

**TRUMP  
AND 2018  
FRED BARNES**

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# IT'S MUELLER TIME

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& JENNA LIFHITS**

**WILLIAM KRISTOL**

**THE EDITORS**

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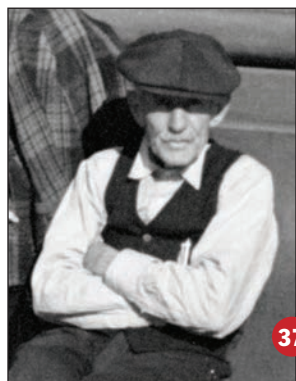
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# Whatever You Do, Don't Say The S-Word

How did Venezuela go from Latin America's richest economy to an impoverished basket case where food is so hard to come by that the average citizen has lost some 20 pounds? The answer would seem to be obvious—so obvious that it could be captured in a single word. But THE SCRAPBOOK gets ahead of itself. For this is a story not about a single word, but about its absence.

The *New York Times* took on, this month, the question of Venezuela's ruin. It was a very serious, erudite piece, more than 1,800 words, with no shortage of quotations from Ivy League professors of political science.

Much of the analysis was put in terms that might seem to describe a certain president of a country that will go unmentioned. Venezuela had suffered a "collapse into authoritarianism." The strongman Hugo Chávez "ran for president in 1998. His populist message of returning power to the people won him victory." Chávez polarized because "populism describes a world divided between the righteous people and the corrupt elite." Now, under the late Chávez's successor, Nicolás Maduro, "The political system, after years of erosion, has become a hybrid of democratic and authoritarian features."

THE SCRAPBOOK gets it: Venezuela was brought down by a toxic mix of democratic populism and authoritarianism. One wonders, is it meant to sound familiar? Are we supposed to look at Venezuela and see it as a cautionary tale of what could happen here?

For all his faults, Trump is no Chávez, and the polarization in U.S. society is nothing compared to the street

making basic goods unaffordable, he instituted price controls and fixed the currency exchange rate.

This made many imports prohibitively expensive. Businesses shut down. Mr. Maduro printed more money, and inflation grew again. Food became scarce. Unrest deepened, and Mr. Maduro's survival grew more contingent on handouts he could not afford.

This cycle destroyed Venezuela's economy.



Caracas: 'Chavismo means starvation.' So who's to blame? Those nasty populists!

Quite right—that's exactly what so often happens under governments that practice socialism. And that, of course, is the magic word—"socialism"—that answers the question of how Venezuela was brought so low. And yet somehow, that term never appears in nearly 2,000 words of careful *New York Times* explanation of the Venezuelan crisis. Nor "socialist," either. We hear a lot about the ravages of "populism," but Chávez didn't lead the Venezuelan Populist Party, he was the head of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela—the party under whose banner Maduro is currently starving his country's people.

After a decade and a half of socialist rule, Venezuela is collapsing. Why is it so hard for the *New York Times* to admit that socialism just might have something to do with it? ♦

battles in Caracas. Americans, it has been noticed, are well-fed. No, there is something else going on that explains what's wrong with Venezuela, and that something is described clearly and well in the *New York Times* article. The authors explain Maduro's predicament:

Unable to pay for subsidies and welfare programs, he printed more money. When this drove up inflation,

## Protests Get Results

Here's the latest academic news: It turns out that letting left-wing protesters run roughshod over your campus is bad for business.

You might recall the protests at the University of Missouri two years ago. Initially about how Black Lives Matter, soon they were about college-worker benefits and everything else under the sun. They lasted for months—there were hunger strikes, the football team launched a boycott, and a professor was caught on video encouraging violence. The chancellor of Mizzou



Would the last Tigers fan turn out the lights?

resigned, as did the president of the whole University of Missouri system. Spike Lee made a film about it.

Not all publicity is good publicity, it seems. Last May, Mizzou suffered a staggering enrollment drop of 1,500 students for the current year; the school closed four dorms as a result. That was a year ago, and it turns out things have only gotten worse. "For the school year that ended last week, enrollment at MU was 33,266, down 6.1 percent from the previous year's record," reports the *Columbia Tribune*. "If [interim chancellor Garnett] Stokes' projection of a 7.4 percent decline is accurate, enrollment in the fall will be about 30,800, the lowest in nine years." And it looks like

TOP: NEWS/COM; BELOW: TWS PHOTO ILLUSTRATION, KEITH ALLISON (STANDS)

future enrollment could dwindle even further: MU is expecting its smallest freshman class in two decades.

The school is cutting \$55 million out of its budget to make up for the tuition shortfall and it hopes to close its fiscal gap by increasing the cost of tuition. We'd explain what that's likely to do to enrollment numbers, but most universities stopped acknowledging, much less teaching, basic economics years ago. Local landlords, however, appear to be more familiar with the basic functioning of markets: The *Columbia Tribune* reports property managers are offering \$1,000 gift cards and major rent reductions to attract tenants from among the shrinking student population.

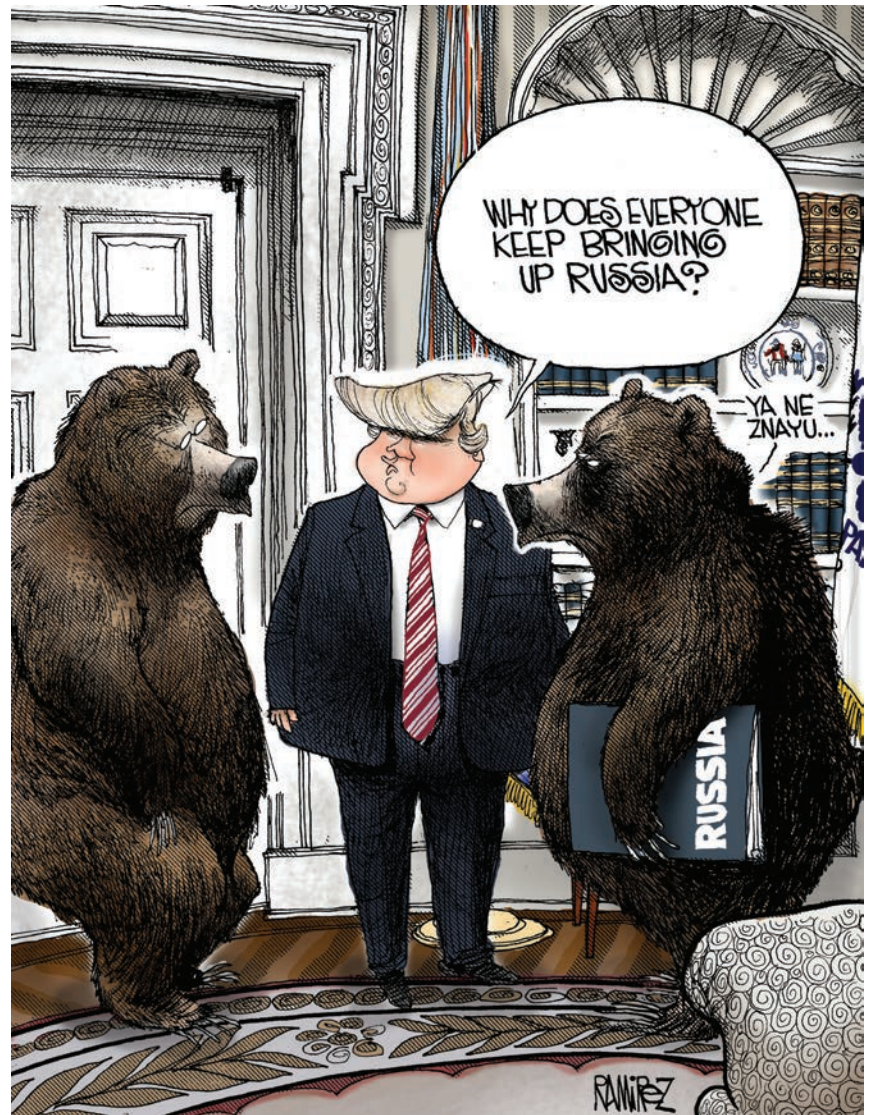
You'll remember that the protests were in part about campus worker benefits. Fat lot of good that did: The cuts made necessary by the unrest mean the university will be laying-off 400 employees. Not that it means much. Like most big public universities, MU suffers from administrative bloat: Currently, there are over 13,000 full-time MU employees, or 1 for every 2.4 students next fall. If would-be students continue to stay away in droves, that ratio may get smaller still. ♦

## Dearly Beloved

Rare is the reporter, it seems, who lets go by an opportunity to praise Britain's system of socialized medicine. And a perfect opportunity presented itself this month when the "WannaCry" computer virus seized networks worldwide.

The first wave of infections hit systems in Europe. For example, arrival and departure boards at train stations in Germany were taken over by a message demanding ransom payment in bitcoin. Also affected were Spain's Telefónica and France's Renault.

When it came to labeling these various European institutions, the *Washington Post* was plainly descriptive: Deutsche Bahn is "Germany's national railway service," Telefónica is "the Spanish telecom giant," and Renault is "the French carmaker."



But when it came to putting a label on the U.K.'s health care bureaucracy, the *Post* had a different sort of description altogether, writing that the computer virus "hit Britain's beloved but creaky National Health Service particularly hard." *Beloved but creaky*—it's not necessarily an inaccurate description, but it is clearly a normative one.

The *Post* didn't feel the need to include any information on customer attitudes toward German trains, Spanish phones, or French autos, but the paper just had to put in the assertion that the NHS is "beloved." (This, though in the British press, whenever there's a reference to the health sys-

tem being "beloved" or "cherished" or "treasured," it is usually followed by a painful story about patients stacked like so much cordwood as they wait for care—thus the *creaky* qualifier.)

Over at National Public Radio the praise for the NHS had no qualifier. This is how reporter Frank Langfitt began his story on *All Things Considered*: "The ransomware attack struck more than 30 facilities in England's vaunted National Health Service." *Vaunted*: What, one might ask, is that editorial stamp of approval doing at the top of a news item? THE SCRAPBOOK suspects the editors at NPR would have ixnayed any similar bit of reportorial opinionating if the opinion



*Beloved but creaky*

about the NHS had been a negative one. (Though we guess Langfitt might just have gotten away with “creaky” as long as he was sure to preface that critique with “beloved.”)

Why the gratuitous endorsement? Could it be that reporters find ways to sneak in praise for the NHS because it’s the sort of single-payer health care system they’ve long believed the United States should adopt?

Or maybe NPR’s Langfitt was being subversive. “Vaunted,” after all, doesn’t just mean “celebrated,” let alone anything like “excellent.” It is the adjectival form of the verb “to vaunt,” meaning to boast or brag. One could argue that to say something is “vaunted,” strictly speaking, means that it is overpraised. So, National Public Radio was right after all, if inadvertently.

Oh, sorry, we should have said “the *vaunted* National Public Radio.” ♦

## Schedule I Sunscreen

Leave it to the nanny state to put the “block” in “sunblock.” Multiple state governments are pursuing bills to let schoolkids apply their SPF-50 without first asking for permission or acquiring a doctor’s note. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, California, New York, Oregon, and Texas have already passed laws allowing students to bring sunscreen to school and use it. Ten other states have their own measures in the works.

It seems silly that legislatures would need to rock the Banana Boat like this in the first place. But the Food and Drug Administration classifies sunscreen as an over-the-coun-

ter medicine, which apparently has put it in a strange regulatory limbo. How, exactly? Does sunblock’s OTC designation require public schools in 50 states to abide by a certain mandate? Or do some states interpret that classification as a reason to send students to the nurse’s office for fevers and sunburn prevention alike? THE SCRAPBOOK asked Doug Farquhar of the National Council of State Legislatures, who was quoted in the *Journal* story, for his take. He said he had the same questions and asked the FDA. So did we. There was no response as of press time.

There’s irony in how the same agency that urges sunscreen use is unwittingly responsible for restricting it. “Spending time in the sun increases the risk of skin cancer and early skin aging,” reads the warning at FDA.gov. “To reduce this risk, consumers should regularly use sun protection.” But according to consumer data cited by the FDA, “On average, only



*An FDA image promoting sunscreen use*

10 percent of high school students used sunscreens ‘most of the time’ or ‘always.’” This is not to say scores of kids are being denied sunblock on the playground. But the states’ status quo reading of federal regs can’t help.

That may not be such a problem in, say, Minnesota, but what about places where a blazing sun is a constant? Heather Carter is a member of the Arizona state house, where she introduced legislation making it clear kids can carry sunscreen. “It’s crazy,” she told the *Arizona Republic*. “We’re in Arizona.” ♦

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## First Taste of Japan

The 19th-century Irish-American vagabond and travel writer Lafcadio Hearn opened the first of his many books on Japan by quoting an English professor whom he met in his first days there. “Do not fail to write down your first impressions as soon as possible,” the old scholar said. “They are evanescent, you know; they will never come to you again once they have faded out; and yet of all the strange sensations you may receive in this country you will feel none so charming as these.”

I have been walking around Tokyo for days now with Hearn’s book *Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan* (1894) in my pocket. It may seem like a foolish choice. Why settle for “glimpses” from a fellow who admits to knowing the country only superficially, when there are plenty of people who can offer expertise with a capital E? That would include Hearn himself, who settled, married, and lived till his death in Japan. And yet, the critic Donald Richie notes, it is his very first writings, from when he knew least about the country, that have always been his most popular.

Edith Wharton actively distrusted expertise. She could have been thinking about Hearn when she wrote, in *French Ways and Their Meaning* (1919), “There are two ways of judging a foreign people: at first sight, impressionistically, in the manner of the passing traveller; or after residence among them, ‘soberly, advisedly.’ . . . Of the two ways, the first is, even in ordinary times, often the most fruitful. The observer, if he has eyes and an imagination, will be struck first by the superficial dissemblances, and they will give his picture the sharp suggestiveness of a good caricature. If he settles down among the objects of his

study . . . he will waver between contradictions, and his sharp outlines will become blurred with what the painters call ‘repentances.’”

Good for her. But I always want to get to the bottom of things. Staying in a hotel that offers four different restaurants, I chose the “classic” Japanese one for my first breakfast. I had woken up fresh as a daisy. In a convenience store the night before I had tried to buy sparkling water and figured out which of the nearly identical plastic



bottles with kitty-cats and squirrels contained it. I had learned the Japanese word for thank you. I had taken a walk in the 400-year-old Japanese garden next door and marveled at the carp pond, which was so well stocked I assumed they must practice catch-and-release here. I was ready to continue blazing a path as a savvy traveler. No International Omelette Bar for me!

A woman in a kimono nodded to me as I entered and said something. I repeated it back to her. I hope it was “Good morning” and not “Hello, sir.” She walked me through the restaurant, which was packed with Japanese businessmen in suits and ties and older Japanese couples, and sat me at a table

in the far back corner of the restaurant, facing the wall, where I was invisible to other diners.

Probably in Japan they consider the back corner in the annex the place of honor, but to me it was terribly unfortunate. Because when my Shogunate Sampler arrived, the waitress forgot to bring the instructions. There was some hot water in a cereal bowl, another empty bowl, a stack of dry seaweed, some pebbly looking paste in various pastel colors, and a pile of teensy-weensy high-viz-orange fishes which didn’t appear to be moving but didn’t appear to be cooked either, a seaweed called “black algae,” a sauce that consisted of black algae chopped into a viscous fluid, a ramekin full of stuff that looked like Greek yogurt but which, when you dug into it, turned out to be warm tofu juice, a slice of gelatinized fish cube, and some long-stemmed mini-mushrooms in another bowl of water. I could go on. The breakfast was in about 40 pieces.

What was I supposed to do? Was I supposed to put the seaweed on the gelatinized fish cube? Pour the tofu juice onto the tiny mushrooms? Squash the tiny fishes into the paste pebble? My back was to the restaurant. I couldn’t just wait the Japanese out and watch what they did.

I came up with a rule: If it was on a plate I’d eat it, and if it was in a glass or cup I’d drink it.

I finished my breakfast with a frothy warm white drink in a glass that I quite liked. As I left, I told the hostess so and asked her what you called that drink. She put her hand over her mouth as if to stop herself from bursting out laughing.

“It is a drink, isn’t it?” I asked.

“You can drink if you like!” she nodded reassuringly before frowning a bit and adding in the tone of one offering tips: “But Japanese eat on rice. It is a whipped yam.”

CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL

# Let the Investigation Begin

This week Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein appointed a special counsel to investigate Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. election. It was an important move, and one that President Donald Trump made unavoidable with his erratic and irresponsible behavior over the past fortnight.

It all began on May 9 when Trump fired FBI director James Comey. For two days, the White House misled the American public about how and why this dismissal took place. The White House emphasized Comey's handling of the probe into Hillary Clinton's email server, which Rosenstein had reviewed and criticized in a memorandum for his boss, Attorney General Jeff Sessions. The attorney general, in turn, had recommended a change of leadership at the FBI. President Trump, his spokespeople insisted, was simply implementing this recommendation.

White House officials were working hard to create the impression that the decision to fire Comey had originated somewhere other than in the Oval Office. But the claim was false. The president had asked that the case against Comey be constructed to justify a decision he'd already made. Rosenstein later told the Senate that he'd known Comey would be fired even before he drafted his memorandum. In an interview with NBC News's Lester Holt on May 11, Trump acknowledged that the decision to fire Comey was his alone and one he was going to make without regard to what Rosenstein and Sessions recommended. "I was going to fire Comey," he said. "My decision."

