noted that they are far from unanimous—several Claremonsters are Never Trumpers) is found in another aspect of the Claremont argument about which there is near-complete harmony among East, West, and everyone in-between: the insidious political character of the "administrative state," a phrase once confined chiefly to the ranks of conservative political scientists, but which has broken out into common parlance. It refers not simply to large bureaucracy, but to the way in which the constitutional separation of powers has been steadily eroded by the delegation of more and more lawmaking to a virtual "fourth branch" of government.

The *political* character of the administrative state is more important than the *economic* inefficiency or arbitrariness of bureaucracy that is the usual target of conservative ire, because it represents a new answer to the classic political question: Who should rule? The premise of the Constitution is that the *people* should rule. The premise of the administrative state, explicitly expressed by Woodrow Wilson and other Progressive-era theorists, is that *experts* should rule, in a new administrative form largely sealed off from political influence, i.e., sealed off from the people. At some point, it amounts to government without the consent of the governed, a simple fact that surprisingly few conservative politicians perceive. Ronald Reagan was, naturally, a conspicuous exception, noting in 1981 in his first Inaugural Address, "It is time to check and reverse the growth of government, which shows signs of *having grown beyond the consent of the governed.*" (Emphasis added.)

Wilson's theoretical writings about the purpose of elections are opaque and hard to make out, but in one sense modern contests don't even live up to one of his simpler themes—elections express a general direction for the

country, and the experts should be left to figure out the details for us. There have been several Republican land-slides in the last 40 years based on the explicit premise of reimposing limits on the nation's government, but they have led to very little fundamental change. Newt Gingrich likes to talk about what he calls "70-30" issues—areas in which survey data show a large majority of Americans agreeing with the conservative view, but which are nonetheless trampled on by Washington. And polls show a growing majority of Americans believe the government is an active threat to their liberty. There may be good reasons—excuses?—for the practical inability of Republicans to block or roll back these predations against the people,

such as the president's veto, the Senate filibuster, and undue judicial deference to administrative power, as well as the collective action challenges of the fractious House GOP caucus. But these are second-order problems. The salient political fact is this: No matter who wins elections nowadays, the experts in the agencies rule and every day extend their rule further, even under Republican presidents ostensibly committed to resisting this advance. We still nominally choose our rulers, but

they don't reflect our majority opinions. No wonder more and more conservatives regard the GOP leadership in Washington as "collaborationists" with Democrats.

The profound understanding of the insidious political character of the administrative state is not original to the Claremonsters. Parts of it are visible as early as James Burnham's masterful 1941 book *The Managerial Revolution* (recalled recently in *THE WEEKLY STANDARD* by Matthew Continetti). For more than 30 years, Prof. John Marini of the University of Nevada, Reno, a Claremont Institute stalwart, has gone beyond Burnham to work out a complicated account of the unconstitutional character of the administrative state, explaining why it is more than just centralized bureaucracy, the erosion of the separation of powers, the corruption of Congress, and the disgraceful complicity of the judiciary. It requires a high degree of constitutional literacy to understand fully; just try explaining it to a GOP officeholder (as I have tried many times) and watch the eyes glaze over. I've argued for a long time that the defect of the Claremont insight into the administrative state is that it is severely limited in practical politics if it requires a Ph.D to understand.

But one of Marini's astute observations is easily accessible and ought to arrest even the dullest politico: For most of the last 50 years, nearly all successful presidential candidates, of both parties, have made their principal appeal as

The salient political fact is this: No matter who wins elections nowadays, the experts in the agencies rule and every day extend their rule further.

outsiders, running *against* Washington. Even Barack Obama, a sitting senator, ran largely in this mode. Does this not indicate fundamental disharmony between the people and their rulers? Never mind that Democrats are insincere when they speak of “the mess in Washington.” The administrative state is the partisan creation of liberalism and serves the ends of liberalism—a fact Republicans either do not clearly discern or fail to confront directly. If that statement seems hyperbole, try this simple thought experiment: If you’re a federal bureaucrat, which party is more likely to defend your professional interest and policy domain?

In opposition to the slow-motion Progressive assault on self-rule by the people, the conservative establishment has been offering mostly what can be called “checklist conservatism,” i.e., policy ideas with indirect or negligible political effect. What do Progressives stand for? Justice, equality, and the “right side of history”? What do conservatives stand for? More tax cuts, school choice, enterprise zones, a balanced-budget amendment, medical savings accounts, a statutory cost-benefit standard for regulation, and other policy wonkery. All worthy ideas, to be sure, but none of them reach very far to halt the steady unraveling of constitutional government.

In other words, while much of the conservative establishment is talking about *policy* (as the slogan “ideas have consequences” is typically misunderstood), the Claremonsters are talking about *governance*. But along with the increasing concentration of power in the hands of unaccountable experts is the equal concentration of authoritative *public opinion* in the hands of the experts and their media-academic allies. As Marini, a Trump supporter, told me last week, “Public opinion is in the hands of a national elite. That public opinion, the whole of the public discourse about what is political in America, is in the hands of very few. There’s no way in which you have genuine diversity of opinion that arises from the offices that are meant to represent it.” A good example of the defensive crouch of Republicans accepting the elite-defined boundaries of acceptable opinion was Sen. Ted Cruz’s comment shortly after the 2012 election that conservative social policy must pass through “a Rawlsian lens,” an astonishing concession to the supercharged egalitarian philosophy at the heart of contemporary leftism.

The enforced conformity of public opinion is also not a brand-new thought. Walter Lippmann perceived in the 1920s how elite dominance of public opinion would shape and constrict our political horizons, and you can hear the distinct echo of Tocqueville as well. But in recent years the combination of administrative sovereignty and authoritative public opinion has taken a menacing turn with liberalism’s full embrace of political correctness. It’s one thing for liberalism to organize and minister to society according to specific economic interests and ethnic group solidarity,

which provided the practical glue for old-fashioned pork barrel politics. During the Obama years the boundaries of acceptable opinion have shifted sharply to an identity politics rooted in radical grievance that rejects wholesale the justice of American democracy. Marini summarizes it thus:

Post-modern intellectuals have pronounced their historical judgment on America’s past, finding it to be morally indefensible. Every great human achievement of the past—whether in philosophy, religion, literature, or the humanities—came to be understood as a kind of exploitation of the powerless. Rather than allowing the past to be viewed in terms of its aspirations and accomplishments, it has been judged by its failures. The living part of the past is understood in terms slavery, racism, and identity politics. Political correctness arose as the practical and necessary means of enforcing this historical judgment. No public defense of past greatness could be allowed to live in the present. Public morality and public policy would come to be understood in terms of the formerly oppressed.

This is no longer just a campus fetish. It has broken out, with examples including the federal government threatening to cut off funding to any public school district that wishes to keep its single-sex bathrooms, the social pressure to punish anyone who opposes same-sex marriage like former Mozilla CEO Brendan Eich, and the legal vise-grip being applied to religious institutions that resist various government mandates. Liberalism today goes beyond wanting to control your pocketbook; it now demands to control how you think. It resembles the state of play that Lincoln noted in his Cooper Union address in 1860—that the South would not be placated by toleration of slavery, but demanded that we “cease to call slavery *wrong*, and join them in calling it *right*. . . . Silence will not be tolerated—we must place ourselves avowedly with them.” Just as in 1860, the tacit platform of today’s Democratic party is that the Republican party is illegitimate unless Republicans surrender their principles and get on “the side of history.”

Trump’s disruptive potential explains therefore his attraction for Claremonsters. More than just a rebuke to political correctness and identity politics, a Trump victory would be, in their eyes, a vehicle for reasserting the sovereignty of the people and withdrawal of consent for the administrative state and the suffocating boundaries of acceptable opinion backing it up. A large number of Americans have responded positively to Trump’s slogan “Make America Great Again” because they too see Trump as a forceful tribune against the slow-motion desiccation of the country under the steady advance of liberalism.

Does Trump understand any of this himself, or is his reflexive rejection of the establishment of both parties merely coincidental with his towering self-regard and boorish manner? Trump seems more

like a stopped clock, right twice a day by chance. The difficulty with the Claremont argument is that it bids to understand Trump better than Trump understands himself. While a Trump victory on November 8 would represent a massive and salutary blow against our bipartisan ruling class, what happens after January 20, when governing begins? No one should want another administration staffed with K Street Republican factotums, but the presumed Trumpian alternative—private-sector business executives with little or no political experience (“the best people!”)—is unlikely to be any more effective in taming the administrative state. Washington bureaucracies eat business managers for breakfast. Could Trump carry them by his relentless bluster and force of will? Most of the Claremonsters admit this defect; even “Decius” says only that Trump “might” do some of the right things, whereas we know that a Hillary presidency will be hopeless.

The Trump disruption thesis is not held uniquely by the Claremonsters. David Gelernter offered a version of this argument in the *Wall Street Journal* last weekend, and Victor Davis Hanson has been arguing along these lines for months. But it does seem out of harmony with the Claremont focus on the high-minded understanding of the need for statesmanship. Is there a statesman lurking underneath Trump’s glitter and grimace?

The exacting demands of statesmanship have seldom been put better than by Hillsdale’s Thomas G. West, one of the most fervent Claremont pro-Trumpers, in a 1986 essay: “A president who would successfully lead the nation back to constitutional government must have the right *character*, be able to present the right *speeches*, and undertake the right *actions* to guide the people to elect a new kind of Congress.” Last week, I asked West whether and how Trump could measure up to this understanding of what is necessary today. West points to what he calls Trump’s “civic courage,” i.e., his intransigence in the face of relentless attacks, his willingness to call out radical Islamic extremism by name while noting the guilt-infused reluctance of Obama and Hillary Clinton to do so, his willingness to question the bipartisan failures of foreign policy over the last 25 years, and his direct rebuke to the collapse of the rule of law in cities with large black populations. West thinks Trump’s breathtaking stubbornness and shocking candor are the ingredients for the kind of restorative statesmanship the times demand.