On May 12, Trump threatened the ex-FBI director on Twitter: "James Comey better hope that there are no 'tapes' of our conversations before he starts leaking to the press!" With Trump, there's always the temptation to dismiss such outbursts as adolescent bluster. But he has a long history of surreptitious taping in his business career, and White House spokesman Sean Spicer refused to deny that Trump was recording Oval Office conversations when asked repeatedly about the possibility.

On May 15, the *Washington Post* reported that Trump

had disclosed highly classified information in an Oval Office meeting with Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov and the Russian ambassador to the United States, Sergey Kislyak. The intelligence, related to the threat of ISIS-engineered explosives concealed in laptop computers, came from an ally and was allegedly shared without its permission. The White House at first categorically denied the claims, calling the story "as reported . . . false." But in public comments over the next 48 hours, officials confirmed many of the details.

On May 16, the *New York Times* reported that Comey had written official memos about each of his interactions with Trump. In one of them, describing a meeting with Trump in the Oval Office on February 14, Comey claims

that Trump asked him to end the FBI's investigation of former national security adviser Michael Flynn. "I hope you can let this go," Trump told Comey. The White House has denied that this happened.

The next day, Rosenstein named former FBI director Robert Mueller special counsel for the investigation of "the Russian government's efforts to interfere in the 2016 election." The order allows Mueller to investigate "any links and/or coordination between the Russian government and

individuals associated with the campaign of President Donald Trump; and any matters that arose or may arise directly from the investigation."

The White House initially welcomed the news. "As I have stated many times," the president said in a press release, "a thorough investigation will confirm what we already know—there was no collusion between my campaign and any foreign entity. I look forward to this matter concluding quickly." But by early Thursday morning, May 18, the worm had turned and Trump had taken to Twitter: "With all of the illegal acts that took place in the Clinton campaign & Obama Administration, there was never a special counsel [sic] appointed!" And "This is the single greatest witch hunt of a politician in American history!"

What to make of all this? There certainly is plenty to



Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov and ambassador Sergey Kislyak meet with Donald Trump.

investigate. And the question of who should properly do the investigating is a knotty one, admitting of no simple answer. The liabilities of special prosecutors are well known and have been articulated in these pages on several occasions over the last two decades: Such investigations can spin out of control; prosecutors can feel undue pressure to seek scalps, so as to justify work that has stretched out for months or years; and so on.

That said, there is little evidence that the current appointment was ill-motivated. The decision was in the hands of Rosenstein, a Trump appointee, because Attorney General Jeff Sessions had previously recused himself in matters related to the FBI's Russia investigation after it was discovered he'd testified falsely—he says accidentally—that he had had no contact with Russian government officials during the campaign. Sessions had in fact hosted Kislyak in his Capitol Hill office in September.

While Sessions's failure to disclose an official meeting when asked about his contacts with Russians raised eyebrows, nobody thinks it is evidence that he is a secret Putin stooge. But many others in Trump's coterie of advisers have had significant dealings with Russia, relationships likely to be at the center of Mueller's probe.

Paul Manafort, who served for a time last summer as chairman of the Trump campaign, has longstanding connections to Vladimir Putin's allies. After stints advising dictators in the Philippines and Zaire, the political consultant began working for Ukrainian prime minister Viktor Yanukovich in 2005, helping restore his pro-Putin party to power in 2010. In 2006, Manafort also took on Russian aluminum billionaire Oleg Deripaska as a client—signing, according to the Associated Press, a \$10-million-per-year contract with Deripaska to “advance Putin's interests.” Manafort and Deripaska (who is suing the AP for libel) both deny the allegations. Manafort came aboard team Trump in May 2016, offering to work for free. In August, the *New York Times* published findings from a “secret ledger” showing \$12.7 million in off-the-books cash payments to Manafort from Yanukovich's party. Five days later, he resigned from the Trump campaign.

Manafort's former business partner and longtime Trump adviser Roger Stone predicted WikiLeaks' disclosure of Hillary Clinton campaign manager John Podesta's emails, said to have been procured by a Russian hack. In August, Stone tweeted, “Trust me, it will soon [be] Podesta's time in the barrel.” WikiLeaks released Podesta's emails in October. Stone claims he enjoyed “back-channel communications” with WikiLeaks leader Julian Assange through a “very good mutual friend.”

Trump's former national security adviser Michael Flynn was fired from the administration after 24 days for falsely characterizing calls he made to Kislyak after the election in November. In their increasingly frequent exchanges after Trump won the election, Flynn reportedly discussed setting up a backchannel for communica-

tion between Putin and Trump—a way for the two world leaders to forge diplomatic relations out of view of national security bureaucrats, whom Trump and Flynn believe are meddlesome and vindictive. Among other matters under federal scrutiny, the Pentagon is investigating the retired general's failure to obtain approval for a paid public appearance in Moscow, alongside Putin, at an anniversary party for the Russian propaganda network Russia Today in December 2015. Flynn has offered to testify to the FBI and to House and Senate investigators, but only in exchange for immunity from prosecution.

Carter Page, a foreign policy adviser for the Trump campaign, is currently under FBI investigation for his ties to Russia—and has been for the better part of a year. He worked in Merrill Lynch's Moscow office and advised Russian oil companies before the Trump campaign brought him on in March 2016. On a trip to Moscow last summer, while he was working for the Trump campaign, Page gave a speech critical of the U.S. sanctions imposed after Russian aggression in Crimea and Ukraine. By September, Page had left the campaign amid allegations that he was in contact with high-ranking Russians while working to elect Donald Trump.

Trump defenders are fond of saying there's no hard evidence of collusion between Trump associates and the Russian government. Fair enough. But Trump's first national security adviser resigned because of misleading claims he made in relation to his contacts with a Russian official. Trump's campaign chairman resigned amid questions about his work for pro-Putin politicians and entities. And a foreign policy adviser quit after questions about his continuing contact with Russians. Justifiably or not, such a string of coincidences raises suspicions. The president himself will benefit enormously if an investigation widely seen as thorough, professional, impartial, and independent dispels them.

In naming Mueller as special counsel, Rosenstein cautioned against assuming that laws have been broken and prosecutions are inevitable. It's good advice. There is no reason to assume that this will be a witch hunt.

As Michael Warren and Jenna Lifhits report elsewhere in this issue, Robert Mueller is a man of integrity. Nothing in his record suggests the investigation he conducts will be anything other than serious and thorough, driven by facts and evidence. Such an investigation, we need hardly add, would stand in dramatic and welcome contrast to the partisan sniping and half-truths that have dominated the discourse in Washington over the past six months. Only those who thrive on ideological warfare would be disappointed.

The White House's initial reaction—to welcome a chance to lay suspicions to rest—is one no doubt shared by millions of Americans. We share it ourselves. We welcome the investigation.

—The Editors

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# Our Trump Problem

The fish, as they say, rots from the head first. And Donald J. Trump is the head of the executive branch. It's not that the U.S. government isn't beset by innumerable problems and systemic dysfunction. But in the here and now, Donald Trump is the problem. The president is the dysfunction.

And so, in the midst of the fevered speculation about the meaning and implications of what is happening in the capital of one of the greatest and most powerful nations in the history of the world, let's not lose focus. Yes, it has been an amazing week of news: the firing of FBI director James Comey; the revelation of Trump's one-on-one meeting with him two months before; the reports of sensitive intelligence being shared by the president in his meeting with the Russian foreign minister; the appointment of Robert Mueller as special counsel; the questions about what everyone from the president on down knew about Michael Flynn's work for Turkey and when they knew it; and the constant speculation about a major shakeup of the White House staff. But at the center of all this news is one cause, one newsmaker: Donald Trump.



And so while there are many questions facing the nation that deserve investigation, and many problems besetting us that need to be dealt with as best we can, the question underlying all the other questions is the question of Donald Trump.

It is increasingly difficult for those who have eyes to see to escape the conclusion—one to which we have been inclined since the beginning—that it would have been better if Trump had not become our president and that it would be better now if his service in the office were as brief as possible. But impeachment is a lengthy process and requires a factual record to justify conviction that may or may not present itself. Resignation from the presidency is unusual. And section four of the 25th Amendment, which establishes procedures for declaring the president “unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office,” has never been invoked.

So we have to deal with two facts: that Donald Trump is who he is and that he is our president. Coming to grips with this reality will require an awful lot more leadership than we

have seen so far from Republicans on the Hill, an awful lot more responsibility in opposition than we have seen from Democrats, an awful lot more clarity and courage than we have seen from the most prominent conservatives, an awful lot more care and fidelity to facts than we have seen from the media, and an awful lot more thoughtfulness and consideration of their duty to the public and the country than we have seen from those serving in the Trump administration.

The prerequisite to behavior worthy of the citizens and officials of a self-governing people is being sincere and candid about the situation we face. That situation will be perilous as long as Donald Trump remains in office. Until he departs—whether that's in four years or four months—America expects all of us, in our varied positions with our differing responsibilities and to the best of our judgment and abilities, to do our duty.

—William Kristol

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## Scouts' Honor

Like millions of American men, I spent a good number of weeknights in my youth donning a goofy uniform and heading off to church. The meetings all began the same way—we would rise from our folding chairs, make an odd gesture with our hands, and say, “On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country and to obey the Scout Law; to help other people at all times; to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight.”

The decision this spring of the Mormon church to pull 185,000 older teens out of the Boy Scouts suggests that this quintessential American rite of passage has a very uncertain future. Anyone familiar with the Mormon church and the Boy Scouts will know how unthinkable this move would have been even a few years ago. The Boy Scouts have been a central part of the church's youth program for 104 years. Thomas S. Monson, president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) has been on the Boy Scouts of America executive board for 47 years. There are about 2.4 million Boy Scouts in this country; one out of every five belongs to a Mormon-sponsored troop.

The LDS church hasn't been too specific about the reasons for the split, but they are obvious enough. The Boy Scouts of America have been buffeted by the same cultural revolution as the rest of the country. Two years ago, the BSA's ban on homosexual leaders and employees was rescinded. In January of this year, the BSA opened boys-only troops to “transgender boys”—i.e., children born female who now “identify” as boys.

So it's no coincidence that the church is being attacked by the Human Rights Campaign and other gay rights groups for the move to pull its teens out of the Boy Scouts.

DAVE MALAN

Never mind that the Mormon church displayed an initial willingness to accommodate working with gay scoutmasters, provided they were allowed to continue choosing their own leaders for the troops they sponsor.

In this time of cultural turmoil, it's often noted that Mormons are one of the stronger civic and religious groups remaining in a country that's coming apart. The church is developing its own youth program for boys to replace scouting, and it will no doubt be successful internally. Given cultural trends and the withdrawal of easily the largest supporter of the organization, financially and otherwise, the real question is whether the Boy Scouts as we have known them will continue to exist in a generation or two. The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod severed its ties with scouting in 2015, and Franklin Graham, the influential evangelical pastor, reacted to the news of the Mormon decision by writing that "all churches" should "pull out of the Boy Scouts organization completely."

It's easy to take for granted the existence of an institution like the Boy Scouts, a venerable, hugely successful, voluntary social program whose benefits can reach far beyond the obvious opportunities to acquire friendships and skills

and participate in camping trips and the like. Looking back now at my own boyhood experience in a rural Oregon troop, what I recall is how my father and other Mormon church elders were always swinging by the trailer parks and homes to pick up fatherless boys whose only examples of competent adult male leadership and attention came from scouting.

It's facile to say that groups like the Boy Scouts simply must accommodate the latest cultural imperative. The future of the Boy Scouts, and that of the country, depends on the cultivation of decent and hardworking men—that, too, is a cultural imperative.

The country is currently facing a crisis of manhood—some seven million working-age men have inexplicably dropped out of the labor force, and nearly half of those are daily drug users. There are a lot of reasons for this depressing state of affairs, and no one has all the answers. But strong civic institutions are one answer. Unfortunately they cannot simply be willed into existence. All the more reason, then, to cherish the ones that we have. Not enough boys are growing up surrounded by men who take the time to instruct them in how to be "physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight."

—Mark Hemingway



## Little-Known Law Makes a Big Difference

**THOMAS J. DONOHUE**  
PRESIDENT AND CEO  
U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Congressional Review Act (CRA) was passed in 1996 to give Congress the right to review and rescind regulations, yet it was only used once in its first 20 years. Since January, it has been one of the most effective weapons of our new government, allowing Congress to reverse 14 midnight regulations passed in the waning days of the Obama administration. With the window for CRA action on Obama-era rules now closed, we should look back on the strides made and gear up for the next phase in the regulatory reform fight.

Leaders in Congress and the administration deserve great credit for acting with urgency to provide some needed regulatory relief using the CRA. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce worked closely with them to advocate for the repeal of a variety of harmful and costly regulations.

One example was the Stream Protection Rule, which would have threatened more than 100,000 jobs by placing unnecessary burdens and restrictions on coal. The CRA also stopped a rule that would have shifted control of federal lands away from local powers and into the hands of Washington bureaucrats.

At the urging of the Chamber, Congress also rescinded the Federal Contracts Blacklisting Rule, a devastating regulation that would have forced federal contractors to disclose mere allegations of labor violations. This would have blocked them from federal contracts before they could even exercise their legal right to challenge the charges.

In addition, the Chamber supported the repeal of rules that would have hurt consumers and small businesses in the digital economy, jeopardized the retirement savings of hardworking Americans, and disadvantaged U.S. businesses through costly disclosure requirements.

These are only a few of the victories

achieved through the CRA this year. But even with this progress, the regulatory system still needs a lot of work—not just relief from existing regulations but also an overhaul of the process for writing new ones. That's why the Chamber is helping lead the charge for the Regulatory Accountability Act (RAA), which passed the House and is moving in the Senate. It would require cost-benefit analysis and transparency for new regulations and would represent the first major reform of the system since the Truman administration.

We've got a long road ahead to bring some sanity and relief to the regulatory process. But with the CRA, we're off to a strong start. American businesses would have faced the prospect of billions of additional dollars in compliance costs and millions of hours of paperwork had it not been for the historic and unprecedented use of this critical law.



Learn more at  
[uschamber.com/abovethefold](http://uschamber.com/abovethefold).

# Are Republicans Mid-Terminal?

The coming test of the GOP's House majority.

BY FRED BARNES

President Trump sees himself as harassed and abused. True enough. Presidents often feel oppressed. But Trump is protected and defended in a way that he appears to take for granted. It comes from having both houses of Congress controlled by his own party.

The political safety this provides is all he has known in the four months he's been in the White House. But it may not last. Republicans are in jeopardy of losing control of the House in next year's midterm election. If that occurs, Trump would be subjected to far more persecution than even he can imagine.

Should Democrats win a House majority, they would control the committees and what happens—or doesn't happen—on the House floor. They would have subpoena power. They would be free to investigate Trump on matters far beyond any possible ties he has to Russia. They would have the votes, if they stick together, to impeach the president.

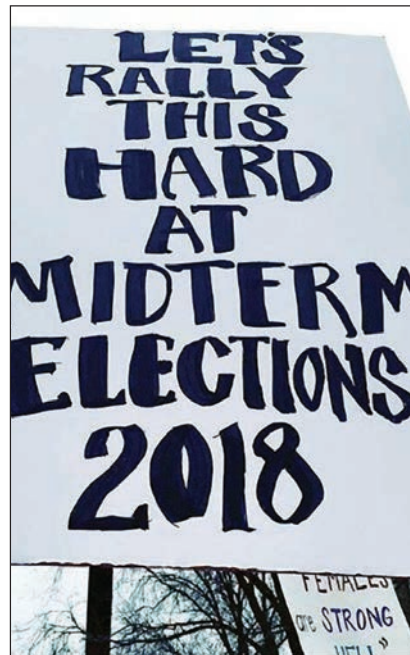
Democrats need to pick up 24 seats to capture the House, assuming they don't lose any of the districts they now hold. This isn't a huge reach, but it's harder than it looks. Democrats dreamed of a House takeover in the 2016 election. They gained six seats.

But they will have advantages in the 2018 election they didn't have last year. Some of these are normal in midterms. Others are related to Trump and the unusual coalition that elected him. The effect of both is to stack the deck against Republicans.

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Midterm elections are referendums on the president and what he's done, especially in his first two years in office. And the verdict of voters can be harsh. Democrats lost 54 House seats in 1994 in Bill Clinton's

**Midterm elections are referendums on the president and what he's done, especially in his first two years in office. And the verdict of voters can be harsh. Democrats lost 54 House seats in 1994 in Bill Clinton's first midterm and 63 in 2010 in Barack Obama's.**



*A widely circulated Democratic meme*

first midterm and 63 in 2010 in Barack Obama's.

In 2002, voters rallied behind George W. Bush after the 9/11 attack. Republicans won eight House seats. That was the exception. The outcome in 2006 proved the rule. With the war in Iraq going poorly and Bush's approval rating in decline, Democrats gained 30 seats and control of the House.

There's also an ideological dimension to midterms. When a Democrat is president, voters tend to tilt slightly to the right. With a Republican president, they shift to the left. Pew Research has already found evidence of this in the aftermath of Trump's election.

In an April survey, 48 percent preferred a bigger government with more services while 45 percent favored a smaller government with fewer services. This was a substantial change from last September, when 50 percent wanted less government and fewer services and 41 percent preferred the opposite.

Another factor is enthusiasm. It's usually on the side of voters from the party that lost the White House two years earlier. Recall the Tea Party voters who led the GOP surge in the 2010 midterm.

For now, Democrats are ferociously opposed to Trump personally and to his presidency. Their fervor could fade in the 17 months between now and the 2018 election—but probably not by much, because attacks on Trump, including calls for his impeachment, are likely to dominate Democratic campaigns.

A more subtle factor in 2018 is the role of the coalition that put Trump in the White House. He appealed to millions of working-class voters, many of them Democrats or independents or nonvoters in the past. He wouldn't have won Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Wisconsin without them.

But it's unclear whether they are casual voters attracted solely to Trump. Will they will turn out for Republicans in a midterm election in which Trump isn't on the ballot?

Nationwide, the turnout is smaller

in midterms (40 percent) than in presidential years (60 percent). And the midterm electorate tends to be more educated, according to Kyle Kondik of the University of Virginia's Center for Politics. If that trend holds true next year, it suggests a chunk of the core Trump vote will be missing.

Democrats experienced this phenomenon both in the Obama years and in 2016. Many Obama voters in 2008 and 2012 didn't vote in the 2010 and 2014 midterms when he wasn't on the ballot. The result: Republicans prevailed. The same was true last year, leading to Hillary Clinton's defeat in critical states.

While concentrating on working-class states, Trump ignored states he had no chance of winning. "That was beneficial to Republicans in last year's general election," Kondik says. But it could backfire in congressional races in 2018 if GOP turnout suffers from last year's neglect in places like Orange County, California.

Neil Newhouse, who has polled House races for many years, says it's too early to make predictions so far ahead of November 2018. But "these midterms look precarious for Republicans," he told me.

He offers "two cautionary notes to those who want to say the reign of the GOP is over in the House." Says Newhouse, "the lion's share of the districts the Democrats need to pick up are uphill for Democratic candidates. And GOP fundraising has never been better."

Republican operatives with the National Republican Congressional Committee know how "to help candidates win elections and they will be fully engaged," he says. "Every GOP professional knows what's at stake in the '18 election."

Trump, while grouching last week about being treated "worse or more unfairly" than any politician in history, may be catching on. "You can't let them get you down," he told Coast Guard Academy graduates. "Adversity makes you stronger. Don't give in. Never back down. . . . Nothing worth doing ever, ever, ever came easy." Nor will holding the House. ♦

# The Ziegfeld of Political Theater

Roger Ailes, 1940-2017.

BY ANDREW FERGUSON

Many mistaken beliefs left over from the 1960s are embedded in mainstream, which is to say liberal, American culture. As an earnest young lefty I was taught that generals like war, that businessmen like free markets, that Christians think everyone else is going to hell, and that Republicans are conservative ideologues. None of

second belief was that, having won all this booty in the culture wars, the left-wingers had screwed things up almost beyond repair. *Almost*: He was happy to do what he could to frustrate the progress of progressives. To the extent that he embraced political ideas, they were essentially negative, not so much pro-right as anti-left.

Maybe his enemies on the left sensed this—that his political project wasn't a crusade but an assault aimed directly at them—and that's why their hatred of him reached such an astonishing intensity. But they got him wrong. He was more a star-struck creature of show biz than of politics, and in either endeavor a rigid ideology is the surest impediment to success. He liked politics only where it intersected with show biz. Ailes always



Original co-hosts of 'The Five,' from left: Kimberly Guilfoyle, Bob Beckel, Eric Bolling, Dana Perino, and Greg Gutfeld

these statements is true. Roger Ailes, for instance, was a Republican but he wasn't an ideologue.

Of course he believed certain things to be true. He believed that over the last two generations left-wingers had swept the field culturally and were now safely in control of every influential institution of American life, from the universities to the press to Hollywood to the bottomless sump of American philanthropy. (The exception is the large number of electoral offices around the country which, being sometimes in the control of ordinary voters, are often in the hands of non-liberals. He loved his party, the Republican party, as one of their last redoubts.) Ailes's

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said his first love was for the theater, and he had some luck producing plays long before the idea of Fox News began twinkling in his eye. It was to his theatrical skill that he attributed his TV success; he had a deep understanding of how things would look to an audience out there—whether the audience was just beyond the footlights a few yards away or 1,500 miles from Manhattan, watching TV in a paneled living room in Garden City, Kansas.

As a political consultant he worked for Republicans right, center, and left, it didn't much matter. I first met him when we both worked for President George H.W. Bush, Ailes at the top rank, me a grunt in the trenches. One of the few extended conversations I had with him came many years later, not long after he had conceived of and then

COURTESY OF FOX NEWS

launched the Fox show *The Five*. He needed a program to fill the time slot left by Glenn Beck, who had quit Fox in a blaze of controversy and bad feeling. Ailes couldn't replace Beck's hour-long gasworks with another show built around a single performer. "No matter who it was," he told me, "the comparisons with Beck would kill 'em."

And so, like a theatrical producer, he put together an ensemble show. He made it clear he didn't care much about its political content, which would be the usual Fox palaver. What he worried over was its look, its "dynamic," he said. It would air at 5 P.M. Eastern Time and would have five stars and would be called *The Five*. But the key was the set of types that would make up the ensemble.

"Go around the table," he told me, delighting in his own ingenuity. "Over on this end, we've got the bombshell in a skirt, drop-dead gorgeous." He raised a chubby finger: "But smart! She's got to be smart or it doesn't work." Next, he said, "we have a gruff longshoreman type, salty but not too salty for TV. In the middle there's the handsome matinee idol. Next to him we have the Salvation Army girl, cute and innocent—but you get the idea she might be a lotta fun after a few pops. On the end, we need a wiseguy, the cut-up."

He sat back in triumph.

He said that once he had cast his types with real people—any casual viewer of the original show will know who they are—he called them all into his office. He told me he had them stand in a semi-circle around his desk. He asked them why they thought he had called the show *The Five*. "Because it's on at five?" one asked. "I said, 'Oh, f— no.' Someone else said, 'Because there's five of us?'" Wrong again.

"I said, 'I'm calling it *The Five* because you are types, not people. You all are about to become very famous, and you're going to make a lotta money. A lotta money. But don't ever forget. Right behind you I've got somebody exactly like you ready to take your place. So don't f— up.'"

Then Roger Ailes winked at me.

"It's good to have people a little scared of you," he said. ♦

# Founders' Keepers

A glorious digital archive.

BY JAY COST



*A George Washington journal with critical annotations at Founders Online*

Ever since the founding, the people of the United States have been particularly interested in their own history. The first collected edition of the Federalist Papers was published shortly after the originals were first printed. In the early days of the republic, newspapers would print transcripts of congressional debates, which were collected and organized for publication beginning in 1834. In 1861 Congress established the Government Printing Office—an important landmark, for it moved the publication and proliferation of public information outside the boundaries of the spoils system.

In the second half of the 19th century, historians began organizing multivolume compendiums of the writings of the Founding Fathers. The first major contribution was from Charles Francis Adams, the

grandson of John Adams, who beginning in 1856 published the papers of the second president. By the turn of the century, many other Founders had multivolume works of their papers in print—Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Hamilton, and more.

In the 20th century, as the social sciences became more rigorous and better funded, universities expanded on this project. After World War II, institutions like Columbia University and the University of Chicago began efforts to gather *all* the papers of the major Founders. Amazingly, this is a process that continues to the present day. The first volume of the *Papers of James Madison* was published in 1962 by Chicago, and in 2013 the University of Virginia published the 37th volume, with more to come.

When the Internet became popularized 20 years ago, it was not irrational to hope that it might facilitate the

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distribution of these amazing documents, which track the development of the American republic in the first person as it happened. Alas, those dreams have been largely unfulfilled—as the web seems mostly dedicated to cat videos and social media.

Granted, there are some digital redoubts for those interested in our nation's history. The American Presidency Project, created by John Woolley and Gerhard Peters at the University of California at Santa Barbara, is a treasure trove of primary documents from the executive branch. Similarly, the Online Library of Liberty, run by Liberty Fund, offers a vast array of primary documents that cover the whole of Western history. Intrepid browsers might also stumble upon "A Century of Lawmaking," an old, forgotten site from the Library of Congress, which contains scanned documents from congressional history. Notable as these efforts have been, one cannot but be disappointed that the Internet era has failed to fulfill its promise in carrying on the tradition of collecting and distributing the Founders' documents.

Happily, the gap has begun to be filled in an important and exciting way—by Founders Online. A project of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (part of the National Archives and Records Administration), Founders Online represents a great advance in the digitization of our nation's primary documents.

For those who love American history, Founders Online ([founders.archives.gov](http://founders.archives.gov)) is a site to behold. The commission has digitized the papers of several Founding Fathers—the Adams family (including John, Abigail, and John Quincy), Franklin, Hamilton, Jefferson, Madison, and Washington. These are not the late-19th-century, incomplete volumes, but the comprehensive series begun after World War II—a total of 262 printed volumes to date. Beyond that, Founders Online is regularly adding "Early Access Documents" that have yet to be included in the final printed volumes, to give readers access to even more material.

In all, it adds up to more than 178,000 documents, which one can browse or search by date, author, recipient, and keyword. Also included are the annotations and introductions by the archival historians who originally compiled the volumes.

The reach of the Founders Online collection extends beyond these core Founders. The digitized volumes include not only the letters written by them, but also *to* them. This makes it possible to better understand the relationships that they had with any number of other figures whose papers are not directly included.

According to Kathleen Williams, the executive director of the commission who has overseen Founders Online since its inception, the idea had been percolating since 2004 to create an online nexus that connects the papers of the Founders to one another. The commission was encouraged by successful documentary editing projects like Rotunda, the electronic imprint of the University of Virginia that made great progress in converting print volumes into a usable digital platform. It began putting together a detailed plan in 2007, and went to the Office of Management and Budget at the end of the George W. Bush administration. "We got them listening to us about this," Williams said. "They saw an immediate public benefit to this for a whole bunch of sectors—from schoolkids, to journalists, lawyers, genealogists, and scholars." OMB submitted it as part of its 2009 budget to Congress. "And Congress," Williams added, "liked it so much, it actually added more money to it," enabling the commission to speed up the process.

The final cost of this invaluable resource? Just \$4.5 million—less than a rounding error in the federal budget. The dividends to scholarship and understanding will be many times this original expense. Comparing scholarship on the founding from the late 1940s to, say, the 1980s, one cannot help but detect a noticeable increase in detail and sophistication. This is in part a consequence of the systematic collection and publication of documents by major research universities,

which lowered the transaction costs for researchers. No longer would they have to rely on incomplete volumes or track down original manuscripts.

Founders Online opens up a new realm of efficiencies. Unless one has access to a major university library, it can be all but impossible to find these volumes—many of them are out of print and unavailable on the secondary market. Many more are prohibitively expensive—running upwards of \$100 apiece. But now they are free and open to the public, meaning that one can research the founding independent of the higher education system. And the functionality of the collection—leaps and bounds above the typical government website—creates all sorts of opportunities for surprising discoveries. Keyword searches enable one to research specific subjects with just a click of a mouse, rather than flipping through multiple volumes. Searching by date makes it easy to narrow down one's focus to a particular period. One can also track correspondence among separate Founders occurring at the same time, to see the differing reactions to the same events.

Williams and her team at the commission are hoping to expand Founders Online—perhaps including the works of John Jay and John Marshall. They have talked as well of including mapping tools, to enable visitors to see where the Founders' correspondence went over time. And maybe even working with the Library of Congress to link the transcribed documents to their original images.

The federal government wastes an obscene sum of money every year, but this is no waste. In fact, it is central to one of the purposes of our government. The Constitution empowers Congress to regulate patents to "promote the progress of science and useful arts." And Madison, the "Father of the Constitution," was an early advocate of a national university as a way to promote knowledge. Founders Online is a realization of such goals, a leap forward by our government in advancing one of its constitutional missions. It is a project worthy of high praise—and more funding. ♦

# No-Collateral Damage

A Jesuitical way to help Native Americans.

BY NAOMI SCHAEFER RILEY



*A portion of the South Dakota badlands territory of the Rosebud Sioux*

The Jesuits are sorry. Last fall, Jesuit-founded Georgetown University apologized to the descendants of 272 slaves sold by the institution in 1838. In addition to the formal apology, the school announced plans to rename some buildings, construct a public memorial, and possibly offer scholarships or preferential treatment to those descendants. Now, the Jesuits have started to consider other aspects of their behavior in 19th-century America and have announced that they plan to give 525 acres of land that they own in South Dakota to the Rosebud Sioux tribe.

The parcels, which were given to the Jesuits in the 1880s by the U.S. government for use in their work as missionaries to the Indians, do not currently house any church facilities. And there are certainly no plans

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to build any. In a YouTube video announcing the transfer, Rev. John Hatcher, president of the St. Francis Mission, explained, “the mission is not in the property business. . . . [W]e are out of a colonial approach to the work of mission.” He says it is time for the order to have an “adult relationship” with the Lakota people.

The Jesuits, like other religious orders and churches, have come in for plenty of criticism in recent years for the way they treated natives, and especially for the Indian boarding schools they ran. These schools, which were charged by the American and Canadian governments with educating natives, abused untold numbers. In 2015, Pope Francis reiterated the church’s apologies for its role in crimes against indigenous people. “I say this to you with regret: Many grave sins were committed against the Native people of America in the name of God.”

Today, though, most Indians are Christians, and some of the only functioning institutions on reservations

are those run by churches. Catholic schools like Red Cloud on Pine Ridge and St. Labre, which educates Crow and Northern Cheyenne Indians in Montana, are the only places where kids have a chance of learning basic academic skills and in many cases going on to college. In addition to offering stability and hope to the children of these chaotic and often violent communities, these schools are also doing everything possible to preserve the language and culture of the locals.

The Jesuits will no doubt pat themselves on the back for this land transfer and outsiders will applaud what they see as a new, enlightened attitude toward native people. But this gesture will do absolutely nothing for the Rosebud Sioux.

Which, by the way, is really saying something. Todd County, S.D., home to the Rosebud Sioux, is the second-poorest county in the United States. The unemployment rate is over 80 percent, and three quarters of those who are employed live below the poverty level. Along with the Pine Ridge reservation, also in South Dakota, the Rosebud Sioux have the lowest life expectancy rate of any community in the country. So why not give them more land? Surely such a gift could improve things on the margins at least.

Responding to the announcement of this gift, Harold Compton, deputy executive director of Tribal Land Enterprises (the Rosebud Sioux’s land management corporation), said that this “is a plus for everybody.” He estimates the land may be worth as much as \$2,000 per acre. But it’s not as if the Jesuits are just handing over \$1 million to the tribe. In fact, by handing over the land to the tribal government, it will be placed “in trust” and thus be rendered all but worthless.

While many Americans think that a reservation is a way to protect native lands from greedy white people, reservations were originally set up to get Indians out of the way of westward expansion. Today the reservation system continues to keep many American Indians in abject poverty.

Because the land is held in trust by the federal government, individual

ROBERT VAN DER HILST / GAMMA-RAPHO / GETTY

Indians cannot buy or sell it even among themselves without the permission of an agent from the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Indians cannot get mortgages because a bank could never foreclose on the property, so there is essentially no collateral. Indians cannot use their land to get a home equity loan, which means they don't have the access to capital that many Americans use to start small businesses. Land that is held by the tribe is even worse. In order to determine how to use communal land, some tribes require near-unanimous votes, a process that has halted any kind of economic development. Reservation land has become what the famed economist Hernando de Soto calls "dead capital."

If the Jesuits really wanted to improve the situation of the Rosebud Sioux, they would take the land, divide it into smaller parcels, and deed it over to individual natives, chosen by lottery or some kind of entrepreneurial competition. In this way, the Jesuits could actually give the Sioux the land they need to increase their wealth. The Jesuits have the chance to do for the community what no amount of government subsidies has been able to accomplish—give them property rights.

Individual Indians might choose to use the land for grazing cattle. Or they might decide to use it to build a home. (Because of the difficulty in getting a mortgage, there is a severe housing shortage on many reservations, and large extended families are forced to share small trailers.) Perhaps the recipient of such a parcel might decide to start a business—a pizza place, a convenience store, etc. There is so little commerce on the reservations that residents drive hundreds of miles for the most basic supplies. After a few years, perhaps it would finally be obvious to observers both inside and outside of the native community that the people who received these parcels—who now own their land outright—are much better off than those whose land is ostensibly protected by the government.

If that were to happen, then the Jesuits would truly have begun to atone for their sins—and for ours. ♦

# If They Only Had a Brain

## What's the matter with Kansas Republicans?

BY STEPHEN MOORE

*Topeka*

When you travel down I-70 west from the Kansas City airport to the Kansas capital of Topeka, you pass a sign that says "You Are Entering the Land of Oz." Well, of late, there's a distinct "we're not in Kansas anymore" feeling to the place, given what's been going on in this traditionally bedrock conservative state.

Some 70 percent of the legislators in Topeka are Republicans, and the voters here went overwhelmingly for Trump. But the Kansas House and Senate are poised to pass the largest tax increase in the state's history. This would be the third tax hike in five years. When lawmakers in the House spoke up for a billion dollar tax hike not long ago, the liberals in the chamber rose in thunderous applause. This latest revenue grab would effectively repeal Governor Sam Brownback's 2012 income tax cuts, his signature achievement.

Brownback recently vetoed a similar tax scheme, and the tax-hike caucus came within three votes of an override. Now liberal Republicans, the dominant faction in the state thanks to massive teacher union money pumped into their campaigns, are teaming up with the few-and-far-between Democrats in the state to enact the nine-digit tax hike the left has craved for years. The conservative speaker of the House, Ron Ryckman, tells me forlornly, "I'm just trying to get the votes for the least damaging tax increase possible."