I’ll leave to others to debate whether what West sees as Trump’s courage is closer to the recklessness that is the defect of courage. Perhaps Trump’s intransigence and self-regard would serve him well in office, but his likely failure at the polls next month ought to raise a serious question for those of us who hold aloft the banner of high statesmanship. We’ll never know whether a candidate of Trump’s

disposition without his baggage and defects would succeed in winning in 2016 and governing effectively in 2017 and beyond. Did not James Madison warn that “enlightened statesmen will not always be at the helm”? If the restoration of the republic depends more than ever on the contingency of a wise and forceful statesman winning election at the right moment, then it suggests the crisis of governance is so far advanced that we need more than just a great president to reverse our course.

Perhaps everyone has put too much emphasis on finding the supreme virtuous statesman—another Reagan—to lead us out of the wilderness. The failures and shortcomings of the Reagan presidency, whose experience and lessons are strangely unstudied by conservatives, ought to be a source of searching reflection. (I took a lot of criticism from some Reaganites for the conclusion of my book on his presidency, *The Age of Reagan*, for being less than fully triumphant about the greatness of the Gipper. I wrote that “Reagan was more successful in rolling back the Soviet empire than he was in rolling back the domestic government empire *chiefly because the latter is a harder problem.*”) It ought to be added, though, that this *Waiting for Godot* outlook is less fanciful than that of our legal friends who keep hoping that appointing the right Supreme Court justices and generating the right cases will chip away at “Chevron deference” and other constitutionally dubious props of the administrative state.

Still, I can’t help but think back to Willmoore Kendall’s admiring review of *Crisis of the House Divided*. While appreciating Jaffa’s profound understanding of Lincoln, Kendall worried that it set the bar for statesmanship at a level so high that it would elide inevitably into the requirement that we be governed by an endless series of Lincolns. But true statesmen are exceedingly rare things, and a constant emphasis on the statesman would become willy-nilly a Caesarism that would favor the left, the chief example of our time being Obama. Trump certainly looks like an example of Caesarism run amok, though he may be better understood as an example of how *low* our standards have sunk, that someone as crude and ill-equipped as Trump can appear bold and fresh. That Trump can be made out to be the only candidate since Reagan who has represented a fundamental challenge to the status quo puts in stark relief the attenuation of conservative political thought and action over the last 20 years and the near-complete failure of aspiring Republican presidents to marry their ambition to a serious understanding of why the republic is in danger.

Lincoln famously said in 1854, “Our republican robe is soiled.” We need only capitalize one word to adapt it to our time: “Our Republican robe is soiled.” The cleanup is going to be excruciating. But nothing is more necessary and important. ♦

Scandal? What Scandal?

Look what WikiLeaks dragged in

BY MARK HEMINGWAY

On March 5, 2015, John Podesta, former White House chief of staff and longtime Clinton family confidant, received an email from his daughter. “I’m heading back to NY tonight. Any chance you’re staying in nyc b/c of weather (or scandal)?” she asked. Podesta responded, “What scandal? A few e-mails that we’ve asked be made public?”

What makes this email remarkable, observes *National Review*’s Jim Geraghty, is the date. It was three days after news had broken that Hillary Clinton improperly used a private email server during her time at the State Department and one day after Clinton had been served with a congressional subpoena for emails on that server. Podesta may have tried to spin his own daughter with his seeming insouciance, but about three weeks later, with the scandal of the private server rapidly metastasizing, Clinton’s IT guy had his infamous “oh sh—” moment. He realized he had forgotten to wipe her server clean, as he had promised to do. He promptly used the computer program BleachBit to delete all the emails even though, as the FBI later concluded, “at the time he made the deletions in March 2015, he was aware of the existence of the preservation request and the fact that it meant he should not disturb Clinton’s e-mail data.” (The FBI investigators, as it turned out, gave him immunity, but this sort of data-destruction-despite-a-subpoena is not something you should try at home.)

The reason we’re privy to Podesta’s cavalier attitude about Clinton’s email scandal is that he now has email

headaches of his own. Over a period of weeks, the shadowy WikiLeaks organization has been releasing hacked copies of Podesta’s emails dating back years. WikiLeaks almost certainly has ties to Russian intelligence and is obviously up to no good. The requisite *caveat lector* thus applies. But so far, every email under scrutiny appears to be genuine.

And what a story they tell. America’s greatest novelists could not have concocted a tale that so perfectly confirms dark suspicions about how the liberal elites running America really operate. Taken in total, the picture Podesta’s emails present is of a man whose tentacles are adroitly moving all the levers of power. In retrospect, Podesta’s casual attitude toward Clinton’s email problems doesn’t look oblivious—it looks prescient. Why should he worry about disgrace for Hillary Clinton when he and his friends in politics, business, and the media dictate what becomes a scandal?

In this respect, Podesta’s emails help explain why the FBI ignored basic procedure, destroyed the computers of Clinton aides in “side agreements” to their immunity deals, and then refused to charge Clinton for egregious violations of laws governing classified information. On March 4 of last year—again, right

after the Clinton email scandal broke—Podesta sent the following email to Clinton aide Cheryl Mills (who also received an immunity deal from the FBI): “Think we should hold emails to and from potus? That’s the heart of his exec privilege. We could get them to ask for that. They may not care, but [it] seems like they will.”

President Obama first claimed, as with all allegedly unexpected calamities that have befallen his White House, that he didn’t learn about Clinton’s email scandal until he read about it in the papers. However, an item from Podesta’s

John Podesta’s emails help explain why the FBI ignored basic procedure, destroyed the computers of Clinton aides in ‘side agreements’ to their immunity deals, and then refused to charge Clinton for egregious violations of laws governing classified information.

Mark Hemingway is a senior writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

inbox makes that denial seem less plausible. After the *New York Times* reported on March 7, 2015, “Obama Says He Didn’t Know Hillary Clinton Was Using Private Email Address,” Clinton aide Philippe Reines wrote to Podesta, “One of us should connect with the WH just so they know that the email will show his statement to not make sense.” That’s because, as was subsequently revealed, the president had been emailing Clinton at her private email server address.

According to FBI files released in late September, Obama was emailing Clinton using a pseudonym. “Once informed that the sender’s name is believed to be a pseudonym used by the president, [Clinton aide Huma] Abedin exclaimed: ‘How is this not classified?’” the FBI report says. “Abedin then expressed her amazement at the president’s use of a pseudonym and asked if she could have a copy of the email.” Abedin was also granted immunity by the FBI.

Had the Department of Justice charged Hillary Clinton, the nature of the president’s correspondence with her might have quickly emerged as an issue. Pretty soon all of America would have been asking: What did Obama know about Clinton’s illegal email server and when did he know it?

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE POSITIONS

Most of the Podesta emails stop short of blockbuster revelations of corruption. There are intimations that sources inside the State Department and Department of Justice were giving the Clintons advance notice of developments in the email investigation, and while it’s unseemly, there’s no compelling evidence this was illegal. Podesta’s emails contain evidence of possible illegal coordination between the Clinton campaign and pro-Hillary political action committees, but that’s still being unpacked. Even the emails about Obama and Clinton’s correspondence have to be taken in broader context to be properly understood.

What the Podesta emails mainly highlight is how disingenuous the Democratic political agenda has become. In one email, dated April 28, 2015, Neera Tanden, the head of the Center for American Progress—the influential liberal think tank founded by Podesta—warns the Clinton campaign against backing a \$15 minimum wage. “Substantively, we have not supported \$15—you will get a fair number of liberal economists who will say it will lose jobs,” writes Tanden.

Despite this apparent belief the policy would do more

harm than good, you will find no shortage of instances on the Center for American Progress’s website and in its in-house publication, *Think Progress*, endorsing a \$15 minimum



From left:
John Podesta,
John Halpin, and
Jennifer Palmieri

From: jhalpin@americanprogress.org

To: JPalmieri@americanprogress.org,
john.podesta@gmail.com

Date: 2011-04-11 21:10

Subject: Re: Conservative Catholicism

Excellent point. They can throw around “Thomistic” thought and “subsidiarity” and sound sophisticated because no one knows what the hell they’re talking about.

Jennifer Palmieri <JPalmieri@americanprogress.org> wrote:

I imagine they think it is the most socially acceptable politically conservative religion. Their rich friends wouldn’t understand if they became evangelicals.

----- Original Message -----

From: John Halpin

To: John Podesta <john.podesta@gmail.com>;

Jennifer Palmieri

Sent: Mon Apr 11 18:55:59 2011

Subject: Conservative Catholicism

Ken Auletta’s latest piece on Murdoch in the *New Yorker* starts off with the aside that both Murdoch and Robert Thompson, managing editor of the *WSJ*, are raising their kids Catholic. Friggin’ Murdoch baptized his kids in Jordan where John the Baptist baptized Jesus.

Many of the most powerful elements of the conservative movement are all Catholic (many converts) from the SC and think tanks to the media and social groups.

It’s an amazing bastardization of the faith. They must be attracted to the systematic thought and severely backwards gender relations and must be totally unaware of Christian democracy.

wage. This includes a statement Tanden herself issued in April of this year praising “progress initiated by Fight for \$15” that culminated in a “\$15 per hour wage, which will apply in parts of New York state.”

While Tanden was right to warn against embracing the sort of populist socialism that Bernie Sanders's campaign would promote, the Podesta emails suggest that Sanders's critique of Democratic elites' being in thrall to Wall Street is on target. According to the *New Republic*, the most damning of the lot is an October 6, 2008, email from Michael Froman, currently the U.S. Trade Representative. He formerly served as chief of staff for Secretary of the Treasury Robert Rubin in the Clinton White House and worked with Barack Obama at the *Harvard Law Review*. At the time he emailed Podesta, Froman was an executive at Citigroup and Podesta was co-chair of Obama's presidential transition team. The email had the subject "Lists." Attached to the email were three lists of people who could fill 31 Obama cabinet positions, organized by sex and ethnicity.