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*Stephen Moore is a senior fellow at the Heritage Foundation and a senior economic analyst with CNN. He is coauthor of The Wealth of States (Wiley).*

The plan that liberals are cheering so loudly for would soak every Kansan with an income above \$15,000, every small-business owner, and nearly every farmer operating in the state. If it passes, conservative Kansas will have a higher state income tax (5.3 percent) than even liberal Massachusetts (5.1 percent).

The legislature also is trying to reverse Brownback's teacher tenure reforms that were designed to help fire bad teachers. It previously voted to expand Medicaid under Obamacare, which would drive another massive hole in the state budget after 2020, when the federal matching funds begin to shrink. Manhattan, Kansas, is starting to vote like Manhattan, New York.

Unions, liberal interest groups, and the media have made the Kansas fiscal saga a national *cause célèbre*, a case study in the supposed horrors of supply-side tax cuts. On CNN and MSNBC leftist commentators regularly warn that a Trump tax cut would be as ruinous for the country as Brownback's in Kansas. The narrative runs something like this: Giant tax cuts bankrupted the state with \$350 million deficits, ripped gaping holes in the safety net, and decimated funding for schools.

Republicans are worried that the middle class in Kansas has turned against Brownback and his economic ideas. The governor won reelection in 2014 despite millions of union and MoveOn.org money spent against him, but his approval rating today, thanks to the drubbing by the media, has fallen to one of the lowest among governors. For liberal GOP lawmakers the fight has also become personal.

They want payback for Brownback's campaign to defeat eight incumbent liberal Republicans in the GOP primaries in 2012. In 2016 the teacher union war chest helped win back those seats and more. Senator Barbara Bollier admitted to the *Atlantic* that this blowback is a result of "the governor holding on to the old days where he had all these people [conservatives] elected." She sounded triumphant in declaring that the tax hike she supports means Brownback's "legacy is going down in flames."

Meanwhile, the actual economic effects of the Brownback tax cuts have been distorted beyond recognition. It is true that the cuts haven't been a miracle cure for the Kansas economy. The state has underperformed on jobs and growth compared with the national average, but this is in part due to steep declines in the price of oil and gas (Kansas is an energy state) and the hit to farmers from historically low commodity prices. Tax collections have fallen off and are lower than Brownback had predicted.

The heart of the Brownback tax plan was to cut income taxes by 30 percent and zero out the tax on small-business "pass through" income, so as to encourage new enterprise. This is hardly a radical idea: Eight other states—including prosperous Florida, Nevada, Tennessee, and Texas—don't tax small-business income and have few problems paying their bills and balancing their budgets. According to an analysis by the Kansas Policy Institute, those states spend about one-third less per citizen than Kansas does, even though Kansas is a very low cost of living state.

Eliminating taxes on small-business income has lost revenue, but it has brought enterprise to the state. The Kansas secretary of state income tax return data show that the number of new business filings in Kansas has grown by roughly 23 percent since Brownback took office—to 187,000

from 145,000. Small-business pass-throughs account for 98 percent of Kansas jobs gains since 2013, which is up from 82 percent before the tax cuts. Businesses have scrambled out of Kansas City, Missouri, into Kansas City, Kansas, at such a fast clip that three years ago Missouri passed an income tax cut of its own to stop the bleeding. The Missouri legislature called for a "border war truce" to stop employers from relocating across the state line. Brownback's critics have never been able to explain why if the tax cut is such a disaster, the Kansas unemployment rate today is one of



Sam Brownback, center, with legislators in Topeka, March 22

the lowest in the nation. Despite the relentless anti-Brownback blitzkrieg, only 17 percent of Kansas voters say the income tax is the "best way" to close the income gap, according to a February Survey USA poll.

The charge that schools and state government have faced savage cuts is mostly histrionics. In 2017 per capita inflation-adjusted general fund spending in Kansas reached an all-time high and has soared 33 percent since 1997 and more than 10 percent this past decade. Brownback also had to put out unexpected fires. He inherited a severe pension crisis. He replenished the state's retirement program with \$400 million to keep the system solvent. Six years ago the state was ranked in the bottom five in pension funding; now it ranks above average.

The one glaring problem with the

Kansas tax cut was that since zeroing out small-business taxes, thousands of businesses—law firms, accounting agencies, consultants—have gamed the system by declaring wage income as "business profit income" to lower tax liabilities. (Closing this scam is going to be a challenge for the White House and Congress, which also want to have a lower tax rate for small-business pass-through income.) This has cost the state tens of millions in lost tax revenue at the very time it must cope with a Kansas supreme court ruling that schools in low-income areas are underfunded. Brownback and the

House speaker have come up with a smart solution. Get rid of the small-business deduction on income above \$50,000 and tax all business and wage and salary income at the same flat rate of around 4.6 percent. When Brownback came into office the rate was closer to 6.5 percent.

The pro-tax contingent say they will settle for nothing less than a full repeal of the Brownback legacy. They parade around the state pretending that this will have no impact on the state economy. This experiment has been tested in nearby Illinois and in

Connecticut with catastrophic results. Illinois and Connecticut both passed giant income tax hikes "on the rich" at about the same time Brownback was cutting them. Today, these two blue states are fiscal basket cases with debt levels so high their finances resemble those of a third world country. Illinois has over \$12.8 billion in unpaid bills and is six to nine months behind in paying them. When just one wealthy hedge fund manager left Connecticut for Florida, it put a dent of more than \$10 million in the state budget.

Yet the media and the teachers' unions and, alas, at least half the Republicans in Topeka now think the financial salvation for Kansas is to make the state look more like Connecticut and Illinois. If they have their way, that's exactly where the state is headed. ♦

# It's Mueller Time

*A wild Washington week was punctuated  
by the appointment of a special counsel*

BY MICHAEL WARREN  
& JENNA LIHITS

Washington greeted the news that the Justice Department had named Robert Mueller special counsel to oversee the FBI's investigation of Russian meddling in the 2016 election with a collective sigh of relief. The speed and intensity of events and developments about this interference—and the possibility that Trump associates were involved or had knowledge of it—had only increased over the first four months of Donald Trump's presidency.

It was particularly virulent in the nine days preceding Mueller's appointment. In quick succession, the FBI director was fired, the White House lied about the reasons, the president reportedly disclosed classified intelligence to the Russian foreign minister, and the White House declined to comment on whether Trump had recordings of his conversations with Comey or others. Then on the evening of May 16, the *New York Times* reported that Comey had drafted a detailed memo following a February meeting with Trump in which the director claimed the president had pushed him to “let go” of the FBI's investigation into former national security adviser Mike Flynn, the epicenter of scrutiny about Russian meddling.

Much of professional Washington, the brotherhood of the political news media, and the White House staff itself were exhausted, dizzy, and caught off guard when Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein announced Mueller's appointment at 6 P.M. on May 17. You could hear a pin drop on both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue as everyone absorbed the news. Then, the reactions started rolling in.

“As I have stated many times, a thorough investigation will confirm what we already know—there was no collusion between my campaign and any foreign entity,” said President Trump in a surprisingly conciliatory statement that evening. “I look forward to this matter concluding quickly.”

“My priority has been to ensure thorough and

independent investigations are allowed to follow the facts wherever they may lead,” said House speaker Paul Ryan in a statement. “That is what we've been doing here in the House. The addition of Robert Mueller as special counsel is consistent with this goal, and I welcome his role at the Department of Justice.”

“A special counsel is very much needed in this situation and Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein has done the right thing,” said Senate minority leader Chuck Schumer. “I now have significantly greater confidence that the investigation will follow the facts wherever they lead.”

The investigation will drag on for months, maybe years. The process won't be pretty. It is likely to result in great costs both in money and to the reputation of anyone caught in its scope. But for Trump opponents convinced of the worst, for Trump allies convinced of deep-state sabotage, and for the bulk of the country just looking for a reason to trust their institutions again, Mueller's appointment as a special counsel provides a real chance for resolution. There may finally be an authoritative answer to what the Russians really did or didn't do during the 2016 presidential campaign.

The wellspring of this confidence in the new special counsel is the man himself: Robert Mueller. The former FBI director is respected on both sides of the aisle and throughout the world of criminal justice. “Former Director Mueller is exactly the right kind of individual for this job,” said Schumer. Jason Chaffetz, the Republican chair of the House Oversight Committee, called Mueller a “great selection” and a man with “impeccable credentials.”

Jack Goldsmith, a Harvard law professor who worked with Mueller in the George W. Bush Justice Department, called him a “man of extraordinary integrity.” “He's not afraid to stand up to POTUS when the law demands,” Goldsmith wrote on Twitter the night of Mueller's appointment. “I also think it is a great choice for Trump if he is innocent. Mueller is one of few people who can reach that conclusion with credibility.”

A Republican, Mueller had stints as a federal prosecutor during the 1970s and '80s. After Bill Clinton was elected president, Mueller settled into a good job at a litigation firm in Boston. But he grew antsy in the private sector and, in 1995, called up an old friend who'd become the

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*Michael Warren is a senior writer and Jenna Lijhits is a reporter at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.*

U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia, Eric Holder, and asked if there was a job where he could put away murderers. Obama's future attorney general placed Mueller in the homicide division. Three years later, after Holder became Clinton's deputy attorney general, Mueller was named U.S. attorney in Northern California—the job he held until Bush appointed him FBI director in 2001, just days before 9/11. The terrorist attacks defined Mueller's 12-year term as director of the bureau, which he transformed into an institution that prioritized counterterrorism.

A Marine platoon commander who served in Vietnam, Mueller can be rigid to a fault, as an FBI employee who worked closely with him for years says. He arrived at FBI headquarters every day at 6 A.M. Staff in the office of the director joked that because Mueller wore only white shirts with either a blue tie or red one, this became the de facto dress code of the bureau. "He's the human embodiment of the first of the FBI's core values," says the employee. "He is 'rigorous obedience to the Constitution.'"

That obedience led him to clash with the president who had named him to the directorship. In 2004, Mueller and James Comey, then the deputy attorney general, fought an effort by the Bush administration to overrule the Justice Department's finding that the administration's domestic wiretap program was unconstitutional. When Mueller and Comey threatened to resign, the White House backed off and implemented changes to the program.

If Trump allies have any objection to Mueller, it will be the perceived closeness with Comey and Holder. But there are very good reasons to be at ease with the appointment.

Mueller is 72, at the end of a long career in public service, and has no obvious political ambitions or scores to settle. The contrast with the last special counsel to haunt a Republican president is acute. Patrick Fitzgerald was just 43 and in the middle of his career when he was tapped to lead the investigation into the Valerie Plame affair during the George W. Bush administration. Republicans found Fitzgerald obsessed with his power,

fishing for indictments anywhere he could find them. He eventually charged the vice president's chief of staff, Scooter Libby, with five counts of perjury and obstruction of justice—charges that came directly from statements Libby made during Fitzgerald's investigation, not from any wrongdoing related to the leaking of Plame's identity (which was not his doing).

Mueller is also the polar opposite of the showboater critics accuse Comey of being. As FBI director, Mueller avoided the spotlight. "He's uncomfortable with the press," says the former employee. "He is extremely reticent." While the controversy over Russia and Trump has become a media circus, Mueller should be a sobering force.

His appointment has already been that on Capitol Hill. Republican lawmakers had spent the better part of last two weeks praying for some calm. On May 16, Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell said Congress could "do with a little less drama" from the White House. "It feels like we've lived three months in one week," South Dakota senator John Thune told reporters.

Rosenstein's announcement was met with a bipartisan chorus of praise. Republicans were quick to say that their agenda and the legislative process were still on. "It's very important that people know that we can walk and chew gum at the same time," Paul Ryan told reporters. "I realize that there's a lot in the media these days. That doesn't seize up Congress. That doesn't stop us from doing our jobs to work on people's problems."

Arizona senator John McCain said that the controversies may divert attention, but they don't slow the overall legislative progress. "We are proceeding with health care reform, we are proceeding with the defense authorization act," he said. "We all have to walk and chew gum at the same time up here," quipped Idaho senator Jim Risch, picking up Ryan's metaphor. "You guys are kind of focused on all this stuff. But believe it or not, we're actually legislating. Congress is working."

South Carolina's Lindsey Graham was particularly vocal about the Mueller appointment. "We can get back to the normal business of legislating," he said. "You know, the winners of this would



be the new FBI director—they don't have to deal with it—and Republicans in Congress, because we don't have to talk to y'all anymore." He continued: "The losers I think are Democrats because they don't have a perch, and the Trump administration, because this is going to go on longer, and there will be a thousand leaks a week."

The most pressing question: What will the president do?

His uncharacteristically conventional statement the night of May 17 suggested Trump might be listening to the advice of his aides that the best he can do is stay out of the way. The unexpected show of temperance from Trump lasted about 12 hours.

By 8 A.M., Trump was tweeting his thoughts, calling the investigation "the single greatest witch hunt of a politician in American history" and complaining that no special counsel had been appointed to investigate "all of the illegal acts that took place in the Clinton campaign & Obama Administration." The *New York Times* reported senior White House adviser (and Trump son-in-law) Jared Kushner had "[urged] the president to counterattack" rather than accept the special counsel.

And Trump seemed eager to counterattack. In a lunch with television news anchors, he said he believes the continued investigation is a "pure excuse for the Democrats having lost an election that they should have easily won because of the Electoral College being slanted so much in their way." Trump also said it "hurts our country terribly, because it shows we're a divided, mixed-up, not-unified country."

Perhaps. But the controversy leading up to the appointment of Mueller showed a divided, mixed-up White House. The mood within the administration is grim. Already understaffed and spread thin, the West Wing will now find itself under the unyielding magnifying glass of the FBI—and with a president who has little political clout to protect his staff. Aides already suspicious of their colleagues in this highly factional White House may start shutting down and lawyering up.

Ari Fleischer, the first press secretary for President George W. Bush, said a situation like this is "draining" for staff. "You go to the White House for the purpose of supporting the president and advancing his policy agenda, and it's a thrill," he said. "You're used to playing defense because you must. There's always something that goes wrong. But when it enters the realm of a legal investigation, it can become paralyzing."

The leak to the *Times* about Kushner's "counterattack"

advice to Trump is "a perfect sign of a White House that is working against itself," Fleischer added.

The best thing for the White House and the president to do, Fleischer said, would be to ignore the special counsel's investigation altogether and turn their attention to the administration's policy agenda. "It's a test of the White House, it's a test of whether or not they can focus on policy, right the ship, and lead the government," he said. "If they can't focus on policy, what are they there for?"

**T**he biggest threat to the administration's ability to focus on policy, beyond Trump's own inability to stay on message or keep his head down, would be a revolt from staff. The West Wing isn't close to mass walkouts yet, but some aides will be pushed in that direction

by the pressure of the investigation. It doesn't help when the president undermines and muddles their work, as Trump did in revealing his premeditated reasons for firing James Comey, or puts them in potentially compromising positions, as he did with his national security adviser H. R. McMaster following the firestorm over his meeting with Russian officials.

So what does the president do? If the investigation continues to vex him, will he do the unthinkable and fire Mueller, Rosenstein,

or anyone else supporting the special counsel's office? As with the sacking of Comey, this remains within Trump's rights. But ousting Mueller would drain his remaining political capital in Washington. It would sink the best opportunity for Trump and his team to be vindicated if there's been no wrongdoing, and it would further harden his opponents in their quest to drive him from office. If he did so before the 2018 midterm elections, it would compound whatever losses his party is already likely to take.

Republican senators certainly seemed wary of defending the president as the week came to a close. "I've grown less responsive to tweets," said Tennessee senator Bob Corker, usually a reliable Trump ally, before sliding into his car and heading back to Chattanooga. He'd already described the White House as in a "downward spiral" earlier in the week.

"We're a nation of laws," said Florida senator Marco Rubio. "A special counsel has been appointed, and I anticipate everyone is going to fully cooperate with it."

Lindsey Graham may have had the best advice for Trump. "If I were the president," he said, "I would stop tweeting about this investigation." ♦

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**The mood within the administration is grim. Already understaffed and spread thin, the West Wing will now find itself under the unyielding magnifying glass of the FBI—and with a president who has little political clout to stop it.**

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# Meanwhile, Up North

*In the race to lead Canada's Conservative party, it seems the talk always returns to Trump*

BY KELLY JANE TORRANCE

Ottawa

Last week in Washington began with reports that the president might have shared sensitive classified information with Russian officials and, after other shocking revelations arrived daily, sometimes hourly, ended with talk that the United States' chief executive could be pushed out of power in a national security scandal. Just across the border to the north, meanwhile, a man who had already suffered such a scandal—and admitted to wrongdoing—was enjoying increasing influence and could be just days away from moving into a multimillion-dollar government residence.

Donald Trump is such an American original that it might be hard to believe that multiple frontrunners for the leadership of a major political party in Canada, one of the politest nations on earth, have borne comparisons to him, with some even encouraging the analogies. But that's exactly what's happening. Former prime minister Stephen Harper made Canada the best-governed nation in the Anglosphere while Barack Obama oversaw a new entitlement Republicans still despair of discontinuing. To no avail. In November 2015, Harper's Conservatives sustained a massive loss to the Liberals led by Justin Trudeau—who proved before Trump that style over substance is back. Now some of them are wondering if wilderness is the way back out of the wilderness.

Maxime “Mad Max” Bernier revels in his nickname, even posting online an image of his face superimposed on that of the movie character. If he wins the Conservative leadership contest on May 27, he'll become Leader

of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, a position that comes with its own Ottawa mansion. He's the frontrunner to replace Harper, who tossed him out of his cabinet less than a decade ago after Bernier, then minister of foreign affairs, oafishly left classified documents at the home of his girlfriend, who had ties to Hells Angels. He's known as the “Albertan from Quebec” for libertarian views that are more commonly found in the West. But it's his birthplace that's made him the frontrunner.

Kevin O'Leary shocked the country last month—and not, as usual, with one of his proposals, such as auctioning off Senate seats—by pulling out of the race when it was clear he led the pack. O'Leary was the only Conservative candidate with real celebrity: The former software magnate is one of the investor stars of American television's *Shark Tank*—where he's known by the somewhat ironic self-descriptor Mr. Wonderful—and that fame made up for the charges of carpetbagging. But O'Leary decided his inability to speak French meant he

couldn't garner enough seats in Quebec—which accounts for a quarter of the ridings in Parliament—to make taking down Trudeau a possibility. He threw his support behind the Francophone Bernier, saying at a press conference, “Quebec is the Florida of Canada.”

It was easy to liken O'Leary to Trump—a flashy businessman prone to saying outrageous things running for political office as a newbie. But Trump was already on the minds of northern right-wingers, as was obvious at what's billed as “the event for conservatives and libertarians to attend in Canada.” This year's annual Manning Centre conference in the Canadian capital of Ottawa was the best-attended ever, perhaps because the Conservative party faces its first leadership race in a decade—and only the second for the party that arose from the merger of the old Progressive Conservatives and the Reform party that Preston Manning founded as a Western protest movement in 1987.



Maxime Bernier, left, receives Kevin O'Leary's support after the latter withdraws, April 26.

Kelly Jane Torrance is deputy managing editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

Manning changed the political character of the entire country. “A lot of water under the bridge,” Manning chuckled when I mentioned to him I was last in Ottawa almost exactly 20 years ago, for a Reform party convention. In the election that year, the party didn’t make the inroads it hoped and some members wondered if it was time to give up. They didn’t, and less than a decade later, Stephen Harper, a former Reform MP, became prime minister under the rebranded Conservative party and ruled for a decade.

“Populism has been used by the left as a dirty word. A more respectful word is bottom-up democracy. Ordinary people, with one person, one vote, that’s one place where there’s real egalitarianism,” said Manning, who founded his eponymous think tank after his retirement from politics. “I think there is a more small-d democratic ethic in the West than there is in the older parts of the country.” In the younger parts of Canada, he said, there’s still a feeling that “things are not cast in stone.”

He sees the recent rise of populist movements in North America and Europe as a mixed bag—but the twinkle in the 74-year-old’s eye as we talked suggests he’d love to be back in the game right now. “The worrisome part about it is it is a measure of the number of people who are disenchanted from politics and government parties and mainstream media and that. But I don’t worry about it as much as some of these other people because I think it can be channeled,” he said. “I like political energy, I like manifestations of political energy because I’ve been in situations where it’s dead flat, and you can’t spend enough money to create a political excitement if it’s not there. But if there is—it’s like if a boat is moving, then you can steer it. But if it’s dead in the water, you can’t do anything.”

Manning emphasized the importance of channeling that energy in a productive direction. “Can you find hooks in the mentality that’s fueling this thing that actually connect to conservatism? I think one is the value of the individual person. We tend to connect that in the economy: The individual person is valuable and important and should be given the freedom to do what they want to do, and often we’re talking economically.” That’s not enough, though. The disenchantment isn’t simply economic. “If you really value the individual citizen, then you shouldn’t let him get in this position where he doesn’t think his opinion counts, and if he says something that’s politically incorrect, you shut him down or get the security guys to throw him out of the room.”

There was plenty of political incorrectness to be found at Ottawa’s Shaw Centre that weekend.

The leadership candidate in favor of a carbon tax, Michael Chong, was roundly booed when he mentioned it. Another, Kellie Leitch, promised personal interviews for every single immigrant coming into Canada. Police were posted outside the door of a conference session titled “Leading the Response to Islamist Extremism and Its Ideology in Canada.” Pundit and humorist Mark Steyn closed the conference with a rollicking celebration of dissent with a distinctly Canadian flavour. Steyn addressed a recent parliamentary motion—since passed, supported by many in the Conservative caucus—that called for the government to “condemn Islamophobia” and do something about “the increasing public

climate of hate and fear.” Steyn declared, “I’m a phobia phobe. And I’m sick of the medicalization of differences of opinion.”

Some of Steyn’s best jokes wrote themselves. He did a sound check in the auditorium after the headline event, a debate with all 14 candidates vying to lead the Conservative party. Some of them had left their notes on the stage; one piece of paper had on it the words “Wife. Three kids.” Steyn barely had to ask why a man needed a note to remind him of this before the crowd erupted in laughter.

That man was probably Chong, who noted in his closing remarks that he has a wife and three children. “The reason I tell you that is I think the next leader of the Conservative party needs to understand the concerns of middle-class families.” It wasn’t an electric moment, but this is a race in which the social media campaign of another candidate, Andrew Saxton, presented a “boring hall of fame”—featuring former prime ministers Harper and John Diefenbaker—and the tagline “boring gets the job done.” Ontario MP Lisa Raitt, in her closing statement, insisted only she has the attributes necessary to beat Trudeau. “Last election, we lost Atlantic Canada. I was born in Cape Breton. Last election, we lost women,” she said, and here there was a too-long pause. “I am a woman.” “Everybody panders,” one constituency president said wryly after the debate. “Pick your panderer.”

Raitt’s wasn’t the sort of argument to win over this crowd. It was a bit disconcerting to walk into a panel the first day of the conference and see a speaker wearing one of the red “Make America Great Again” hats made

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**Maxime Bernier, the frontrunner in the race to lead the Conservative party, hopes to replace the man who tossed him from the cabinet after Bernier, then minister of foreign affairs, oafishly left classified documents at the home of his girlfriend, who had ties to Hells Angels.**

famous—and lucrative—by Donald Trump. It turned out she is a dual citizen, though it wasn't the only red Trump hat on display there. The panel was on "Understanding the rise in anti-establishment sentiment," and those in the packed room certainly exhibited it. Doug Ford, the brother of controversial but lovable late Toronto mayor Rob Ford, drew cheers every time he complained about the media, the bureaucrats, and the establishment in "all parties." "Down with the elites is very good shorthand for 2016," concluded another speaker in the session, Matthew Elliott, the chief executive of the Brexit Vote Leave campaign.

Despite some imported speakers, the conference still fulfilled Canadian content quotas. One panel featured two different hockey metaphors in the space of five minutes, while another focused on that perennial question about the government broadcast company: "CBC: Time to Pull the Plug?" But the apotheosis of the presence of Trumpism there was obvious. "A Trump Movement in Canada? Can Trumpism be exported to Canada? Or is it already here?" had, besides a questioner, just a single speaker: Frank Buckley, a professor at George Mason University's law school who became better known after writing a speech Donald Trump Jr. delivered during the campaign. Only Canadians would invite into their home someone to insult them. "You've doubtless heard the expression 'world famous in Toronto.' Trudeau is world famous in Toronto," Buckley said dismissively of the Canadian prime minister whose strikingly handsome visage regularly appears in newspapers and magazines around the world. Buckley is a dual citizen but declared with pride that he might be the only Canadian in Washington who doesn't know what "softwood lumber" means. Someone on Trump's staff does, though—the president announced after the conference that the United States would slap new tariffs on imports of it, the latest volley in what has long been the biggest dispute between the trading partners.

Buckley brought a direct connection to the Trump campaign and a flair for the dramatic, giving his talk in a fedora that shaded his eyes; he didn't take audience questions. But he did offer valuable insights into the winning campaign that so many seek to replicate. "A crucial question right now is how to bust up the monasteries," he said, using a clever analogy for today's elites. To those who would run to do so, he advises, "You gotta get angry. Second is have a Twitter account." He noted that Trump speechwriter "Steve Miller asked me for about four constitutional conservative speeches" during the election—none of which ended up being delivered. But he reassured those in the audience—and it was a great deal of the crowd—uncomfortable with the new president, even before Trump formally sent notice that he would seek to renegotiate NAFTA. "Americans and Canadians

don't do fascism. That's not who we are. So don't worry about that," Buckley affirmed. And he departed from his sometime boss on one big issue: "I should have thought it obvious that the point of immigration is to let in the people who are going to make the native Americans or native Canadians better off. And then you can afford to be generous with a refugee policy."

The response to Buckley's talk was mixed, as was every mention of Trump throughout the weekend. Some of the ambivalence was self-interested. "Canadians are very worried that Mexicans will come in great numbers across the border when it warms up, because of Trump," one attendee told me, a remark echoed over the weekend. Others were even more blunt. "After years of public education, I think conservatism has been hollowed out," one attendee said over lunch. "Look at Trump. He's not conservative."

That's not stopping the president from making a mark on conservatives up north. "Trump is causing a lot of schisms within the conservative tribe, there and here," Paul Bunner, editor of the Manning Centre's *C2C Journal* and a former speechwriter to Harper, told me. Bunner has seen it first-hand. "So many conservatives that I've known for a long time, had good relationships with, friendships with, and we're estranged from each other on the question of Trump, which is a proxy for the questions like 'Is the media all bad, all liberal, all fake, all wrong?'" he reported. "They're willing to overlook what a creep and cretin he is to get back at their enemies." He believes the news business is full of bias, but also full of good people—and it's dangerous to attack the entire industry at a time outlets are already facing extinction. "If you add the demonization of political media by conservative demagogues on top of that, you're really putting democracy itself at risk."

Trump is toxic, Bunner argued, for right-wingers everywhere. "He's potentially poisoning the well for a long time for conservative ideas and the conservative brand. Worse than that, he's causing otherwise rational and reasonable conservatives to forget about their values and principles and the philosophical foundations of their beliefs."

Even those Conservative leadership candidates who encourage comparisons with the president don't trumpet Trump's policies. "The populist message that Trump brings is so powerful because we have to connect with what people think," Vancouver businessman Rick Peterson told me after the Ottawa debate. "The conservative party needs a more grounded message than we've had in the past. . . . I'm the only one, I think, who brings a true populist grassroots approach to the race." Now that O'Leary's out, Peterson is the only candidate in the contest without experience in office, the sole outsider,

competing against a dozen MPs and former MPs. He's a talented speaker and a smart guy who answers policy questions with ease. And he's one of the few talking about reaching out to new constituencies. "Where the party is going to grow is where I represent. We don't have any MPs in Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal," he pointed out. But he's unlikely to win: Despite his complete fluency in French—he lived in Europe for a time—and sharp policies—he'd eliminate the corporate income tax entirely—he doesn't have name recognition or the flash that earns it.

"Mad Max" Bernier does. The recognition might have come from the bad publicity surrounding his classified document scandal, but Donald Trump proved that old saying about bad publicity. O'Leary dropping out and endorsing Bernier "solidified Max's positioning as the candidate that conservatives can look to if they hope to see a Trumpish revolution come to Canada," Bunner said.

It seems a strange thing to say about a libertarian free trader who would break the dairy industry cartel of his home province—"supply management" has been a regular refrain of the campaign, showing that Canadian Conservatives haven't given up all of their policy wonkery. "It's not fair at all to call Maxime Bernier the equivalent of Trump," Bunner conceded. "Max is a far more civilized, decent, thoughtful, experienced political operator than Trump. But—but he is asserting radically conservative ideas. In that sense, he is speaking to the same frustration and impatience and hope as the near-Trumpers or the full Trumpers or the people who are overlooking Trump's shortcomings in hope that he'll succeed and win and defeat their enemies. At some level, there's a connection between what Max is offering and Trump is delivering."

There's a good chance that Bernier, though the frontrunner, will not win the party leadership. That's because the balloting is being done by preferential vote. If no candidate receives more than 50 percent of the vote in the first round, the lowest-scoring candidate is eliminated and the second choices of that candidate's voters are then plugged in; this will continue until some candidate does reach a majority. If the Republican primary had been decided under such a system, it's quite possible—maybe even likely—that Donald Trump wouldn't have won the nomination.

One Conservative party member, who wasn't at the conference, complained to me that it was tedious to have

to rank all 13 candidates. "I bet lots won't vote because of that," she predicted. The head office sent out a press release bragging, "The Conservative Party of Canada has set a record for memberships in a leadership race." Party membership—which costs \$15—more than doubled, from around 100,000 to 259,010. The largest membership gains came in areas where Conservatives have the least support. "Why is that?" Bunner asked. "If you're a small campaign planner, you get a bigger bang for your buck in the rotten boroughs in Quebec and the Maritimes." Such ridings might have had as few as a dozen Conservative members before the race. "They're way easier to go in and take over." As in America, this isn't a one-person, one-vote race: Every riding, no matter how many members, is worth 100 points.

"We're all trying to figure out what the definition of Conservative means and how we can win," is how one

candidate put this race at the Ottawa debate—Kevin O'Leary. Some candidates, appealing to a broad number of members across the country with their visions of both, could have strong second- or third-ballot support. Andrew Scheer is only 37, but spent four years as House of Commons speaker and even ended up one of the thirteen Canadians put on a retaliatory sanctions list by Russian president Vladimir Putin in 2014. "I will pull federal

funding from universities that do not foster a culture of free speech on their campuses," he declared in a recent tweet. Erin O'Toole, 44, spent a decade in the Canadian Armed Forces; the *Globe and Mail* says his "policy proposals include meeting NATO commitments, allowing provinces to develop privately administered health services and a plan called Generation Kickstart, which would give young people under 30 a sizable tax credit."

At one level Bernier's appeal "is akin to Trump's appeal to American conservatives. It's hunger, this impatience, this desire to 'shake things up' that is really the single most important parallel," Bunner said. "God forbid that Trump is impeached and does incalculable damage to the conservative brand on the continent at the same time that Johnny-come-lately Conservatives are trying to get power in Ottawa." Trudeau's Liberals could then become the reassuring party. Bunner imagined them convincingly arguing: "These conservatives are great fans of Kevin O'Leary and Donald Trump. They want to shake things up and look how that ended up south of the border. They'll just wreck the place." ♦



*A free-drink coupon handed out by the Maxime Bernier campaign at the Manning Centre conference in Ottawa*

# Retaliation Nation

*The case for a don't-tread-on-me trade policy*

BY IRWIN M. STELZER

There is something dispiriting about the debate over trade policy, and the problem does not lie with Donald Trump, or his tweets, or his on-again, off-again threats to various trading partners, or his fickle choice of partners to head the negotiating queue: EU to the front, Brexiting Britain to the rear, Angela Merkel trumps Theresa May, presidential promises notwithstanding. No, the problem lies with the belief that in the world in which we live and make our livings, free trade remains a global system that produces the efficient specialization of labor and allocation of resources that the textbooks promise. Rather than face reality, too many defenders of free trade adopt the ostrich position, leaving themselves exposed to attack by fact-wielding critics.

Defenders of free trade—denizens of think tanks, Republicans representing corporate interests, farmers, establishment elites—contend that if the president carries out his threat to impose high tariffs on some of our trading partners, he will start a trade war, at huge cost to American interests and the international economy. Current trade practices and imbalances notwithstanding, they want more of existing policies. “My concern is that they’re [the Trump team] making it too difficult to enter into trade agreements,” says Senator Cory Gardner (R-Colo.). “Mr. Trump’s portrayal of trade deficits entails crucial departures from economic reality,” scolds Peter Goodman in the *New York Times*. To which the *Economist* adds, “The Trump administration’s trade strategy is dangerously outdated,” which I suppose is better than departing from economic reality.

The problem with all of this is that it is impossible for Trump to start a trade war. As Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross so aptly put it, “We’ve been in a trade war for decades. . . . The only difference is our troops are now coming to the ramparts.” It took the threat of a border-adjustment tax to get policymakers to focus on the fact that our trading partners load a 20 percent value-added tax on goods we try to sell in their markets, while we impose only minor taxes on the stuff we import. But set that aside as an

error in U.S. tax policy rather than a barrier imposed by our trading partners.

Instead, do a quick survey. Ask a German manufacturer how well he would do if the euro, a seriously undervalued currency for Germany, kept low by inefficient southern European industries, were replaced by the deutsche mark, which would certainly soar. Ask a European farmer how well he would do if the protection provided by EU rules were removed: According to our Department of Agriculture, “the U.S. agricultural trade deficit with the EU is the largest of any trading partner and contrasts sharply with that of other major U.S. trading partners.” Ask a Japanese auto manufacturer how he would fare in his home market if non-tariff barriers to the importation of made-in-America vehicles were removed.

These are minor skirmishes in trade wars that have been going on for far longer than Trump has been in the White House. The real battle is with China, which Trump threatens to lumber with a 45 percent tariff, or accept in lieu thereof the head of Kim Jong-un, preferably delivered on a beautiful made-in-China platter. Some two-thirds of our trade deficit is generated by our dealings with China, a centrally directed economy with goals other than the efficient allocation of international resources. Two such goals are relevant to our trade policy. The first is to preserve Communist party control of the politics and economy of China. To do that in a nation in which there is no democratic outlet for discontent requires providing jobs, at almost any cost. If that means selling goods at prices below the cost of producing them, so be it. If it means subsidizing excess coal mining, refinery, and steel capacity (turning out more steel than the rest of the world combined), that is a small price to pay to maintain a grip on power and, not incidentally, damage American industries. If that means shoring up banks that have been required to make loans to manufacturing enterprises that have no hope of repaying them, so-called zombie companies, turn a blind eye to the rising mountain of duff IOUs on bank balance sheets (bankruptcy is a rarity in China, avoided by funneling billions into state-owned enterprises).