"[The lists] correctly identified Eric Holder for the Justice Department, Janet Napolitano for Homeland Security, Robert Gates for Defense, Rahm Emanuel for chief of staff, Peter Orszag for the Office of Management and Budget, Arne Duncan for Education, Eric Shinseki for Veterans Affairs, Kathleen Sebelius for Health and Human Services, Melody Barnes for the Domestic Policy Council, and more," notes David Dayen in the *New Republic*. "For the Treasury, three possibilities were on the list: Robert Rubin, Larry Summers, and Timothy Geithner." In other words, a month before the 2008 election, an executive at Citigroup, which would soon receive the largest federal bailout of any bank during the financial crisis, was basically dictating the makeup of the Obama cabinet.

If that weren't enough to give the Bernie Bros an aneurysm, WikiLeaks released what they dubbed "an American journalism 'holy grail.'" In Podesta's emails were three transcripts of speeches Hillary Clinton was paid \$675,000 to deliver to Goldman Sachs, the world's most powerful investment bank and a favorite punching bag for liberal activists demanding more financial regulation.

In the speeches, Clinton lamented that Wall Street had been demonized unfairly. "I think there's a lot that could have been avoided in terms of both misunderstanding and really politicizing what happened with greater transparency, with greater openness on all sides," Clinton says. While that seems like a benign enough sentiment, we learn from a previous Podesta email that Clinton's other comments on Wall Street transparency were duplicitous and worrisome to her campaign. "If everybody's watching, you know, all of the back room discussions and the deals, you know, then people get a little nervous, to say the least," she said at a Goldman Sachs event. "So, you need both a public and a private position."

She also disparaged the Dodd-Frank financial reforms as being the result of political panic, contradicting not just the Democratic narrative that reforms were being put in

place to prevent another financial meltdown but her own *New York Times* op-ed, in which she praised Dodd-Frank for "curb[ing] recklessness on Wall Street." Given what a flashpoint Hillary Clinton's paid speeches to Wall Street were in the Democratic primary, NBC's Chuck Todd speculated on the *Today Show* that had her remarks to Goldman Sachs been released earlier, it could have "possibly cost her the nomination."

CONTEMPT AND BACKSTABBING

There's another batch of Podesta emails that bear mentioning simply because it's astounding to see in black and white the cattiness and pettiness of the people running the Clinton campaign. "Many of the most powerful elements of the conservative movement are all Catholic (many converts)," wrote Center for American Progress fellow John Halpin. "It's an amazing bastardization of the faith. They must be attracted to the systematic thought and severely backwards gender relations and must be totally unaware of Christian democracy." Responded Jennifer Palmieri, director of communications for the Clinton campaign: "I imagine they think it is the most socially acceptable politically conservative religion. Their rich friends wouldn't understand if they became evangelicals." If Catholic conservatives are "an amazing bastardization of the faith," one wonders what that makes liberal Catholics who support the Democratic party's abortion platform. As for Jewish Democrats, they might be alarmed to learn that campaign manager Robby Mook advises Hillary Clinton not to discuss Israel in speeches with Democratic activists. Clinton speechwriter Dan Schwerin, however, does chime in to say it's okay to discuss Israel at fundraisers.

Podesta, for his part, is loath to discuss anything that could negatively reflect on Muslims. After the San Bernardino terror attack, MSNBC host Chris Hayes tweeted out the name of the killer, who had just been identified. Podesta responded to the Hillary campaign press team on email, "Better if a guy named Sayeed Farouk was reporting that a guy named Christopher Hayes was the shooter." This attentiveness to the political ramifications of the killer's religion and ethnicity says volumes about the sway identity politics holds over the Democratic party.

Indeed, when it comes to racial issues, politics are always the uppermost concern in Clintonworld. There is worry that Clinton's record on race relations will haunt her in the era of Black Lives Matter, specifically that she will be asked about the design of the Arkansas state flag, which honors the Confederacy, and the fact that her husband, as governor, signed into law a bill creating an Arkansas state holiday for Robert E. Lee. (Elsewhere in the emails, Podesta notes that most of "the finalists in Miss America"

came from “the CSA [Confederate States of America]”; Tanden sniffs, “I would imagine the only people who watch it are from the confederacy and by now they know that so they’ve rigged the thing in their honor.”)

Aside from the frequent contempt for their supporters specifically and vast swaths of America generally, it’s also worth marveling at the petty infighting in Clintonworld. David Brock spent the nineties digging up Clinton dirt before undergoing a political conversion, founding Media Matters, and becoming one of Hillary Clinton’s most ardent and controversial defenders. But when Podesta solicited advice on how the campaign should deal with Brock, Tanden called him “a menace” and an “unhinged soulless narcissist.”

For Sidney Blumenthal, the former *New Yorker* journalist turned Clinton lackey, Podesta has little love. “It always amazes me that people like Sid either completely lack self awareness or self respect. Maybe both,” Podesta writes to Tanden. “Will you promise to shoot me if I ever end up like that?”

In another email, Podesta tells liberal columnist, former Democratic aide, and confidant Brent Budowsky, “Sid is lost in his own web of conspiracies.” It was just a few weeks ago that the Clinton campaign was pretending it was absurd to believe, in the face of credible accusations from the McClatchy news organization, that Blumenthal, a “senior adviser” to Clinton’s 2008 campaign, started the “birther” rumor Barack Obama was born in Kenya and therefore ineligible to be president. Now we know even those at the highest levels of the Clinton campaign think Blumenthal is a conspiracist.

Another spate of emails is notable for how contemptuous members of Clinton’s inner circle are of Chelsea Clinton. The younger Clinton started taking an active interest in the Clinton Foundation in 2011, and it didn’t take long for Bill Clinton’s longtime personal aide Doug Band to start complaining. “I don’t deserve this from her and deserve a tad more respect or at least a direct dialogue for me to explain these things,” Band emails Podesta on November 13, 2011. “She is acting like a spoiled brat kid who has nothing else to do but create issues to justify what she’s doing because she, as she has said, hasn’t found her way and has a lack of focus in her life.” Chelsea was apparently concerned that Band might be using Clinton Foundation connections to drum up business for his consulting firm Teneo.

It’s hard to tell whether Band is right that Chelsea Clinton has nothing better to do than harass people or whether Chelsea was justly concerned that Band was violating the unspoken rule that the only people allowed to use the Clinton Foundation for grifting purposes are the

ones with their name above the door. There’s a possibility they’re both right.

In the following months, Chelsea Clinton tried to make nice, but Band wasn’t having any of it. On January 27, 2012, he forwarded a flattering note he received from Chelsea to Podesta and Cheryl Mills, who was then Hillary Clinton’s chief of staff at the State Department. Band appended the following note: “She sends me one of these types of emails

every few days/week. As they say, the apple doesn’t fall far. A kiss on the cheek while she is sticking a knife in the back, and front.”

Doug Band, Chelsea Clinton



From: Doug Band <doug@presidentclinton.com>

To: “cheryl.mills@gmail.com” <cheryl.mills@gmail.com>, “john.podesta@gmail.com” <john.podesta@gmail.com>
Date: Fri, 27 Jan 2012 14:34:46 -0500

Subject: Fw:

She sends me one of these types of emails every few days/week

As they say, the apple doesn’t fall far

A kiss on the cheek while she is sticking a knife in the back, and front

----- Original Message -----

From: Diane Reynolds
Sent: Friday, January 27, 2012 01:02 PM=0A=
To: Doug Band; Justin Cooper
Subject:=20

Hi Doug and Justin – Just met Clark Winter on our BA flight and he had terrific things to say about Dad and you Doug and CGI generally and it was nice to hear as ever so I wanted to pass along. Sorry for brevity. We’re taking off. Hope alls well in Davos Justin.
Chelsea

THIS MEDIA

The Podesta emails, it’s fair to say, have had trouble elbowing their way onto the front page. It’s of course an extraordinarily strange season for politics. In any normal year, such revelations might have swamped Clinton’s candidacy. But this year she benefits from the media’s hopeless addiction to Donald Trump’s antics.

Another reason for the relative lack of attention has to do with the reprehensible nature of WikiLeaks. There’s something unseemly about poring over hacked emails, even

when they are of demonstrable public interest. Few among us would see our personal and professional relationships emerge intact and undamaged if years of our emails were exposed to public scrutiny. When WikiLeaks's initial revelations centered on the Bush administration's efforts in the war on terror, the media largely characterized the organization as a white-knight whistleblower. As the years went on, there was little scrutiny of the organization's methods or ties to foreign intelligence services—even when WikiLeaks indiscriminately released information that provoked riots and protests in multiple African countries, in which hundreds were killed.

Only this year, now that WikiLeaks has attacked the Democratic party, is the organization being reevaluated. After years of tolerating WikiLeaks's founder Julian Assange's hiding out in Ecuador's embassy in London, it was the release of Clinton's Goldman Sachs speech transcripts that finally prompted enough international pressure to get the Ecuadorian government to cut off Assange's Internet access.

But the most obvious reason Podesta's emails are being downplayed is that they are embarrassing to the media. A recent NBC poll found that only 19 percent of Americans approve of the media, a rating well below that of Clinton or even Trump. And the missives in Podesta's inbox reveal good reasons for the media's reputation to be in the dumpster.

One email shows Donna Brazile, then working as a CNN commentator, emailing Podesta and Palmieri the day before a March 13 Democratic primary debate hosted by CNN with the subject heading: "From time to time, I get the questions in advance." Brazile writes, "Here's one that worries me about HRC," and proceeds to lay out a detailed question Clinton will be asked about the death penalty. The next day at the debate, Clinton was asked that question, virtually word for word, by CNN's Roland Martin. Brazile flatly denied a leak: "I never had access to questions and would never have shared them with the candidates if I did," she said. But CNN media reporter Brian Stelter contacted Roland Martin, and he did not exactly back up Brazile's denial. Martin admitted sharing debate questions with others at CNN and his staff. "When asked in a followup question if he would explicitly rule out any sharing of questions with Brazile, Martin did not respond," reports Stelter.