China’s second goal is to dominate the industries of the future. The quickest route to that goal is to steal intellectual property (IP), subsidize the home-town boys, and make it somewhere between difficult and impossible for American firms to peddle their wares in China.

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*Irvin M. Stelzer is a contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD and a columnist for the Sunday Times (London).*

Start with IP. It has long been known that China steals American intellectual property: Our moviemakers complain that you can buy a pirated DVD of a new film on the streets of China for \$1 before it is released in theaters in the United States. A report issued earlier this year by the Commission on the Theft of American Intellectual Property—a bipartisan nongovernmental group co-chaired by former Utah governor Jon Huntsman Jr., who served as U.S. ambassador to China from 2009 to 2011—states that mainland China and Hong Kong account for 87 percent of counterfeit goods seized by the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol. Their share of trade secrets theft, estimates the commission, is not far behind.

Theft and subsidies to zombie companies are the least of our worries. More troublesome are the techniques China has publicly and unashamedly announced it will employ to assure its dominance of industries of the future. According to a report by the European Union Chamber of Commerce in China, emerging industries will benefit from \$300 billion in low-interest loans from state-owned banks and financial institutions, and the government will finance foreign acquisitions of key startups and high-tech companies. The goal is to become 80 percent self-sufficient in those industries that will be the major drivers of economic growth and high-end jobs in the years to come. Bolstered by subsidies, low-cost capital, and stolen IP, Chinese companies would become “global champions” of sufficient scale to wrest export markets from China’s trading partners. This is not mere surmise by some old China hand interpreting tea leaves. In March, Premier Li Keqiang in his annual speech to the National People’s Congress made the regime’s policy clear: “We will accelerate R&D on, and commercialization of, new materials, artificial intelligence, integrated circuits, new energy, bio-pharmacy, 5G mobile communications, and other technologies, and develop industrial clusters in these fields.” The plan goes on to list aircraft manufacture and electric cars as targets.

Finally, China either excludes American firms from its market or sets conditions that make entry too costly to contemplate. In its overt version this barrier takes the form of a requirement that China’s state-owned enterprises “buy Chinese” even when they could lower costs by purchasing imported products. For the regime the trade-off is clear: accept the inefficiency involved in avoiding dissent that might arise from job losses in return for perpetuation in power.

In its more subtle form, exclusion is accomplished by

setting onerous requirements on firms seeking to do business in China. In a letter recently sent to Cui Tiankai, China’s ambassador to the United States, more than 50 congressmen responded to China’s claim that it is wide open to American firms to expand in China, citing Amazon’s proposed entry into the cloud computing business. They pointed out that such entry would come at the price of turning over all intellectual property to China. Many American manufacturing firms have been required to do just that as the price of entry, and soon found that China had set up a competing company that, backed by the buy-China policy, proved to be a formidable competitor.

**T**heory tells us that free-market economies allocate resources more efficiently than can a centrally planned economy, that markets process billions of bits of information more effectively than even the brightest of bureaucrats. And such has proved to be the case. But

that theory no longer translates to the international arena, at least within a time-frame reasonable policymakers should be using. National power, not efficiency, is China’s goal. The Chinese hope with their Great Firewall to block access to three out of our four FANGS, Facebook, Amazon, Netflix, and Google (Netflix has been allowed in after agreeing to a licensing deal with a Chinese search engine). If they are successful, these Internet giants—

along with Boeing, General Electric, and our renewable energy industries—will become mere case studies in business schools seeking reasons for their disappearance.

Perhaps most ominous, the spoils of a Chinese victory extend beyond racking up large trade surpluses. For one thing, such a win would further destabilize American society by consigning millions more workers to the scrap heap. Studies by David Autor, David Dorn, and Gordon Hanson (MIT, University of Zurich, and University of California, respectively) conclude, “Alongside the heralded consumer benefits of expanded trade are substantial adjustment costs. . . . Adjustment in local labor markets is remarkably slow, with wages and labor-force participation rates remaining depressed and unemployment rates remaining elevated for at least a full decade after the China trade shock commences.” Nicholas Eberstadt and Charles Murray have alerted us to the social and economic consequences of such a shock. Difficult though it may be, those costs must be considered when deciding how much pressure we are prepared to put on China to end its trade practices. High tariffs have their costs, both in the prices we pay for goods and in forgone economic growth. But so do the social and economic



*What’s with the subsidies and IT theft?*

consequences of accepting the current pattern of world trade. A policy that does not consider those consequences in the continued hunt for cheap sneakers in Walmart is a long-term threat to the acceptability of anything approaching an efficient world trading system, and to continued general acceptance of our system of free-market capitalism.

There are other costs of acquiescing in China's planned march to dominance of key manufacturing sectors and industries of the future. Such a policy would weaken our ability to defend ourselves in a military confrontation should it come to that. Secretary Ross argues that we already are no longer able to manufacture steel of the quality that the military needs for its vehicles and weapons, such as the Mother of All Bombs recently deployed to wipe out a network of terrorist tunnels in Afghanistan.

Finally, the consequences of a continuation of current trends are likely to prove irreversible. Unused factories deteriorate. Laid-off workers lose the skills needed by a workforce capable of competing in global markets—and retraining programs have not proved to be successful in restoring old or teaching new competencies. There are areas in which lost ground can be made up—refreshing our military is one such—but further ground lost in a trade war is likely to be irretrievable, especially once China scales up the new industries it plans to grow by means not normally considered when listing the efficiency advantages of free trade.

None of this means that we should never, ever enter into trade deals. It was a terrible mistake by both Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump to repudiate the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which for all its failings would have allowed us and our regional allies, which together account for 40 percent of world commerce, to set the rules of trade in the Asia-Pacific region. And, not incidentally, bind our allies to us with what old Polonius called “hoops of steel,” preferably steel that is not manufactured in China's subsidized mills. It would equally be a mistake to abort rather than modernize NAFTA, and to refuse to negotiate bilateral trade deals that incorporate reasonable anti-cheating provisions, or multi-nation deals such as the one the president is now pursuing with the 28- and soon to be 27-nation European Union. Hard-line protectionists might remember that just as a cigar is sometimes not merely a cigar, a trade agreement is rarely merely a trade agreement; it is a statement of a willingness to do all sorts of business together, of which only one is exchanging goods and services.

Which is what the recent much-trumpeted deal between Xi Jinping and Trump is all about. After an agreeable bit of dinner-table diplomacy at Mar-a-Lago, the president's team came up with a deal that would end China's ban on U.S. beef and our credit-card companies and rating agencies, and allow cooked Chinese poultry to be imported

here. More important to Xi, Trump agreed not to treat investment in America by Chinese entrepreneurs any differently than investment coming from other countries, never mind the security implications. These concessions will have no measurable effect on our trade deficit with China, and might prove unenforceable. China's ban on U.S. beef ended last September, since when not an ounce has been sold there, and the barrier to our credit-card companies has been in effect long enough to allow Chinese companies to build almost impregnable market positions. But this is not about our beef and their chickens; it is about North Korea and persuading Xi to rid us of this meddlesome and dangerous dictator. Unless Trump receives some major help on that score from the Chinese, it is fair to conclude that Xi's study of Sun Tzu's *Art of War* has done him more good than our president's study of the *Art of the Deal*.

No discussion would be complete without mention of our own distortions of the way in which trade allocates markets and wealth. For the benefit of a handful of farmers we subsidize sugar production at the cost of billions of dollars and lost jobs in the confectionery and other industries; for the benefit of Boeing (and to remain in the subsidization competition) we have the Export-Import Bank; the list goes on. But these pale in comparison with the distortion-producing effects of China's trade policy.

Those who fear that retaliation might trigger a trade war—or heat the existing one to a trade-stifling boiling point—would do well to unshelve their undoubtedly dog-eared copies of *The Wealth of Nations*. Adam Smith, hardly the voice of mercantilism and protectionism, advises, “The case in which it may sometimes be a matter of deliberation how far it is proper to continue the free importation of certain foreign goods is, when some foreign nation restrains by high duties or prohibitions the importation of some of our manufactures into their country. Revenge in this case naturally dictates retaliation. . . . There may be good policy in retaliations . . . when there is a probability that they will procure the repeal of the high duties or prohibitions complained of.” As for the consumer who would end up paying more when a nation retaliates by raising tariffs, “The recovery of a great foreign market will generally more than compensate the transitory inconveniency of paying dearer during a short time for some sorts of goods.”

Yes, any nation we might decide to penalize will probably find ways to damage the exports of politically noisy and important American constituencies—apple farmers in Washington howled loudly when we placed restrictions on Mexican trucks, and we reversed course. Still, if we don't retaliate against barriers to our goods and services, we will be accepting the status quo and the trade deficits and social consequences that go with them. If retaliation is good enough for the Great Scot, it should be good enough for us. ♦

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*A lunar eclipse seen from Scotland (2015)*

# Goodnight, Sun

*The romance of the eclipse.* BY WRAY HERBERT

**I**n June 2001, physicist and self-styled “eclipse chaser” Frank Close found himself at an isolated roadside stop deep in the Zambian bush, chatting with a small local boy. Close was trying to explain his purpose in being at this remote outpost, why he had traveled all the way from England—some 5,000 miles—to experience a three-minute total eclipse of the sun.

*Wray Herbert is the author, most recently, of On Second Thought: Outsmarting Your Mind’s Hard-Wired Habits.*

**Eclipse**  
*Journeys to the Dark Side of the Moon*  
 by Frank Close  
 Oxford, 208 pp., \$21.95

The boy was skeptical. “Who’s arranged this eclipse?” he wanted to know. Close explained that nobody had arranged the eclipse, that it was a natural phenomenon: “Sometimes when the moon crosses the sky, it gets in the way of the sun.” That’s about as parsimonious a definition of a solar

eclipse as possible, but the boy pushed for more, so Close expanded:

If the moon is directly between you and the sun, you will be in the moon’s shadow. The moon is very big and its shadow will cover from one horizon to the other. But the moon moves quickly and will be out of the way in a few minutes and it will be sunny again. For those three minutes, however, the sky will turn dark.

This accurate if simplified explanation satisfied the Zambian child, and it may be a perfectly good summary for most readers of this highly personal

DANNY LAWSON / AP

introduction to the science and history and lore of solar eclipses. For those who want more technical matter—who like the Zambian boy who wants to know why-here/why-now/why-not-another-time-and-place?—there is plenty here, strewn throughout the first-person narratives of Close’s global treks over a lifetime of eclipse chasing.

This is not *A Novice’s Guide to Eclipses*; but even so, this neophyte found the science captivating. We learn, for example, why total solar eclipses are relatively rare—one occurs about once every 18 months—and why many of these phenomena are fleetingly brief and visible only in the planet’s most remote locales. That total solar eclipses occur at all is really a “cosmic coincidence,” Close explains: The sun is both 400 times broader than the moon and 400 times further away. This is why the sun and moon appear to be the same size. So if the moon is lined up directly with the sun, it completely and precisely blocks it from view.

A lot follows from this cosmic coincidence. Close explains how scientists can predict eclipses with remarkable accuracy, and how they use this scientific understanding of eclipses to illuminate human history and theology. Since we can compute the location and timing of eclipses, these same computations can also be used to calculate backwards into history, to identify the dates of famous eclipses.

For example, the crucifixion of Jesus is said to have taken place during a dramatic eclipse. Acts 2:20 describes the event this way: “The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood.” Three gospels tell essentially the same story of darkness at noon, leading eclipse experts to conclude that the crucifixion took place during a total lunar eclipse, dated precisely to Friday, April 3, 33 A.D.

Similarly, the Book of Genesis tells of Abraham in Canaan this way: “When the sun was going down, great darkness fell upon him.” The location and timing fit with a solar eclipse that occurred on May 9, 1533 B.C. Another famous eclipse, recorded in Joshua, includes a miracle: The moon and sun

appear to stop, and even reverse their motion. No doubt, the eclipse occurred in September 1131 B.C., but the “miracle” is physically impossible, leading Close and others to suspect an optical illusion associated with a total eclipse. Close makes it his personal mission, as an eclipse chaser, to witness and verify this optical illusion. It’s a backstory that runs through this volume.

As fascinating as the science and culture of eclipses are, it is Close’s personal search, actual and spiritual, that makes this book special. As a particle physicist, Close approaches his topic with all the rigor of a scientific mind, but clearly, eclipses are for him something more than a natural phenomenon to be observed and measured and described. They are psychologically powerful and spiritually uplifting, life-changing, even (to use a most unscientific word) magical.

Close’s enduring fascination with eclipses began in midsummer 1954, when he was just a schoolboy of 8, at St. Mark’s County Primary School in Peterborough, England. His teacher was Mr. Laxton, a generalist who taught classrooms of 50 preteens everything from multiplication tables and historical facts to penmanship. Luckily for Close and his classmates, however, Mr. Laxton was both passionate and knowledgeable about eclipses—and just as important, he knew how to observe one properly. The older students were excused from the regular classes to witness an eclipse of the sun, and in the process they learned how to take rudimentary measurements, to conduct a simple scientific investigation. It’s fair to say that Mr. Laxton whetted the young Close’s appetite, not only for eclipses but also for the scientific method: for fact, deduction, prediction, knowledge.

Happily, Close’s first eclipse was a fairly dramatic experience. It filled the pages of the local newspaper. But it was only a partial eclipse. Mr. Laxton made a lesson of this, and taught the students why they had not experienced “totality.” In doing so, he tried to spark their imagination and desire

for the big prize. Totality, Close recalls him saying, “was a sight to behold, and if ever we were lucky enough to see one, the experience would be unforgettable. He couldn’t explain why, except to say that if it happened, we would know what he meant.”

This early experience—and Mr. Laxton’s lyricism and passion—did, indeed, spark Close’s imagination and launched him on a lifelong quest, one that took him to Cornwall, Zambia, the deserts of Libya, the seas of the Pacific, and more. Along the way, we as readers get to share both his disappointments (the weather doesn’t always cooperate) and his ecstasy. His quixotic spirit is infectious, and we come to occupy the odd subculture of dedicated eclipse chasers. This fraternity is almost like a secret society, with its private language, rituals, and mantras. This shared mission has spawned an industry in the manufacture of memorabilia—buttons and T-shirts displaying the latitude and longitude and path of each eclipse—not to mention the substantial travel and tourist economy created by these privileged jet-setters who criss-cross the globe in search of ecstatic moments.

We meet some true oddballs on this pilgrimage, which one devotee describes as “a Grateful Dead concert, but without the drugs.” Close concedes that it’s a blurry line between passion and mental instability: “Like druids, who gather to greet equinoxes at Stonehenge, I had joined an international cult whose members worship the death and rebirth of the sun at moveable Meccas, about half a dozen times every decade.” He was not prepared for the delusional thinking and the full “spectrum of weirdness,” which includes believers in UFOs, alien abduction, and more.

But the “fantasy parallel universe” is a small segment of the whole eclipse-chasing culture. Science and wonder mix seamlessly in this tale, but Close is a scientist first and foremost and has spent his life, since his initiation in Peterborough in 1954, trading in facts. Facts and science are under attack in Western society today, the victims of the worst kind

of magical thinking, and it's difficult to read this scientific memoir without fretting about the scientific enterprise. Close wasn't entirely successful convincing the skeptical Zambian boy of scientific authority regarding solar eclipses, but he did get him thinking, and he got this concession:

The boy listened. He was interested, but skeptical: "I still don't believe it will happen, but if it does, then I will believe in science."

Soon there will be another dramatic cosmic coincidence, and scientists will

have another opportunity to convince skeptics of the value and validity of scientific thought. Scientists are predicting that this summer—on August 21, to be precise—a total solar eclipse will darken a narrow belt across the United States from Oregon to South Carolina. Upwards of 200 million people will gather across the country to witness the phenomenon, making it "the most watched total solar eclipse in history." Most of those who turn out for this dramatic event will already believe in scientific prediction, but perhaps a few skeptics will go home less skeptical. ♦

1980, Fidel Castro allowed over 100,000 Cubans to emigrate from the port of Mariel to Miami, he inadvertently created a natural experiment on the effect of immigration on wages. Borjas calculates that the Mariel boatlift increased the number of high school dropouts in Miami by about 18 percent, and in subsequent years reduced the wages of native-born high school dropouts by over 20 percent. He discusses a well-known earlier study that examined the Mariel boatlift and found no significant impact on wages in Miami. But as he shows, that study was seriously flawed: It failed to isolate workers with similar skill levels to those of the Mariel immigrants, and more surprisingly, it selected comparison cities partly for their economic similarity to Miami *after* 1980.

This elementary error is akin to a medical researcher choosing the placebo by looking for patients who were not injected with a harmful dosage of an experimental drug but somehow got sick anyway.

Despite its obvious flaws, this earlier study on the Mariel boatlift has been cited widely in economics literature and in the popular press, and was recently "trumpeted" by President Obama's Council of Economic Advisors (CEA). Borjas says "the Mariel study has played a crucial role in building the narrative that immigration is 'good for everyone.'" He also discusses a similarly flawed study that was promoted before it was even published by President George W. Bush's CEA. The flaws in these studies, and the reception they nonetheless received, reveal what one might already have suspected: Many who approach the issue hope to find a certain outcome.

Nonetheless, according to Borjas, our current high level of immigration produces substantial benefits. It creates winners as well as losers; more precisely, it creates winners *because* it creates losers. The chief winners are employers who pay less in wages and consumers who pay less for many products and services they buy.

It makes no sense . . . to argue that there are no wage effects while simultaneously claiming that immigrants increase native wealth by billions

BCA

# Winners and Losers

*Immigration is ultimately a political question more than an economic one.* BY PETER J. HANSEN

Anyone wishing to learn more about the economic effects of immigration on America and American workers would do well to read this book. George J. Borjas is a highly respected economist at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and one of the world's foremost experts on the economics of immigration. While most of his past writings have been technical works, *We Wanted Workers* is chiefly intended for a popular audience. It is very clearly written, contains ample yet easily digestible data, and offers a balanced and careful treatment of an issue that is generally treated in a very different manner.

The "narrative" to which the subtitle refers is the widespread view that immigration is an unalloyed benefit for America and those already here. Borjas argues that the reality is more complicated: Immigration creates winners and losers, and as the laws of supply and demand would lead one to expect, workers who must compete directly with

*Peter J. Hansen works in financial markets in Cambridge, Massachusetts.*

**We Wanted Workers**  
*Unraveling the Immigration Narrative*  
by George J. Borjas  
Norton, 240 pp., \$26.95



*California migrant workers (1964)*

immigrant workers (legal or illegal) suffer as a consequence. Working with census data spanning many decades, Borjas has found that "if immigration increases the size of a group by 10 percent, the earnings of native workers in that group fall by 3-4 percent."

Borjas analyzes a recent "natural experiment" that supports his data findings, and even suggests that, in some situations, those findings understate immigration's effects. When, in

or trillions of dollars. It also makes no sense to argue that immigrants greatly depress native wages while maintaining there are no economic benefits to be had.

The laws of economics dictate that, overall, “the dollar gains accruing to the natives who gain *must* be numerically larger than the dollar losses suffered by the natives who lose.” Economists call this the “immigration surplus,” and it follows necessarily from the voluntary nature of economic transactions. Borjas’s estimate of the immigration surplus in America is \$50 billion annually; by contrast, his estimate of the “redistribution effect”—the amount redistributed from native workers to employers and consumers—is about 10 times as much, \$516 billion annually. In other words, immigration currently causes a massive transfer of wealth from workers or labor to owners or capital. It greatly exacerbates income inequality while producing a very modest net increase in wealth. (It is ironic that the political party more vocally opposed to income inequality is the one more that more strongly supports high levels of immigration.)

This calculation does not include the economic gains for immigrants themselves, which are substantial. Borjas notes that these gains are widely acknowledged and uncontroversial. He focuses on the effect of immigration on those already here because it is rarely discussed in a realistic and balanced manner.

The immigration surplus also does not include the fiscal effects immigrants produce, the taxes they pay, and the public services they use. Not surprisingly, the more highly skilled an immigrant, the more positive his or her fiscal effect on the receiving country. Because, at present, our “immigrant population is disproportionately low-skill, a disproportionately high number of welfare recipients are foreign born.” A National Academy of Sciences panel (of which Borjas was a member) estimated last year that immigration currently produces a fiscal burden at the federal level of \$50 billion—about the same as the immigration surplus it provides to the rest of the economy.

That figure does not include the fiscal burden for state and local governments, which (as any parent of children in an urban public school knows) is considerable. Overall, then, immigration probably produces modestly higher fiscal costs than economic benefits for the native population.

Those fiscal costs, however, can be viewed as an investment for the future: Most of the children now learning English in our public schools will someday be workers and taxpayers. And more important than the immediate fiscal impact of immigration is its long-term impact. Regrettably, we cannot begin to estimate what this impact will be without making assumptions—or, more precisely, guesses—about future rates of taxation and government spending. Using various assumptions, the National Academy of Sciences panel estimated the long-run (75-year) fiscal impact

of the average immigrant currently in America as ranging from a gain of \$58,000 to a loss of \$119,000. Unfortunately, that latter figure is based on what might seem to be the most realistic assumption, that there will not be significant federal spending cuts or tax increases in the years ahead.

*We Wanted Workers* also contains excellent discussions of the history of immigration in America, the melting pot in theory and practice, and the likely effects of completely open borders, a policy favored by many economists, libertarian as well as liberal. And Borjas concludes with a sensible, if limited, argument that immigration is ultimately a political question more than an economic one. In sum, it’s hard to imagine a more suitable book if you’re genuinely seeking information about what may well be today’s most politically charged issue. ♦

BCA

## Axis of Envy

*When the cage isn’t big enough for literary lions.*

BY PARKER BAUER

In January 1944 the up-and-coming novelist Vladimir Nabokov sent the oracular literary critic Edmund Wilson a letter, with two enclosures. The first was a sample of Nabokov’s new translation of the Russian verse novel *Eugene Onegin*; the second was a pair of socks Wilson had lent him. The translation, he disclosed, had been done by “a new method I have found after some scientific thinking.” In one sock Nabokov had poked a hole, which his wife, Vera, had sewed up with “her rather simple patching methods.”

Sometimes Wilson would tuck in a note to Nabokov a paper butterfly with a wound-up rubber band, which, on opening, “buzzed out of the card

*Parker Bauer is a writer in Florida.*

### The Feud

*Vladimir Nabokov, Edmund Wilson,  
and the End of a Beautiful Friendship*  
by Alex Beam  
Pantheon Books, 224 pp., \$26.95

like a real lepidopteron,” delighting Nabokov, whose sideline was the classifying of butterfly genitalia for the Harvard Museum. Mostly by mail, the two writers carried on discourse and disputation (and sometimes just carried on, needling one another) for a quarter-century. Alas, it all ended quite badly.

Pen pals forever, or so it might have seemed: two literary minds who meshed and yet clashed, both deeply engaged but different enough to keep it interesting, masters of the amicable

insult. “We have always been frank with one another,” breezes Nabokov in 1956, as a kind of keynote for their entire correspondence, “and I know that you will find my criticism exhilarating.” Their letters—crackling with debate on diction both Russian and English, with pleas to read this or that overlooked novel, with a crossfire of critiques of their own works—were private, even intimate. Their breakup was anything but. At the end, the combatants were flinging their charges not in personal notes but in the letters columns of literary journals where, almost cinematically, the world could enjoy the spectacle. Curious latecomers can catch it in this retrospective account.

Alex Beam, a newspaper columnist and author of books on life in a mental hospital and the murder of Mormon leader Joseph Smith, brings to this one a tonic light touch, at times an elbow. He reveals that on first learning of the falling-out a few years ago, he thought it “was the silliest thing I had ever heard.” For better or worse, he appears not to have gotten over that first impression. When he quips, a bit later, that the duo’s “early years together had elements of a courtship, thriving on shared discoveries,” we have to feel that he gets it just right. Although Nabokov lived mostly in Germany, England, Switzerland, and America, he was irrevocably Russian. He grew up in St. Petersburg, where his father held a post in the government after the February Revolution in 1917. The family left the country two years later, fleeing the Bolsheviks. Nabokov *père* was shot dead while addressing a political event in Berlin.

By then, Nabokov was enrolled at Trinity College, Cambridge, and in the next dozen years, he would publish nine novels, all in Russian. In 1940 he arrived in the United States, aiming to start a new literary life. Providentially—though the skeptic Nabokov would have sniffed at the notion of providence—he had a cousin who lived in Wellfleet, Massachusetts, across the street from Edmund Wilson. Needing an advocate, as well as an income, Nabokov wrote to Wilson at the cousin’s urging.

Wilson, then literary editor of the *New Republic*, was pleased, and poised, to lend a hand. At 45, Nabokov’s senior by four years, he was the nation’s leading critic, having helped to establish the careers of F. Scott Fitzgerald, John Dos Passos, Ernest Hemingway, and William Faulkner. Soon he was running reviews by Nabokov and commending him to other editors. “You are a magician,” Nabokov wrote in thanks.

Wilson was fascinated by all things Russian—history, politics, language. In the 1930s, with many in literary America, he had gone through a phase of infatuation with Soviet com-



Vladimir Nabokov

munism. He visited Russia in 1935, landing in a hospital with scarlet fever, where he set himself to learning the language. His fourth wife, Elena Thornton, was Russian on her mother’s side. Before their marriage he wooed her in the Wellfleet house, where, between episodes of lovemaking, he would make her “laugh a lot” by retelling “Russian stories from V. Nabokov.” Beam leaves out that last bit, about the risibly aphrodisiac powers of Nabokov’s fiction. It comes from Wilson’s journals. Yet Beam does a detailed, folksy job—a sort of chummy voiceover—of relating the feud and its long epistolary foreplay.

In 1943, Wilson pulls strings, helping Nabokov get a Guggenheim Fel-

lowship. He wangles advances for them both on a proposed book collaboration, which never gets done. Together they do turn out a translation of Alexander Pushkin’s play *Mozart and Salieri*, Wilson polishing Nabokov’s draft and writing the introduction. Their letters make clear their closeness, from afar. Nabokov: “You are one of the very few people in the world whom I keenly miss when I do not see them.” Wilson: “Our conversations have been among the few consolations of my literary life through these last years.” (The years in question were those of World War II—which is hardly noted in their hundreds of letters.)

One eventual fault line was political. The second of Nabokov’s English-language novels, *Bend Sinister* (1947), portrayed a dictatorial dystopia that it was no leap for him to imagine, since he had fled the scourges of Lenin and Hitler alike. Wilson—whose leftism had moderated but not enough that you’d notice—couldn’t abide the book. He fired a squib to Nabokov:

You aren’t good at this kind of subject, which involves questions of politics and social change, because you are totally uninterested in these matters and have never taken the trouble to understand them.

The charge was bizarre, betraying an almost amnesiac incomprehension of Nabokov’s émigré history, which surely was no secret. Wilson had a long-term psychic investment in Lenin, having chronicled, in *To the Finland Station* (1940), his ascent to power. To Nabokov, Leninism was “a pail of milk of human kindness with a dead rat at the bottom.” As he reproved Wilson later:

you somehow did not bother to check your preconceived notions in regard to old Russia while, on the other hand, the glamor of Lenin’s reign retained for you the emotional iridescence which your optimism, idealism and youth had provided.

Yet all the fuss was still in good fun, more or less. Despite his dislike of *Bend Sinister*, Wilson finagled to get it published. He promoted it to other critics, not wanting to review it himself. And much later, in 1955, he

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lent his name to getting an agent for a dramatized version. Only with the publication of Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* (1958) did the rancor begin. Wilson composed two lengthy exegeses of the novel, declaring his belief that it would "come to stand as one of the great events in man's literary and moral history." Nabokov, though he admired Pasternak's verse, thought *Zhivago* was tripe. He later called it "the black cat" that came between them.

Where Wilson, his Marxism abated, saw in the novel an affirmation of Christian premises—especially the idea that the vital unit is the individual, not the mass—Nabokov seems to have seen only competition for his own current novel, the notorious *Lolita* (1955). The two books were vying to top the best-seller lists. It didn't help Nabokov's humor when Pasternak was awarded a Nobel Prize (which he declined, wary of Kremlin repercussions).

*Lolita* was another sore spot. Nabokov thought it his best novel; Wilson abhorred it. "Nasty subjects may make fine books," wrote Wilson, "but I don't feel you have got away with this." He ought to know: His own sensational novel *Memoirs of Hecate County* (1942) had once been banned in New York state.

In 1964 Nabokov published his translation of Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*, of which he had sent Wilson a sample long before, along with the mended socks and the ominous note about "scientific thinking." Far from his finest work, nonetheless it would be his magnum opus, measured by weight alone: four volumes, 1,895 pages—nearly all of it Nabokov's commentary and appendices, not the novel itself. This was just the sort of excess that would gag Wilson, who had long urged compact editions of classic works, volumes small enough to be handled in bed.

Nabokov's publishers promoted the idea of a review by Wilson; in an earlier essay he had praised the evocative powers of Pushkin. Nabokov was apprehensive, and for good reason. Wilson's review in the upstart *New York Review of Books* ran 6,600 words, but the second sentence gave the thrust of the whole thing:

Since Mr. Nabokov is in the habit of introducing any job of this kind which he undertakes by an announcement that he is unique and incomparable and that everybody else who has attempted it is an oaf and an ignoramus, incompetent as a linguist and scholar, usually with the implication that he is also a low-class person and a ridiculous personality, Nabokov ought not to complain if the reviewer, though trying not to imitate Nabokov's bad literary manners, does not hesitate to underline his weaknesses.

His hedge that he felt for Nabokov a "warm affection sometimes chilled



Edmund Wilson

by exasperation" could scarcely take the curse off. But he had a case: In the same journal, Nabokov on his high horse had savaged a previous translator's version of *Onegin*. Wilson judged that Nabokov's overly literal translation did no justice to Pushkin. *Onegin* is the tale of a louche aristocrat who kills his best friend in a duel and scorns the woman with whom too late (when she marries a prince) he falls in love. Its poetic effects, mistily resistant to posing in English, are doubly blurred by the nutty syntax and diction—"scrab," "rummers," "shippon"—that Nabokov deploys and Wilson deplures.

Moreover, the afterbirth—the massive commentary—suffered "mainly from a lack of common sense."

Whether or not Wilson had convinced himself that his attack was completely objective, Nabokov could view it as nothing else than the end of their friendship. The *New York Review* published his protest, then a follow-up flurry of broadsides from Wilson rebutting the protest. The quarrel spilled over into *Encounter*, where Nabokov published "A Reply to My Critics"—now numbering, besides Wilson, assorted Slavic scholars displeased with Nabokov's quirky translation. Other writers, including Robert Lowell and Robert Graves (both pro-Wilson), weighed in with letters.

Telling this "silliest" story, Beam strikes the right notes, lightly. On occasion he succumbs to an urge to address his subjects: "But really, Vladimir" and "God bless you, Edmund." He mixes metaphors, including this threefer: "storm-tossed characters pinballing around the canvas of early-twentieth-century Russian and Soviet history." These beefs are minor.

Beam lays stress, perhaps a bit too much, on Edmund Wilson's declining influence by the 1960s. Wilson was living out his days alone, for much of the year, in the dust and shadows of the house he had inherited from his mother in northern New York, while Nabokov, flush with *Lolita* royalties, lived with his wife in a Swiss luxury hotel. Wilson, says Beam, clung to envy; Nabokov, to self-satisfaction: "Wilson had known Nabokov as a man in need, and continued their friendship into a time when Nabokov preferred to be regarded as a man who needed nothing from anyone."

Hearing of Wilson's poor health, Nabokov, for the first time in years, wrote him a letter: "please believe that I have long ceased to bear you a grudge for your incomprehensible incomprehension of Pushkin's and Nabokov's *Onegin*." The note went unanswered, Wilson saying to someone, "It always makes him cheerful to think that his friends are in bad shape." Nabokov noted in his journal for the week of June 12, 1972: "E.W. died." Five years later, Nabokov would follow. There wasn't any winner. ♦

# Devise and Conquer

*Lessons from the building, and maintenance,  
of Rome's imperium.* BY J.E. LENDON

**P***ax Romana* is a magic mirror that shows us the bloody beasts we must become to raise and rule an American empire. Few seek such a course, but it is the inevitable end of many or indeed most realistic American foreign policy options, especially in the Middle East. How must we behave if we wish to hold dominion as securely as the Romans did over sundry ominous, contumacious, and well-armed folk?

First, we must be implacable in war. We must break our enemies. This was once the American way, as the Confederacy, the Germans, and the Japanese can attest. To the broken, mercy and alliance can be extended: To this American habit the same witnesses can be called. "Spare the humble and war down the proud" is how Virgil described our policy. Some foes, like Carthage, may never bow their heads: thus Cato the Elder appending the phrase "Carthage must be destroyed" to his every speech long after Carthage, defeated in two Punic Wars, had been reduced to a trifling trading post on the African foreshore. Carthage was finally obliterated during Rome's Third Punic War, in 149-146 B.C. Such foes must suffer the grimmer fate Tacitus described as Rome's alternative policy: "They make a desert and they call it peace."

We need not turn victory into rule: We seek above all to inculcate a submissive attitude in those we defeat. The Romans rarely made war to seize territory and were long reluctant to create provinces under direct government,

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## Pax Romana

*War, Peace, and Conquest  
in the Roman World*  
by Adrian Goldsworthy  
Yale, 528 pp., \$32.50

preferring deferential friends to taxpaying subjects. Many puzzling instances of Roman action or of sloth—including the alleged advice of Augustus, Rome's greatest conqueror, to his successors, to halt Roman expansion—can be understood when it is grasped that the Romans sought victory for nation and army rather than rule over more dirt; that they valued psychological over territorial domination; and that, early on at least, they felt that the direct administration of a conquered area was a sign of failure.

Allies, in the Roman view, must be supported with arms, even if—especially if—they are in the wrong, as were the "Sons of Mars," the mercenary company that inadvertently ignited the First Punic War. They must be supported even if supporting them is perilous, even if supporting them pits you against a mighty enemy, such as Pyrrhus of Epirus (Pyrrhic his victories might have been, but they killed tens of thousands of Romans). Only by such actions against Rome's own interest was the loyalty of allies ensured afterwards when disloyalty was in the allies' interest—as when Hannibal thrice defeated the Romans and was trampling his way down Italy, and the power of Rome appeared as a balloon drifting towards the sharp tusk of a Carthaginian elephant. An empire consists both of subject lands and loyal allies, ideally mostly the latter. For centuries the Romans' most usual term for their empire was simply "the allies."