Then there's the abject and unseemly willingness of reporters to ingratiate themselves with Clintonworld. Take this email from *Politico*'s chief political correspondent, Glenn Thrush, to Podesta: "Because I have become a hack I will send u the whole section that pertains to u. Please don't share or tell anyone I did this. Tell me if I f—ed up or anything." (WikiLeaks emails released in July revealed *Politico*'s chief investigative reporter Ken Vogel sharing a full draft of a pending story with the DNC's press secretary; an

embarrassed *Politico* made it clear that it was against their editorial policy to share stories with sources before publication.) As a reporter, Thrush has routinely come under fire for laughably over-the-top pronouncements, such as this one: "As Obama talks up legacy on campaign trail important to note he's had best/least scandal-scarred 2nd term since FDR." His defensiveness on Twitter about the Podesta email didn't much help his case. "Little unnerving—but fascinating to be in the middle of a ginned-up, self-serving sh—storm pushed by fake, in-the-bag partisan media," Thrush wrote.

The *New York Times*'s Mark Leibovich, best known for writing *This Town*, a gossipy tome about Washington's venal culture, also figures prominently in the Podesta emails. He is described by Clinton staffer Milia Fisher in the emails as "sympathetic," though "accommodating" might be more accurate. Leibovich wrote a lengthy profile of Clinton for the *New York Times Magazine*, and before it was published reached out to Palmieri to vet the quotes he wanted to use. The Clinton campaign nixed two, a lame aside about Sarah Palin "cooking up some moose stew" and another where Hillary Clinton notes that "gay rights has moved much faster than women's rights or civil rights, which is an interesting phenomenon somebody in the future will unpack."

After the Podesta emails were released, Leibovich wrote "Anatomy of a Media Conspiracy," a flippant, tongue-in-cheek response to the criticism. "Look, Mom, there I am in WikiLeaks," Leibovich writes. "Right there among the rest of the media sellouts, Clinton shills and biased tools of the MSM who are apparently bent on destroying Donald J. Trump." If Leibovich isn't accountable to Trump voters, he should at least have to heed his editors. In 2012, the *New York Times* adopted a policy of forbidding sources from approving quotations after the fact. "We want to draw a clear line on this," reads the *Times*'s memorandum. "Citing Times policy, reporters should say no if a source demands, as a condition of an interview, that quotes be submitted afterward to the source or a press aide to review, approve or edit."

Media sycophancy is sprinkled throughout the emails. See, for instance, the email from MSNBC producer Sheara Braun in April of last year, begging for a guest to appear on *All In with Chris Hayes*: "The point isn't to dwell on the past"—the past presumably being the email scandal that had just broken—"but the point is to talk about this amazing, intelligent woman who probably faced more nonsense back in the day because she is a woman . . . and she continues to have to face it. She is smarter than most men and more qualified than most men to be president," she says. What's truly remarkable is that this groveling wasn't aimed at securing an appearance by Hillary—it was a request to get Clinton friend and former flack Lisa Caputo on the show to blather about (in this case) millennial support for Clinton's candidacy.

But at least Braun's flattery was aimed at getting something in return. The Podesta emails also show John Harwood, of the *New York Times* and CNBC, sending Podesta all manner of complimentary emails—well, just because. In July of last year, Harwood sent out a Tweet that read, “if there’s any specific/plausible suggestion of nefarious email @HillaryClinton was trying to hide, I haven’t heard it.” He then emailed that tweet to Podesta to make sure the campaign saw it. Later that month, when the Clinton campaign wrote a letter to the editor attacking the *New York Times*'s coverage of the email scandal, Harwood sent Podesta a note that simply said, “good letter.” He wrote to praise Clinton's TV appearances. Harwood bragged to Podesta that the GOP was “veering off the rails. I certainly am feeling that way with respect to how I questioned Trump at our debate.” This, of course, was the same CNBC debate where Harwood asked Trump, among other terrible questions, “Let’s be honest. Is this a comic book version of a presidential campaign?” Harwood’s performance as a debate moderator was such a disaster that the irate RNC pulled the plug on a future debate that was to be moderated by NBC.

And this only scratches the surface—there are lots of emails that raise all manner of questions about how the Beltway media operate. It’s undeniable that the Clinton campaign views reporters as pawns to be used (and who want to be used). While there’s no actual suggestion the *New York Times*'s Maggie Haberman has done anything wrong, one wonders why the Clinton campaign says, “we have had her tee up stories for us before and have never been disappointed.”

Only CNN’s Jake Tapper—who coincidentally was the only reporter to ask Clinton about the Arkansas state flag—comes off looking good. “Why is Jake Tapper such a d—?” asks Palmieri. Tapper posted a copy of the email on Twitter and replied, “It’s a question that has confounded millions of people for hundreds of years.”

UNAWARE AND COMPLIANT

The final absurdity in an election that has surpassed all others for absurdity might be this: None of this will matter. While it’s not a new development to have a presidential campaign staffed by amoral operators who loathe voters, in the Clinton campaign such behavior has been taken to dizzying new heights. In one exchange with Podesta, Bill Ivey, chairman of the National

Endowment for the Arts under Bill Clinton, frets that “we’ve all been quite content to demean government, drop civics and in general conspire to produce an unaware and compliant citizenry.” If you want proof of what a problem this has become, consider the fact that Hillary Clinton is poised to enter the White House in January—and she’s presumably going to take Podesta, Palmieri, Blumenthal, and the rest of the sordid gang along with her.

Even Clinton’s boosters can’t believe she made it this far. Budowsky sent Podesta an email in March, and right after noting that Clinton “says things that are untrue, which candidly she often does,” he sounded the alarm: “Right now I am petrified that Hillary is almost totally dependent on Republicans nominating Trump. . . . [E]ven a clown like

Ted Cruz would be an even money bet to beat and this scares the hell of out of me.”

Hillary Clinton needed a miracle, and the American media did their part to deliver. In addition to at least \$2 billion in free airtime during Trump’s nascent candidacy, a study done at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government earlier this year concluded that coverage of Trump in the Republican primary by CBS, Fox, the *Los Angeles Times*, NBC, the *New York Times*, *USA Today*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the *Washington Post* was overwhelmingly positive. Of course, that was then.

Meanwhile, if you’re concerned about the impending presidency of Hillary Clinton, you’re at the mercy of Russian hackers to apply scrutiny. Otherwise, you have to trust CNN, *Politico*, the *New York Times*, and NBC to report damning Clinton revelations that also suggest CNN, *Politico*, the *New York Times*, and NBC can’t be trusted to report on Clinton fairly.

If the media were always dogged and thorough in their reporting on Trump, Clinton, and Obama, American politics would have a lot less sensational information to offer WikiLeaks. But don’t expect the media to contemplate what the emergence of WikiLeaks might say about their shortcomings. It’s not that they haven’t mentioned Podesta’s emails at all—they’ve just done so with a certain bloodlessness. They’ve made precious little effort to connect the dots, follow the leads, or otherwise do the kind of big-picture analysis that stories like this typically receive. Reading between the lines, it’s not hard to detect a common thread. Every one of the stories on the Podesta email leaks seems to be saying the same thing: What scandal? ♦

One Democratic insider sent Podesta an email in March, and right after noting that Clinton ‘says things that are untrue, which candidly she often does,’ added, ‘Right now I am petrified that Hillary is almost totally dependent on Republicans nominating Trump.’



David Miscavige (1998)

The Church Militant

Inside the sinister world of Scientology. BY CHARLOTTE ALLEN

Most parent-offspring biographies consist of either the offspring's fond but warts-and-all reminiscences of his or her famous parent. Or are *Mommie Dearest* exposés of the famous sire or dam's parental barbarity. *Ruthless* is the other way around: Ron Miscavige is the 80-year-old father of a famous son, David Miscavige, head of the Church of Scientology since 1987.

As its title indicates, Ron Miscavige's book is the latest addition to an impres-

Ruthless
Scientology, My Son David Miscavige, and Me
 by Ron Miscavige with Dan Koon
 St. Martin's, 256 pp., \$26.99

sive body of published literature—most of it by former church members but some of it by well-respected journalists (Lawrence Wright's *Going Clear: Scientology, Hollywood, and the Prison of Belief* is the best-known example of the latter)—that paints David Miscavige as a vengeful, secretive, and near-paranoid control freak given to terrifying bouts of rage and rule by intimidation, relentless

belittling of subordinates, and punishments that include sleep deprivation, public humiliation, virtual imprisonment on Scientology premises, and “disconnection,” a form of shunning in which Scientologist relatives and friends cut off relations with apostates.

Ron Miscavige was one of those apostates, leaving Scientology in 2012 after he had finally had enough. Another was Jenna Miscavige Hill, David Miscavige's niece and Ron Miscavige's granddaughter. Hill quit Scientology in 2005 (her father, another Ron, had preceded her in 2000) and three years ago she published a book of her own, *Beyond Belief: My Secret*

ST. PETERSBURG TIMES / NEWSCOM

Charlotte Allen is a frequent contributor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

Life Inside Scientology and My Harrowing Escape.

It was the elder Ron Miscavige who brought his entire family into Scientology, around 1970. Born into a Polish family in northeastern Pennsylvania coal country, he married a fiery Italian hometown girl and high school classmate, Loretta Gidaro, after a stint in the Marines. Miscavige supported the family—four children, including David’s twin sister Denise and a younger daughter Lori—on his earnings as a cookware salesman, a job that, by his own account, he performed very well. The marriage was not a happy one: He and Loretta fought constantly, bitterly, sometimes physically, and usually in front of the children, although they stuck together for a surprisingly long time, not divorcing until the late 1980s (Loretta died in 2005).

David Miscavige was born, along with Denise, in 1960. Ron Miscavige describes the young David as “an affectionate, happy, bright kid with a great sense of humor and a desire to help others”—but in fact, as his father describes it, David started exhibiting at an early age some of the unpleasant traits that came to characterize his leadership style as head of Scientology: relentlessly bullying other kids to their faces and denigrating them behind their backs.

During the late 1960s, a salesman buddy introduced the elder Miscavige to Scientology, then a new and flourishing but still relatively obscure religion. Miscavige started attending impromptu Scientology “training” sessions, which his salesman pal had billed as a mind-over-matter course of “practical things you could do to help yourself.” Miscavige became a believer after he cured a headache by transferring it to an image of himself in a mirror. In 1969 he brought David, then age 9, to one of the sessions, where David was cured of the asthma that had plagued him since infancy and which his father was certain had a psychosomatic component. (Well, sort of cured: David continued to suffer minor attacks and was hospitalized at least once for a major episode as an adult.)

Scientology was the brainchild of L. Ron Hubbard (1911-1986), a prolific science-fiction writer and accomplished hypnotist who frequently embellished his own past as much as his stories. In 1950 he published a best-selling book, *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health*, which argued that a huge array of physical infirmities—ulcers, allergies, arthritis, even the common cold—were actually the residue of traumatic experiences (“engrams”) that blocked the full development of the human spirit. The aim was to get “clear” of those negative forces.

In 1953 Hubbard founded the full-fledged Church of Scientology. It was a religion that (as Ron Miscavige explains here) actually had a respectable pedigree: the New Thought movement of the 19th century, whose promoters asserted that illnesses originated in the mind and could be cured by reconnecting with one’s inner immortal “Spirit.” New Thought (as well as Scientology) clearly had its origins in Ralph Waldo Emerson’s Transcendentalism, and there are distinct resemblances to Gnosticism and to the Buddhist ideal of escaping the cycle of human suffering. The Scientology practice of “auditing”—talk sessions in which the neophyte explores his past traumas with a specially trained “auditor”—is also something like psychoanalysis, although Hubbard openly scorned conventional theories of mental illness.

Scientology was immediately popular, drawing thousands of followers to L. Ron Hubbard; but it was also expensive, drawing the unwanted attention of government authorities who suspected that the brand-new “church” was actually an elaborate racket. It cost—and still costs—believers more than a hundred thousand of today’s dollars to attain the coveted “clear” status, and the church zealously uses intellectual property laws to ensure that rogue Scientologists trading on their own accounts don’t appropriate Hubbard’s ideas and methods.

Hubbard was accused of practicing medicine without a license, and the FDA looked askance at his “electropsychometer,” or “E-meter,” a device that is supposed to measure changes in

an auditee’s state of mind. In 1963 the FBI raided church offices and seized hundreds of E-meters as suspect medical devices; the FDA later won a court order requiring every E-meter to be labeled that it’s being used strictly for spiritual purposes. Entire countries, including France and Germany, have labeled Scientology a dangerous cult.

Feeling persecuted, Hubbard took to the high seas in 1967, acquiring a small fleet of ships, one of which became his residence for the next eight years. Styling himself “the Commodore,” Hubbard established an elite cadre of Scientologists known as the Sea Organization, or Sea Org. Sea Org members dressed in quasi-naval uniforms, worked for very little money, and constituted an unconditionally obedient Praetorian Guard around Hubbard. In 1975 Hubbard moved the Sea Org into landlubber status in Clearwater, Florida, although they retained the uniforms. In 1979 he went into seclusion in Hemet, California, a desert town about 90 miles east of Los Angeles where he lived until his death, seeing no one except a handful of trusted confidants. Even his third wife and the mother of four of his seven children, Mary Sue Hubbard, had been banished. The Church of Scientology bought a 520-acre bankrupt resort nearby that became the church’s creative headquarters, known as the Gold Base. Extensively rebuilt and refurbished, the Gold Base currently houses about 800 Sea Org stalwarts.

In 1971, while Hubbard was still at sea, Ron Miscavige moved his entire family—converts all—to a Scientology compound owned by Hubbard called Saint Hill Manor, about 30 miles south of London. David Miscavige had proved to be an even more fervent adherent than his father. By age 12, he had become Scientology’s youngest auditor; in 1976, at 16, he announced his desire to join the Sea Org, and his indulgent father allowed him to drop out of high school to do so.

According to his father’s narrative, David used his youthful years running errands for Hubbard to make himself indispensable to Scientology’s founder—and also to neutralize

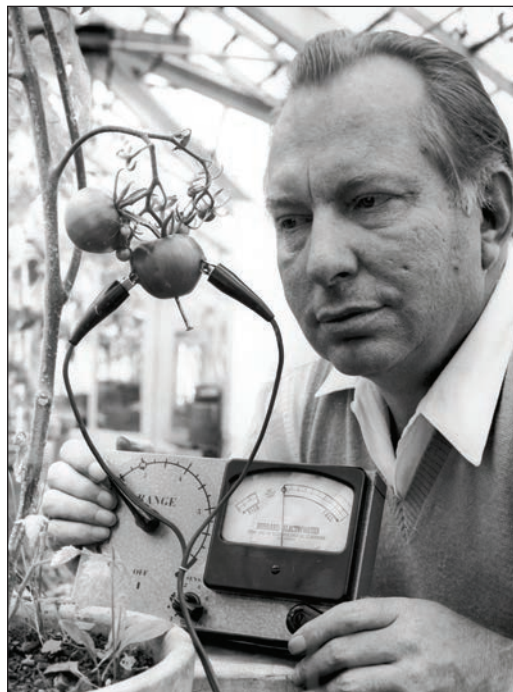
potential rivals to the throne, including the hapless Mary Sue Hubbard, who in 1979 had taken a fall for her husband for masterminding break-ins and wiretappings of the offices of the Internal Revenue Service and other government agencies investigating the church. Mary Sue Hubbard served a year in prison during the early 1980s.

In 1987, a year after L. Ron Hubbard's death, Miscavige took outright control of the Church of Scientology at age 27, assuming the title of "Captain." One of his major achievements was to broker a peace between the church and the IRS. In 1993, after lengthy negotiations, the agency agreed to award the church a coveted tax-exempt status as a charitable nonprofit, and the litigious Scientologists dropped the 50-odd lawsuits they had filed against the IRS.

Ron Miscavige joined the Sea Org himself, in 1985, nine years after his famous son. Regarding the move he says: "Becoming part of the Sea Org was never something I was overjoyed about doing." It does puzzle the reader why any self-respecting father, especially a father nearing 50, would volunteer to be a poorly paid worker bee in a hierarchically ordered hive where his obnoxious son was already occupying the queen slot. The most that can be said is that Ron Miscavige truly believed in Scientology.

Furthermore, back in Philadelphia, and back selling cookware, he had been accused of raping a woman who lived in an apartment building where he had gone to see customers. David Miscavige hired a team of lawyers to help his father, and the case was dismissed at the preliminary hearing when the alleged victim couldn't positively identify Ron Miscavige as her assailant. The rape charge spelled the end of Ron's marriage to Loretta. In gratitude for the church's support during this difficult period, and because he wanted to "help other people and contribute to a group that had the purpose of making a better world," Ron Miscavige packed his bags and headed first to Scientology

headquarters in Los Angeles, and then to the Gold Base, where his son was already occupying lavish quarters and offices, even though L. Ron Hubbard was still alive.



L. Ron Hubbard (1968)

Ron Miscavige had played the trumpet in the Marines and in many a pickup band since, so he was assigned to composing and arranging music for the church's training films and videos. David, meanwhile, seemed to be metastasizing into the repellent character that nearly all written accounts characterize him as being. His main management strategy was public harangues that could last as long as two hours, designed to grind into dust whatever Sea Org functionary happened to displease him at the moment (including his father on several occasions). He relished forcing errant Sea Orgers to stay up all night redoing some frantically organized project that he deemed hadn't been done right in the first place.

He also devoted a huge amount of personal energy and Scientology resources to the care and feeding of various Hollywood celebrities who had joined the church. Tom Cruise and John Travolta are the most famous of

this bunch, and Cruise in particular became the object of David Miscavige's most assiduous fawning. At one point, Sea Orgers were forced to create, nearly overnight, a meadow of flowers on the Gold Base property for a visiting Cruise and his then-wife Nicole Kidman to take a carefree romp. (The flower garden was plowed under before Cruise arrived because it didn't quite meet Miscavige's specifications.)

The most egregious sinners among them simply disappeared. One of the casualties was David Miscavige's wife, Shelly, a fellow Sea Orger whom he had married in 1982. Shelly Miscavige hasn't been seen in public or heard from since 2007, after she reorganized the Sea Org administrative chart without her husband's permission.

Ron Miscavige put up with this for an astounding quarter-century. What struck me wasn't so much the misery but the monotony: toiling a hundred hours a week for a paltry \$50-a-week allowance; wearing cheesy nautical uniforms; eating three chintzy cafeteria meals every day. As time went on, David Miscavige shrank the occasional days off that had been part of the Hubbard regime into a few hours on Sunday when Sea Org members got to do their laundry. They almost never got time to use the swimming pool, golf course, and exercise facilities that were part of the sumptuously appointed Gold Base.

Life seemed acceptable to Ron Miscavige mostly because he found a second wife in the Sea Org, Becky Bigelow, daughter of racecar driver Tom Bigelow. He married her in 1990. That marriage was a happy one, in contrast to the tumultuous liaison with Loretta. Still, they were watched, Miscavige relates.

Nonetheless, it took many years for Ron and Becky to plot an escape. In March 2012 they loaded up Ron's car—a gift from David and a rare motor vehicle among the cash-starved Sea Orgers—and sneaked off the Gold Base to freedom in Whitewater, Wisconsin, where Becky's mother lived.