A properly submissive attitude was difficult for ancient states to maintain, and the Romans were apt to see arrogance where none was intended—as, perhaps, in the case of Carthage. Over time they also came to grasp the joys and profits of direct rule. But their way of war served them well for keeping the peace over what evolved into a territorial empire, because they were no less implacable if that peace were broken. Spare no effort to defeat and hunt down rebels (so the Romans thought). If they flee to the gable of the world—to Masada, 1,300 feet above a desert—carry in water and build a ramp up to that roof and leave it as your monument when the rebels finally preempt their capture by suicide. Atrocity was the Roman way in war and revolts, in part because they enjoyed it—the old wolf-magic still pulsed in their blood—but also because they knew well the terrible power of example.

The Roman peace was kept in less brutal ways, too, as Adrian Goldsworthy goes on to show here. Graceful in prose, learned in lore, as comfortable with archaeological as with literary witness, and a master of anecdote and historical comparison, Goldsworthy points his reader to many instances where Roman rule succeeded by powerful protection, upright justice, and intermingled economic interest.

After the turn of the millennium, Roman soldiers were rare in most of the interior provinces of the empire, because the Romans never imagined that their distant, descending, all-slaughtering military might could replace in local sway the power that rises up by nature from city street, from farm and fane. At that level, the power to collect rent is the power to collect taxes, and the power to protect the harvest is the power to drive off broken men and brigands. Buy the men who live by rent, and control the cities; in ruder lands, buy those who command the ancient fidelity or the piety of the folk. Rome collected *rentiers* and local chiefs into town councils, councils collectively charged with gathering taxes and keeping the peace, councilors who in exchange Rome allowed to lord over lesser men, and squeeze them.

If that squeezing be our measure, the rule of the councils was perhaps the most successful regime in the history of the West, involving the greatest peaceful transfer of wealth from the low to the high. This we can tell from the vast and ornate structures that the squeezers built for their towns in rivalry with one another: the temples, markets, fountains, baths, colonnades, and libraries. York Minster took the Middle Ages over two-and-a-half centuries to finish; a second-century A.D. magnifico of Roman Ephesus could have built it in two-and-a-half years.

After the bloody conquest, and after the bloody suppression of the rebellions that often erupted when the sons of those killed in the conquest came of age, and despite the daily exactions by high from low—despite, in short, the way the Romans seemed to brood a nest full of the eggs of future strife—during

the first two, and the fourth, centuries A.D., most of the Roman empire, most of the time, abode in profound, almost stultifying, peace. Goldsworthy argues that the cycles of stunning violence with which the Romans introduced themselves to their eventual subjects induced in the conquered a manner of coma, and that when eventually they awoke it appeared to them that they had always been servants of Rome, that Roman rule was by then (in the immortal formulation of Paul Veyne) “in the nature of things.”

Can we take upon ourselves the cheerful cruelty needed to beat our enemies into that coma from which they will emerge our willing collaborators? Will we ever be able to reconcile our consciences to looking into Adrian Goldsworthy’s mirror and seeing the wolves of old Rome, their chops crusted with blood, looking back at us? ♦

The ideological thread would have been clearer had this, like other FSA books, been organized chronologically or by photographer.

The photographs, unlike the urbanizing nation of the time, are predominantly rural and small-town until the last phases of Stryker’s federal career. In the beginning, Brain Truster Rexford Tugwell (Stryker’s economics teacher at Columbia), believing that the Depression was permanent, launched the Resettlement Administration, the predecessor of the FSA. The RA created collective settlements where displaced agricultural workers could grow their own food. On Washington’s Metro, Beltway denizens can visit one of Eleanor Roosevelt’s favorites: Greenbelt, Maryland.

Unfortunately, the New Deal itself was responsible for much of the devastation, as even left-leaning writers on the FSA have noted, not to mention conservative historians such as Amity Shlaes. In the economically illiterate hope that raising prices would increase incomes and restore prosperity, the New Deal cartelized agriculture. Landowners raked in subsidies for taking land out of production and destroying crops and livestock, which threw huge numbers of agricultural laborers, tenant farmers, and sharecroppers out of work and made food and clothing more expensive. FDR himself, having created the opportunity, built his coalition by decrying “one-third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clothed, and ill-nourished.”

The first and most famous phase of the FSA project sanctified these destitute workers. Its iconic photograph is Dorothea Lange’s *Migrant Mother* (1936), depicting an abandoned Okie mother and children stranded by their busted car in California’s Central Valley, where they had gone for agricultural work. Lange’s triangular composition, evoking a Raphael Madonna, has lost none of its desperation and sorrow, and for the rest of her long career, she resisted being stereotyped as a one-picture photographer. The picture wasn’t posed, Lange said; she had permission to hang around the family’s camp and waited for the right moment. But photography always requires a choice among images, and until the photographers made him stop,



# Image of a Decade

*The story behind the pictures from the Farm Security Agency.* BY JAY WEISER

**T**he New Deal’s Farm Security Administration (FSA) photography project remains a landmark of documentary photography—and social realism. The project launched the careers of several major photographers, and when we think of Depression America, we see its searing images. But it was a political failure. So, too, is this disorganized book.

Taschen’s standard format makes for an affordable, quality product, and as an aesthetic and ideological statement, the photographs still pack a punch. The tradeoff: The doorstep size, packed with photographs, and text printed in English, French, and German leave limited room for editorial context. The German editor Peter Wal-

## New Deal Photography

USA 1935-1943

by Peter Walther

Taschen, 608 pp., \$19.99

ther’s primary expertise is in photography and German literature, without a feel for the nuances of the New Deal’s Stalinism Lite. Because the photographs are in the public domain, selections have been reproduced in other, more thoughtful, books over the last three decades.

The book claims to offer a geographically organized portrait of America in the 1930s and early ’40s, but this is misleading. As the photographers’ candid comments throughout the book indicate, project head Roy Stryker was commissioning propaganda (his word) for the Roosevelt administration, whose message changed with political needs.

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Stryker went so far as to destroy negatives that didn't follow the party line.

Stryker claimed that unlike *Life*, which launched the golden age of American photojournalism in 1936, the FSA photographs themselves were intended to be the documents, as opposed to illustrating a particular story's narrative. This distinction is without much difference: *Fortune* would often give photographers near-carte blanche—as in the Walker Evans southern series, done on hiatus from the FSA, that became *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*—while Stryker would send the photographers out on assignment with a script, albeit with some flexibility.

This anticipated the postwar Magnum agency, where photojournalists with individual aesthetics went out into the world and developed their own stories. The FSA photographs are static compared to Weegee's anarchic, garish, almost exactly contemporary photos of New York City lowlifes (and low deaths). Instead, Stryker sought to emulate Lewis Hine's straightforward social documentary portraits of workers. Like the Soviet photographer Alexander Rodchenko, whose explosive Constructivist compositions congealed, under Stalinist pressure, into heroic images of the proletariat, the FSA photographers were part of the worldwide 1930s trend to Socialist Realism.

In this early phase, in order to avoid provoking the southern Democratic barons in Congress, the poor but noble agricultural workers photographed were overwhelmingly white. People are notably slim: A half-century before the obesity epidemic, the rare overweight Americans are literally fat cats like Dorothea Lange's white southern plantation boss, shown with his slender black crew (1936).

In contrast to Jacob Riis's early-20th-century New York slum photos, the FSA photographers were instructed to downplay the squalor. Ever the truant, Walker Evans departed from the Stryker aesthetic in his geometric shots of unpopulated, beaten-up houses, cemeteries, and townscapes, echoing the earlier geometric work of Charles Sheeler and Alfred Stieglitz. Work from this series was incorporated into the pathbreak-

ing *American Photographs* (1938), setting the table for postwar classics like Robert Frank's *The Americans* and Lee Friedlander's streetscapes.

Back at the FSA, Stryker was having a hard time getting mainstream publications to use his photographs. Ironically—and noted only in passing by Peter Walther—the FSA photos became widely known only when Edward Steichen, in his last exhibition as Museum of Modern Art photography curator, used them as propaganda for a new collectivist push: the 1960s "Other America" antipoverty crusade. Meanwhile, "Red Rex" (as conservatives called Tugwell) was a lightning



Manhattan bootblack, 1937

rod for controversy, and southern Democrats and Republican conservatives were increasingly opposed to the New Deal. Once they took control of Congress in the 1938 election, they sought to shut down the program.

It was time to show happy peasants, rather than destitute peasants, in order to highlight the New Deal's successes. Unfortunately, to paraphrase Mel Brooks, the peasants were revolting. Progressive-leaning historians Alan Trachtenberg and Lawrence Levine report, in *Documenting America*, that the FSA's clients resisted collectivized subsistence agriculture. Stryker's scripts became more directive, with more views of townscapes with improving conditions and rural families at the local cooperative store (kept in business by New Deal-era restrictions on cheaper chain stores). Less stark than the mid-1930s

work, they also offer mass baptisms, jitterbuggers, Ferris wheels, and elderly Florida beach vacationers.

With the start of World War II, FDR's Dr. Win-the-War replaced Dr. New Deal. The FSA photography unit was shut down and the remaining staff moved over to a new propaganda vehicle, the Office of War Information. Later-period FSA and OWI pictures offer early color photography—this book's revelation, offering a more vivid, naturalistic perspective than Norman Rockwell's sentimental, photorealistic color illustrations. Back in black and white, we see big cities as the war boom takes hold, with views of downtown Dallas and Chicago's Union Station, and masses of people at work.

Of course, not all groups saw increased opportunity during World War II. The book's shocker is buried on page 299, thanks to the perverse geographical organization: Hello to Manzanar—or at least, to Tule Lake. Every collectivist agricultural revolution needs its kulaks, and the administration at last found a population that was compelled to obey commands and (at least in the case of its businesses) be liquidated. Japanese Americans, subject to intense racial discrimination before the war, had created an entrepreneurial niche in truck gardening: fruits and vegetables for urban markets that we would today call "locally sourced." After being forced to sell their businesses for pennies on the dollar, they were shipped off to internment camps.

You can't make omelets without breaking eggs, and you can't collectivize agriculture without creating food shortages: The Roosevelt administration disrupted the West Coast's efficient fruit and vegetable agricultural sector just as the region's population exploded with war workers. *New Deal Photography* offers a single color Russell Lee picture (1942), which the OWI presumably hoped would depict the internees as happy collective farmers among the furrows. They don't look too happy—nor should readers be, because this appalling culmination of the FSA project has been addressed in depth in several previous books, as opposed to the cursory treatment here. ♦

# The Hit Parade

*Keanu Reeves and the economics of movie mayhem.*

BY JOE QUEENAN

In the deceptively thoughtful 2014 action film *John Wick*, Keanu Reeves plays a recently widowed assassin who comes out of retirement after Russian gangsters beat him up, steal his car, and kill his dog. Miffed about the car, not too happy about the beating, but furious about the demise of his puppy, Wick goes on a murderous rampage and ends up killing 3,625 people, all of whom deserve it.

Motion pictures often provide subtle, impossibly delicate critiques of society that go over the head of the average moviegoer. This is particularly true in the macroeconomic arena, where films address flaws in popular economic theories, such as the misguided notion that low unemployment is a good thing. For in *John Wick*, we see exactly what happens when an economy reaches full employment: A hapless employer seeking high-quality personnel finds that all the good ones are taken, all the pros have full-time jobs, and the only people left to hire as henchmen are the halt and the lame, the bottom of the barrel, the dregs of society, the duds.

Not to take anything away from Wick qua bloodthirsty, conscienceless assassin, but if a minuscule labor pool had not forced the Russkie mob boss to hire wastrels, half-wits, and temps to protect him, there is no way his nemesis could have killed off 3,625 of his henchscum. He might have iced 1,000. Maybe 2,000. But he couldn't have killed all of them, because if unemployment were still running at, say, 5.5 percent, there would still have been a few reasonably competent thugs on

the payroll who could put Wick in the ground. The fact is, most of the gangsters in *John Wick* look like they have day jobs at Applebee's.

The exact same thing happens in *John Wick 2*, only this time Keanu polishes off one-third of the population of Rome in about 18 minutes. It is a stupendous achievement, all the more so because this time Wick is not shooting hundreds of people in the head for personal reasons, but because he owes a colleague a favor. In the topsyturvy, yet oddly honorable, world of *John Wick*, when a pal asks you to kill 125,978 people, including his sister, and to do it gratis, you do it.

Yet here, as with the original *John Wick*, an intriguing economic subtext can be deciphered. After Wick shoots or stabs 112,534 bad people, the guy who hired him dispatches his own crew to ice the prolific hit man. This works out badly, as Wick not only kills the 15,768 thugs sent to do him in, but guns down his old backstabbing compadre himself.

Alas, in a momentary lapse of reason, he guns him down in an exclusive hotel that caters only to gangsters, and here such indecorous behavior is strictly forbidden. Immediately, a global contract is put out on him, a contract so mind-bogglingly vast, constituting such an unimaginably large sum of money, that no one can resist gunning for him. It is a contract for \$7 million.

*Seven million dollars?* Seriously? A piddling \$7 million to kill the most gifted, remorseless killer the world has ever known? Let's face it, \$7 million just isn't a whole lot of cash, not when you consider the risk-reward ratio.

What will \$7 million get you outside the world of homicide? Look at it this way: Chase Daniel, backup quar-

terback for the Philadelphia Eagles, gets \$7 million a year. Last year, he threw one pass. One pass. *The entire season.* In other words, \$7 million will get you a scrub who rides the bench behind a callow rookie. What else will \$7 million get you? It might get you a tiny summer home in the Hamptons. You might get Barbra Streisand to do a one-night-only engagement at your private stadium. But she probably wouldn't do an encore. What \$7 million will *not* get you is an actor of the stature of Keanu Reeves to star in your movie. Ironically, Keanu the actor gets more money to act in *John Wick 2* than an assassin would get to kill him.

Where did that number come from? Why not \$10 million? Or \$20 million? Or since the price on Wick's head is Monopoly money, why not offer a trillion? In the first *John Wick*, Keanu kills 3,625 villains. In the second, he kills 1.2 million. And that's just in Rome. So if I'm a top-flight button man and somebody asks me to off a killer of his pedigree, I'm going to want a whole lot more than \$7 million.

The question is: Has Hollywood screwed up the numbers here? No. Because as Wick's bloodbath continues, he dispatches everyone sent to kill him. So by the time the film is over, another 125,387 corpses have been added to the funeral pyre.

What do we learn from this? Simple. When the labor market contracts, employers have no choice but to hike salaries to attract quality help. During a recession, you might be able to hire a halfway-decent hit man for \$7 million. But once the economy starts to percolate, \$7 million will get you nothing but clowns, has-beens, amateurs. As the final shot in *John Wick 2* fades out, we see Keanu pursued by an army of cash-strapped hit men, none of whom has a chance of finishing him off.

Mark my words: When *John Wick 3* hits the screen in a year or so, the price on Keanu Reeves's head is going to go straight through the roof. At least \$100 million. Plus benefits. Because as anybody in show business, and the world of economics, will tell you: You want talent? Pay for it. ♦

Joe Queenan is the author, most recently, of *One for the Books*.

**“The newly crowned Miss USA on Tuesday sought to explain that she thinks she is ‘privileged’ to have healthcare, but that it should be a right. . . . [Kara] McCullough ignited a firestorm on Twitter after her answer to a question during the pageant about whether she thought healthcare was a right or a privilege for Americans.”**

—the Hill, May 16, 2017

# THE NEW YORK TIMES

if there were a little rain in the afternoon, 'cause that happens a lot this time of year, and I have that ache in my left knee again.

Y, MAY 22, 2017

ONE DOLLAR CHEAP

## MISS USA'S ANSWERS SPARK DENUNCIATIONS, DEFENSE

*Contradictions, Lack of Clarity on Net Neutrality, NAFTA*

By GRACIE HART

WASHINGTON — The newly crowned Miss USA, Kara McCullough, is finding herself in the center of a political firestorm—one that may cost her the title. Despite issuing a clarification on her stance toward health care as a right and not, as she previously said on stage, a privilege, McCullough has been caught flat-footed on a range of issues, including net neutrality, NAFTA, the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, and the feasibility of caps on per-capita Medicaid funding.

“That she thought health care was a privilege and not a right turns out to be the tip of the iceberg,” said Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.). “We just did a panel, and I can tell you she has no clue as to the methodology of scoring by the Congressional Budget Office—no clue, whatsoever.” Sen. Warren expressed concern that McCullough may not be up to the task of being Miss USA. “Frankly, I’m beginning



Miss District of Columbia Kara McCullough describes her robotics research for the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency at the Miss USA Pageant in Las Vegas on May 14.

to think I should have run myself. Plus I've got this terrific one-piece.”

In an interview with the Times Editorial Board, McCullough was unable to name any of the candidates in the recent North Rhine-Westphalia election in Germany and was unaware that the CDU-FDP coalition would be succeeding the current SPD-Green Party regime. “Her ignorance was stunning,” said Times columnist Thomas L. Friedman. “I actually felt bad for her not knowing the difference between a Hwasong-12 and KN-08 North Korean ICBM.” As McCullough was exiting the Times building, Friedman handed the pageant winner signed copies of his books. “This should help,” said Friedman, who reminded her to pay the bookstore on her way out.

When asked about her reading list, McCullough confessed she was then perusing a paperback. “I’m sure it’s nothing you’ll find impressive. It’s just the re-release of Norman Podhoretz’s “Making

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