SCOTT LAUDER / EVENING STANDARD / HULTON ARCHIVE / GETTY

What followed was an odd love-hate tennis match between Ron Miscavige and his son, who was trying to lure him back to California. Ron's daughters welcomed the escapees at first, then abruptly "disconnected," apparently on brother David's orders. The penniless Ron, meanwhile, sent a pleading letter to David begging for financial help, and David duly dispatched him \$100,000 plus his share of Loretta's estate.

In July 2013 Whitewater police informed Ron Miscavige that some private investigators had told them that they had been hired to trail him. The investigators told the cops that they had reported seeing Ron bend over and clutch his chest, which they had interpreted as a heart attack (Miscavige says he was merely securing his cell phone in a pocket). They said that they'd gotten a call from someone who identified himself as David Miscavige saying, "If he dies, he dies. Don't intervene." Hence this book—although David, through his lawyers, has denied making that statement.

The Church of Scientology isn't known for taking accusations lying down. Having acquired a manuscript shortly before *Ruthless* went to press, the church created a graphically sophisticated website that paints Ron Miscavige as a loser, musical mediocrity, and wife-beater. Numerous photographs show him quaffing booze and otherwise living it up on Scientology excursions; Becky Miscavige is portrayed as a gold-digging onetime Playboy Bunny waiting for Ron to die so she can cash in on the proceeds. Also included are letters from the church's lawyers to St. Martin's Press that don't exactly threaten a lawsuit, which would be extortion, but do imply that one could be forthcoming.

Of course, St. Martin's Press also has lawyers. I'm sure they vetted Ron Miscavige's book quite thoroughly, and so far, there haven't been any signature Scientology court filings. So readers may profitably enjoy this read about a father whose bizarre religious convictions led to his son's leading him around by the nose for a very long time. ♦

GEORGE MARKS / RETROFILE / GETTY

BCA

Liquid Assets

The long-term implications of turning on the tap.

BY WILLIAM MCKENZIE

A colleague at the *Dallas Morning News* used to gibe when I wrote editorials about water issues: "You turn on the tap and water comes out, right?" he would gig me in a what's-the-big-deal? tone of voice.

Of course, he was right. For those of us in the developed world, water comes out. But the water doesn't flow without intricate planning and delivery systems that the public rarely sees. More to the point, access to water supplies will become one of the most challenging friction points in the United States and abroad as population growth and a changing climate affect current and future supplies.

There's a reason water is termed "the new oil." Securing water supplies and delivering them to communities will become an increasingly crucial task. That's particularly so when you factor in the way our food and energy needs depend upon a ready, reliable supply of water. Michael E. Webber, who teaches at the University of Texas, educates about the ways in which water, food, and energy intersect with each other. At times, the technical details can read as if Webber is writing primarily for hydrologists: *Thirst for Power* could have used another round of editing to keep the salient points in the lay reader's mind. Still, this is an important book for those who simply wonder whether water will keep coming out of the tap.

Much of the answer has to do with how well communities, states, and nations manage the so-called water/food/energy nexus. That nexus is

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Thirst for Power
Energy, Water, and Human Survival
by Michael E. Webber
Yale, 248 pp., \$30



pretty simple to understand, as Webber explains: It takes water to produce energy; energy to produce water; and both water and energy to produce food.

He describes the examples that illustrate the connections: Water, and serious amounts of it, is needed to keep power plants running. Energy, and plenty of it, is needed for desalination plants that cities like San Diego, San Antonio, and El Paso are betting on to turn seawater or brackish water into everyday use. The corn we love to eat requires water to grow, sometimes putting pressure on valuable water sources like the Ogallala Aquifer, which stretches from the Texas Panhandle to South Dakota.

Finding the right policies to sustain this nexus is anything but simple. Webber begins with the battle that Georgia, Tennessee, and Florida have fought

over water in the Southeast: “Drought is only one cause,” he writes in describing the dispute over water supplies. “A rapidly growing population, especially in Atlanta, as well as overdevelopment and a notorious lack of water planning, is running the region’s rivers dry. Production of thirsty energy sources just exacerbates the situation.”

So, what to do? Planning ahead is one of the most important responses, although this doesn’t mean old-time, top-down planning. Rather, smart thinking that relies heavily upon the knowledge and experience that local and state people have with nearby water sources. Texas offers a model of this type of planning. In 1997, Lt. Gov. Bob Bullock (D) got the Texas legislature to pass a water-planning bill with Gov. George W. Bush’s support. Ever since, the state has relied upon local stakeholders—from municipal leaders to agricultural representatives to environmentalists—to craft five-year water plans for their regions.

The bill divided the state into 16 regions, and their citizens are responsible for identifying and prioritizing sources for the next half-century. Texas water officials must approve the plan since some of the water belongs to the state. In some cases, they must mediate disputes. But this is a participatory process, including regular public meetings in local communities.

There is a good argument that Dallas-Fort Worth, now the nation’s fourth-largest metropolitan area, would not have grown so powerfully without local and state leaders planning and funding a series of lakes six decades ago. Let us hope that the current planning model, which includes controversial new lakes, will keep North Texas growing its economy: The last thing the region needs is to become an economic dead zone because of a lack of forethought.

The same is true in other parts of the nation where the smart use of water can help drive and sustain economic growth. “As the building blocks of industrial processes and agricultural production,” Webber writes, “energy and water both foster wealth creation and prosperity.” Fracking techniques that unlock hidden energy reserves are one of the

most important economic forces in the nation. But earthquakes in unexpected places like Oklahoma have shown that energy producers need to find alternative ways to reuse wastewater from those and other wells. Researchers attribute the surprising quakes to the injection back into the earth of the wastewater. If energy producers can take care of this problem, we will continue to benefit from this intersection of water and energy.

There is an important geopolitical element to water as well. Webber does a good job explaining how the commodity can be an empowering force for women and girls in Africa and other developing parts of the world. When they and their communities have access to clean water, women don’t have to spend so much of their day finding water and lugging it back to their villages or homes, where they then must

boil it with dangerous fuels. Instead, they can turn to more productive uses of their time, such as going to school.

The story once was not so different in parts of America before clean water became abundant. Webber reminds us that “the burdened, vulnerable woman in Africa today, struggling to fetch water, is not much different than the burdened, vulnerable woman in the rural United States less than a century ago. Access to water and energy turns the story around.” Water scarcities also underlie tense conflicts in places like the Middle East.

Water has the power to upend, as well as enrich, our lives. Economic growth, the empowerment of women, and political stability are three of the positives. And oh yes—so is being able to simply turn on the tap, which *Thirst for Power* explains is more complicated than you may think. ♦



Open to Belief

The value of faith in the progress of mankind.

BY TATIANA LOZANO

It’s no easy feat to condense the subject of religion, much less comment on its themes, within 256 pages. Similar efforts like Stephen Prothero’s *God Is Not One* and Huston Smith’s *The World’s Religions* have done so at nearly twice the length of *A Little History of Religion*. But Richard Holloway, retired head of the Scottish Episcopal Church, takes the challenge in stride. From Anglicanism to Zoroastrianism, he aims to provide a broad introductory survey while promoting the value of faith. And in a world haunted by secular and religious misapprehension, Holloway certainly has the best of intentions. Yet, for the beginner, does his book actually meet these two goals?

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A Little History of Religion

by Richard Holloway
Yale, 256 pp., \$25

Well, yes and no. On the one hand, he deftly makes his knowledge accessible to the public: Starting with the origins of faith, he uncovers its symbols, its frameworks, and its psychological narratives. Emphasizing themes over chronological order, he covers the next 5,000 years, musing on everything from Krishna and Scientology to violence, authority, and the possible end of religion. In so doing, Holloway vastly improves upon his predecessors. Touching innumerable faiths and denominations, he goes well beyond both Prothero and Smith, including

not only the major religions but also the minor cults of Mithras and Eleusis. Where belief and ritual may be emphasized over history (or vice versa), he attempts to balance all three, covering the good and bad alike. Holloway also engages the reader as narrative intertwines with narrative, all the while grounding the cerebral in ordinary, and sometimes deeply personal, experience. On the other hand, he overlooks key points that could help seekers grasp today's religious landscape. It is nearly impossible, of course, to survey the breadth (or depth!) of thousands of traditions. But although his text tries to maintain a holistic approach, Holloway applies it unevenly from one faith to another. By dividing primarily between East and West, he is forced to leave out substantial segments, such as African traditions, which don't fit within his spectrum. And his overviews of the Indian and Abrahamic religions—as well as more modern faiths—fare better than those of East Asia. For while he covers the various beliefs of Confucianism, Taoism, and Shinto, he overlooks their ritual and customary aspects, summarizing the latter as merely “a love for the spirit of the land.”

These are minor points, however, compared with his underlying approach. While not fully explored until the very end, he asserts that a true appreciation of religion requires three principles: a critical mind, a radical openness, and an acceptance of the unity of all believers. Building upon the parable of the blind men who argue over an elephant without perceiving it in its entirety, he laments that people “confuse what is seen [God] with the one who is doing the seeing.” Denouncing fundamentalism as “a tantrum,” he views it as a rejection of humility and rational progress. And he believes that, without these three principles, such notions prepare the way for violence as people “[hide] God behind the thick fog of [religion's] own cruelty.”

By minimizing theological division, however, Holloway obscures the complex relationship between faith and modernity. While he correctly warns

the reader against blind obedience, he oversimplifies the liberal/fundamentalist divide as one of open-mindedness versus obstinacy. But if truth is timeless, then each religion constitutes a different structure of reality that cannot be easily dismissed in the name of social irrelevance. And this downplays the question of whether the faithful can avoid rigidity without following the elephantine tale to its extreme. As Stephen Prothero has noted, “What we need . . . is a realistic view of where religious rivals clash and where they

can cooperate. . . . Both tolerance and respect are empty virtues until we actually know [what] we are supposed to be tolerating or respecting.”

Richard Holloway has nevertheless done a great service for students of religion. This is no dry textbook: With its conversational prose and density of information, it is a pleasure to read. *A Little History of Religion* may fall short on religious understanding, but the inquirer should use it as a factual resource—a starting point, not the final word. ♦



Philosopher's Guide

The singular importance of Moses Maimonides

to Leo Strauss. BY STEVEN J. LENZNER

Students of Leo Strauss owe a debt of gratitude to Kenneth Hart Green and the University of Chicago Press for this volume.

One might quibble with the subtitle, “The Complete Writings,” as it is not altogether clear what constitutes for Strauss a writing on Maimonides. After all, in 1935 Strauss wrote a letter to Gershom Scholem: “When I have time and strength, I want to write a book on the [*Guide for the Perplexed*], which has been on its way for some 10 years. In the meantime, I am publishing an introduction to the [*Guide*] under the title: ‘Hobbes's Political Science in its Development,’ which should come out with Oxford Press next year.” In any case, this brings all of Strauss's many writings explicitly on Maimonides into a single volume, including a number never before available in English, as well as some interesting and previously unpublished material from the Strauss archives.

Moses Maimonides (ca. 1135-1204)

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Leo Strauss on Maimonides

The Complete Writings
edited by Kenneth Hart Green
Chicago, 696 pp., \$52

is the only author on whom Strauss wrote in each decade of his life: He was the one, above all, to whom Strauss always returned. Moreover, he was the author on whom Strauss wrote most extensively (beating Xenophon by a nose). This fact should give pause to those who believe that Leo Strauss was a “Platonist.” In fact, studying these writings leads the reader to the opinion that, to the extent one can employ such a label for a thinker of Strauss's rank, he was a “Maimonidean.” They would seem to provide copious evidence that Maimonides was the thinker with whom Strauss's thought had the greatest kinship.

In a letter, Strauss once claimed that:

At least in the most important cases, earlier or contemporary, I have always seen that there remained in the text something of the utmost importance which I did not understand, *i.e.*, that my understanding or



Leo Strauss, Moses Maimonides

my interpretation was very incomplete; I would hesitate to say however that no one can complete it or that the finiteness of man as man necessitates the impossibility of adequate or complete or “the true understanding.”

Yet, in 1970, in “A Giving of Accounts,” Strauss said, “One day, when reading in a Latin translation Avicenna’s treatise *On the Division of the Sciences*, I came across this sentence (I quote from memory): the standard work on prophecy and revelation is Plato’s *Laws*. Then I began to begin to understand Maimonides’ prophetology and eventually, as I believe, the whole *Guide of the Perplexed*.” There is no other great work—not Plato’s *Republic* or Machiavelli’s *Prince*—about which Strauss makes a similar claim to understanding it as a whole.

Why was Maimonides of such singular importance to Leo Strauss? Let me note his most important debt: It was in and through his study of (and writing on) the *Guide* that Strauss made his great rediscovery of the art

of exoteric writing, by which philosophers communicate their serious thoughts only to the most intelligent and careful readers. Strauss immediately followed the statement quoted above by noting—with a playful jab at his lifelong friend Jacob Klein—that it was in writing the first of his two great essays on Maimonides that he had fully rediscovered exotericism: “When Klein had read the manuscript of my essay on the literary character of the *Guide of the Perplexed*, he said: ‘We have rediscovered exotericism.’ To this extent we completely agreed.”

But it was not simply the art of writing that Strauss learned from Maimonides. The medieval philosopher also served as Strauss’s chief guide in navigating the problem that the art of writing serves to ameliorate—namely, the theologico-political problem. That problem is a special version of the more general one of the relationship of philosophy to the political community, the “city.” The city demands unquestioning allegiance

to its way of life; philosophy questions everything—not least, the authoritative opinions to which the city demands allegiance. This political problem became the theologico-political problem due to the introduction (as Maimonides notes) of authoritative revealed texts that also demand the unquestioning allegiance of adherents, but in a manner that sets up an additional tension, a third party with pretensions to challenge the claims of both philosophy and city.

So Strauss learned from Maimonides how to navigate a minefield more dense than the one faced by the classical philosophers, albeit with the same end in mind: to promote philosophy while giving political society and revelation their due.

In reading this collection, one is struck by the difference in character between Strauss’s writings before and after his rediscovery of exotericism. Earlier on Strauss is most concerned with Maimonides’s teaching on such grand matters as God, providence,

and prophecy. After the rediscovery, Strauss is, above all, concerned with Maimonides's manner of teaching us how to overcome the authoritative prejudices and opinions that obstruct our access to these questions. It was not indifference to the big questions that induced Strauss to focus primarily on the manner of writing and teaching. It was, rather, a recognition of the fact that, if the teaching is not reached properly, it can never be truly understood. Even if various formulations are correct, they are nothing but doctrine or dogma if the process leading to those insights is short-circuited. So the mature Strauss sought to make it possible for readers to come to understand the questions at hand—especially in his two complementary essays on the *Guide*, “The Literary Character of the *Guide for the Perplexed*” and “How to Begin to Study *The Guide of the Perplexed*.”

The relationship between these two essays is suggested in the very first sentence of the latter: “I believe that it will not be amiss if I simply present the plan of the *Guide* as it has become clear to me in the course of about 25 years of frequently interrupted but never abandoned study.” That quarter-century or so dates back to the composition of “Literary Character” in 1938, so the two studies are, in a sense, one. But when the reader places them side-by-side, one is struck by the realization that the explicit picture of the *Guide* provided by each seems opposed to the other. Yet the differences between these two essays correspond not to a difference in understanding but to a difference in purpose: “Literary Character” is designed to shatter the contemporary complacency that understanding the *Guide* is, essentially, unproblematic. To do this, Strauss went to great lengths to make this enchantingly mysterious book even more mysterious. But it is “How to Begin,” a more difficult and serious essay, that is meant to be the true introduction to the study of the *Guide*.

Leo Strauss on Maimonides, while excellent in general, is marred to some degree by unfortunate editorial decisions. Kenneth Hart Green obtrudes

himself too much in the book, attaching copious notes to nearly every page of the text that amount to a running commentary. He seems to employ this celebration of Strauss's achievement to promote his own understanding of Strauss's Maimonides. (In fact, those who want Green's impressive interpretation can seek it out in his *Leo Strauss and the Rediscovery of Maimonides*.)

Green also alters Strauss's most carefully chosen title—“The Literary Character of the *Guide for the Perplexed*”—to “The Literary Character of *The Guide of the Perplexed*” on the grounds that this better accords with Strauss's mature understanding. But changing Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* to *Measure of Measure* would be no more defensible. Even if it were true that the difference in the articles reflects a maturing of Strauss's

thought, would it not be appropriate for students to be able to observe and ponder the change for themselves?

In fact, the differences between the way Strauss refers to the *Guide* in his two essays is due to their difference in purpose. Green takes a singularity in Strauss's texts—the employment of “The” as part of the *Guide*'s title in “How to Begin to Study *The Guide of the Perplexed*”—and turns it into a commonality; but as Strauss noted in “Literary Character,” the fact (were it fact) that Maimonides employed a title only once would mean that he “attached an extremely high and secret importance to the name.” Something stated just once can be far more important than its endlessly repeated variable. Strauss's singular use of *The Guide* suggests that, for him, it was the guide *par excellence* to the philosophic problems. ♦

BCA

The Masculine Case

A writer's choice of pronouns tells us a lot about him.

BY BARTON SWAIM

Occasionally a younger person will ask me for counsel on getting an essay published. Usually, I have two suggestions.

First, offer to write book reviews instead of freestanding essays; second, once you've finished your piece, obsess over it for hours and hours. Make it as typographically flawless, structurally coherent, and altogether mellifluous as you can make it. What you want to do more than anything else, I say, is to make the editor happy, and the way to do that is to make the job of reading what you've written as easy as possible. At all costs, keep him from having to pause over the text, even for half a second, in order to figure out

what you meant. One pause and you're in trouble; two and you're doomed.

I don't know if these young advice-seekers ever do what I suggest. I doubt it. But I'm finding it harder and harder to follow my own counsel, chiefly owing to the vexing problem of gendered pronouns—whether to refer to indefinite pronouns (“someone,” “anyone”) and generalized nouns (“banker,” “professor”) with masculine pronouns exclusively, masculine and feminine pronouns at the same time (“his or her”), or one and the other at different times.

My general attitude is to wish the whole problem away and just use masculine pronouns. The obsession over gendered pronouns is part of a general tendency in recent decades to treat social and political questions as fundamentally about signs and symbols rather than actual men and women. I do not believe that using “he” or “him” to refer to

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“everyone” or “a writer” or “a physician” in any way implies that men are superior to women, or that the language of power, whatever that is, is somehow intrinsically masculine. I think the whole silly controversy arises from the conflation of reality and signifier.

Those are my views. I don’t apologize for them. But I would be willing to put them to one side, or just forget about them, if there were an easy way to avoid generic masculine pronouns and still make my sentences clip along without giving the reader any trouble. And by “trouble” I mean that brief moment when the reader thinks about the way you’ve written it instead of what you’ve written. This sentence, for example, comes from a recent book about Thomas Jefferson and the ways in which his views changed during his years in France: “The visitor compares the world she knows with the strange new one she encounters, and the comparison brings the known world into view.”

Yes, I want to say to the writer, I know that women, too, have spent time in foreign countries and altered their views as a consequence. But Thomas Jefferson was not a woman, and so the pronouns oblige me to think, however briefly, about the reason for choosing the feminine pronoun rather than the masculine one. It’s that half-second of slight annoyance that a careful writer will labor to avoid giving the reader.

Nor is my problem solved by using the third-person plural pronoun (“Hardly anyone is now prepared to invest their money in our political institutions”). Leaving aside the rightness or wrongness of that usage, and its increasing popularity in American and British English, it’s still not accepted everywhere—it sounds wrong—and if your aim is to please, and not merely to align with prevailing practices, you should avoid it.

I first encountered this convention 25 years ago in a university textbook on state and local politics in America. The author (a woman, if I remember) would use the feminine pronoun when the antecedent was something like “attorney,” “producer,” or “regulator,” whereas most of the masculine pronouns attached to antecedents with

less wholesome associations: “inmate,” “felon,” “vagrant,” and so on. I thought it was a pretty good joke—assuming it was a joke, and assuming that my assessment was more or less accurate. But I don’t want my readers noticing which pronouns I’ve assigned to which antecedents. I want them thinking about the thing I’ve written about.

The generalized noun I’m most likely to use is “politician.” Generally, I dare not use the masculine pronoun—I would rather avoid arguments other than the ones I’m making—and so I’ve had to get round the problem either by writing “his or her,” which to my ear isn’t off-putting when used sparingly, or by pluralizing the noun.

The obsession over gendered pronouns is part of a general tendency in recent decades to treat social and political questions as fundamentally about signs and symbols rather than actual men and women.

Recently, for example, I wrote this sentence: “In the 1990s, when politicians wanted to preempt criticism of a bill or proposal, they would say it was about ‘education.’” My inclination was to write of a single, theoretical politician and rely on the masculine pronoun: “In the 1990s, when a politician wanted to preempt criticism of a bill or proposal, he would say it was about ‘education.’” The latter sounds better to my ear, but I’m happy enough with the former.

I wonder why Gary Saul Morson, in a brilliant essay in *Commentary* last year, didn’t use the same trick: “Readers who mistake theater for reality are vanishingly rare,” he wrote, “but almost every reader spends time wondering what she would do if she were to find herself in the same fix as the characters

she is reading about.” Morson could have stayed with the plural “readers” (“almost all readers” instead of “almost every reader”) and so spared us the implicit and vaguely dissonant insistence that women are readers, too.

Once, though, I did use the masculine pronoun, and the subject was American politicians’ habit of saying they’ve held their views “from the beginning” or “since day one.” I asked:

When was day one? Maybe it was the first day of that politician’s term in office, or maybe it was the day he announced his candidacy, or maybe it was just a long time ago.

I thought I could get away with it. I reasoned that I could, theoretically, have been alternating between masculine and feminine pronouns, only I didn’t need another such pronoun and so didn’t use the feminine one. But two or three sharp-eyed readers weren’t buying it: They sent emails asking how it was that the paper failed to catch this lapse into (as one of them put it) “patriarchal grammar.”

I wonder, though, if the insistence on feminine pronouns at least half the time doesn’t have the opposite effect from the one intended. This sentence appeared in an essay published by the Brookings Institute some months ago:

Though a candidate funded by small donors may be less accountable to a high roller like Sheldon Adelson or Tom Steyer, she is also less accountable to a leader like John Boehner, which right now is the more pressing problem.

So that’s three flesh-and-blood men, two wealthy “high rollers” and one high-level politician, versus one theoretical woman, a mere “candidate.” A sentence like that, in addition to tripping readers up with the “she”—*wait, did I miss someone? Oh, I see*—doesn’t so much encourage sexual equality as mock it.

And so back to my younger friends asking for advice on submitting reviews and essays to magazines. Shouldn’t they worry about irritating editors of a more aggressively egalitarian outlook? Maybe. But I would still go with the quiet, unobtrusive masculine, just as I did in the second paragraph. Maybe you didn’t notice. ♦

Kind of a Drag

The Affleck Affect is getting habitual.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

Imagine for a moment that Arnold Schwarzenegger's agent received a script called *The Accountant* in 1992 because its producer and director hoped against hope he would star in it. In this film, Schwarzenegger would play an emotionless genius who cooks the books for evil governments and crime syndicates, having been trained to do so by a military-man father who recognized his son would have a tough time of it in the ordinary world.

The plot would be full of twists and turns, as Schwarzenegger would take on a legitimate job examining the accounts of a robotics company and discover financial malfeasance that places a pretty young accountant in jeopardy and brings him face-to-face with the only person he still loves.

"Wait," Arnold's agent would say. "Sure, it's not a bad script, this thing by Bill Dubuque. I mean, it's not in the least believable, but neither were *Commando* or *Predator*. And the director, Gavin O'Connor, has made a few good movies in the past. But this accountant part: Where's the fun in it? So he's supposed to have autism, like *Rain Man*, but at least *Rain Man* watched Judge Wapner on *The People's Court* and counted toothpicks on the floor. This guy blows on his fingers. Yeah, that's an exciting bit of business.

"I mean, if Arnold is going to play an accountant who kills people, shouldn't he at least get a few zingers? You know, like he faces down a bad guy and says, 'Carry *this* forward' before he shoots the guy in the head. Or when he's double-crossed by a client, he mows him down with a machine

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

The Accountant
Directed by Gavin O'Connor



Ben Affleck

gun and then when the client is dead, he says, 'Consider that an audit.' Or when a hit man tries to get a drop on him, he throws the guy into the Grand Canyon and says, 'That's what I call a deduction.'

"Also, what's with the character's name? Christian Wolff? Yeah, I know it's an alias the character uses, the name of a famous mathematician. But he's an accountant. His name should be Morris Fishbein. Arnold Schwarzenegger playing Morris Fishbein—see, that's fun! Gimme some fun, for Chrissake!"

The Accountant just came out. It stars Ben Affleck in the duller performance he's given since he was Batman in *Batman v. Superman*. What?

Batman v. Superman only came out six months ago? Yes, we're talking about two of the duller performances ever in the same year. It's as if Martin O'Malley had run for president twice. And I like Affleck, who's proven himself a far more interesting performer in the past (in movies like *Chasing Amy* and *Changing Lanes*) than he's allowed himself to be for years. Here, playing someone with Asperger's, he doesn't look people in the eye and acts awkwardly; every acting choice he makes is the most obvious and the least unexpected he can muster.

There's a stark contrast here between Affleck's lifelessness and the electric charge produced every time a little-known actor named Jon Bernthal is on screen. Bernthal plays another figure in the shadowy world of international espionage inhabited by *The Accountant*; his connection to Affleck is almost instantly apparent to any half-observant viewer. The revelation of the connection at the movie's climax is treated, hilariously, as though it were the moment in *Fight Club* when we discover Ed Norton and Brad Pitt are the same person. Bernthal is smooth-talking and funny and menacing, and he's such a pleasure to watch (along with the ever-thrilling J.K. Simmons) that it's a total drag whenever the action turns back to Affleck.

Arnold Schwarzenegger became an onscreen quipster of violence precisely because he couldn't act, and because he was so inherently ludicrous as a physical human object that he was already half-cartoon. He was letting us know he was in on the joke.

Affleck takes his job here so seriously that he doesn't know a movie about an accountant who is also an international man of intrigue and can shoot like the terrorist in *Day of the Jackal*, kill people with a single kick, and take out 10 members of the Gambino crime family in a matter of seconds is a preposterous contrivance. When you don't laugh with the audience, the audience laughs at you, which is what happens at the end of *The Accountant*.

Consider this review an audit. ♦

“On Tuesday, Ecuador’s Foreign Ministry confirmed that it was giving [Julian] Assange the equivalent of a timeout by cutting off his Web access. The release by WikiLeaks of Hillary Clinton staffers’ hacked emails was having a ‘major impact’ on the U.S. presidential race, the ministry said in a statement.”

—Washington Post, October 19, 2016

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After one-week ban, Assange back on World Wide Web

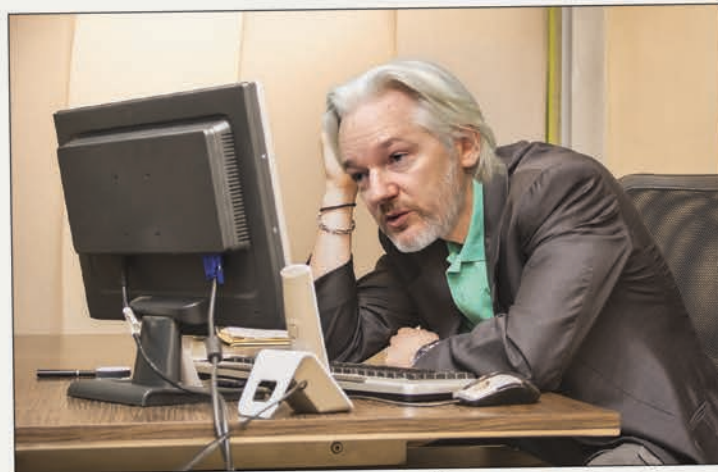
YOU’VE GOT MAIL

Ecuador grants hacker access to dial-up modem, WebCrawler

BY FRANK NAVASKY

LONDON — WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange told reporters to brace for another massive document dump from the Clinton campaign and that there are multiple bombshells among the thousands of pages of unearthed emails. Unfortunately for him, it’s taking approximately 15 minutes to upload each email onto the WikiLeaks site. “At the current rate of 48 kilobits per second,” said Assange, “half the emails should be available by November 13.”

Last week the government of Ecuador denied Internet access to Assange, who is living in asylum at the country’s embassy in London. According to an official statement by the foreign ministry, “The government of Ecuador refuses to be implicated in a plot to throw an election, unless,



ASSANGE, CANCELLERIA DEL ECUADOR; BACKGROUND, BIGSTOCKPHOTO

Julian Assange waits for an email message to upload in the Ecuadorian embassy in London.

of course, that election is in our own country.” But after a few days, Ecuadorian president Rafael Correa expressed leniency and allowed for limited use of a computer and some access to the Internet. “After all,” said Correa, “we are not savages.”

As part of the compromise, Assange can now make use of a dial-up modem (donated by a village outside of Quito), an AOL account, and even a search engine: Lycos, AltaVista, or WebCrawler. If the

hacker behaves, the Ecuadorian government said it will consider an upgrade to EarthLink or even Excite@Home.

Meanwhile, waiting for the pages to upload, Assange said he’s been passing the time by playing *Ultima IV: Quest of the Avatar*. “I’ll rescue you, Lord British!” said Assange, who was thrilled to find a working Commodore

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OCTOBER 31, 2016