

# Liberty

# Greed Is Good

December 2010

\$4.00

## ObamaCare: The Fine Print

*by Steve Murphy*

## Cuba: Change We Can Count On?

*by Robert H. Miller*

## An Experiment in Apocalypse

*by Stephen Cox*

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# Letters

## Same as the Old Boss

Russell Hasan declares libertarians "irresponsible" if they don't vote Republican ("Shifting the Balance," October) — not because Republicans are any less statist than Democrats, but because the body politic "perceives" Republicans as the party of free enterprise. Layered atop this ridiculous rationale is his guarantee that "Republicans must appease libertarian voters or watch their coalition decay."

This might be an intriguing overture if it were truly new out of the box — but the sad fact is that the Republicans have squandered and betrayed exactly this trust every time it has been granted in the past, as far back as when the original coalition decayed in 1971 with the founding of the LP itself. Once Republicans win their seats, what do they care if the coalition is disappointed — there will always be another Hasan to propose next cycle that those "irresponsible libertarians" give Republicans (yet another) chance.

That's not to say Hasan's efforts within the Republican Party are wasted — they are invaluable, and I hope

he continues to hold Republican feet to the fire as a Republican Party member. My objection is that rewarding unprincipled candidates with libertarian votes is never a mechanism that creates more principled candidates. Principles are the horse; votes the cart. When Republican candidates actually deserve libertarian votes, believe me — libertarians won't fail to notice. Just ask Ron Paul.

C.D. Tavares  
Morristown, AZ

## Wedding Bills

Stephen Cox's Reflection "Pigs at the trough" (October) concerning Bill and Hillary Clinton spending several million dollars on daughter Chelsea's wedding was amazing. When my wife and I got married in 1997, we spent \$14,000 on our wedding. This covered all the basics — invitations, flowers, photographer, video recording, music DJ, lunch, and an open bar. All of this took place on a boat. We cruised for four hours from the Flushing Marina down the East River to the Statue of Liberty and back. We and our 125 guests had

## Erratum

An editorial error in Jane S. Shaw's "The Pearl Harbor Problem" (Reviews, October), may have confused careful readers. The Japanese "pilot message" — an intercepted message that indicated Japan's break-off of diplomatic relations with the United States, thus announcing war — was intercepted and translated by 2 p.m., Saturday, December 6, 1941 (not Sunday, December 7). Much of the cover-up involved the issue of whether this message was conveyed to top officials, especially Chief of Staff Marshall, on Saturday, the day of its arrival. All credible evidence suggests that it was. Liberty apologizes to its readers and to Jane S. Shaw for the error.

## Letters to the editor

Liberty invites readers to comment on articles that have appeared in our pages. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. All letters are assumed to be intended for publication unless otherwise stated. Succinct letters are preferred. Please include your address and phone number so that we can verify your identity.

Send email to: [letters@libertyunbound.com](mailto:letters@libertyunbound.com)

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the time of our lives.

In May 2008, President George and Laura Bush hosted a wedding for daughter Jenna at their Crawford, Texas ranch. For \$100,000, several hundred guests enjoyed their day. Fast forward to Astor Courts — a private estate on the Hudson River in Rhinebeck, New York today. For the princely sum of several million dollars, Bill and Hillary Clinton hosted a wedding for their daughter

Chelsea and 500 guests. Just how many speeches did the former president give to various special-interest groups at prices ranging from \$50,000 to \$500,000 a pop to pay for the event? This cost of the wedding by the Clintons did not include several hundred thousand dollars borne by taxpayers to enforce a “No Fly Zone” over the wedding along with security around the estate and in Rhinebeck. A combination of Secret

Service, FBI, Coast Guard, state, county, and town law enforcement authorities assigned several hundred members to the festivities. You can imagine how much generous overtime pay was involved. In the middle of an economic recession with 10% unemployment rate, perhaps the Clintons should have toned it down a little. My wife and I along with the Bushes and most average Americans enjoyed our blessed day for far less money in more humble surroundings. Perhaps in lieu of gifts, Chelsea could have asked her guests to make a donation to the Clinton-Bush Haitian relief effort. I hope the Clintons donated all the leftover food, and refreshments to a local food bank or homeless shelter. How ironic that “liberal” Democrats like the Clintons live a decadent life style spending like the multimillionaires, fatcat Republicans, and greedy Wall Street investors they have historically always despised! “Do as I say, and not as I do” must be the Clinton family crest.

Larry Penner  
Great Neck, NY

### Know When to Walk Away

Bruce Ramsey (“Don’t Default on Me,” October) doesn’t seem to know what a treasury bond is, a mortgage, or libertarianism.

Our government regularly “walks away from contract obligations,” and “cheats people to whom it owes money,” so defaulting on a bond is completely in character. Moreover, a bond is just gambling by another name. The buyers gamble that the government will not default in exchange for an interest rate that makes their gambling worthwhile. If they lose their gamble, it’s tough, but they’re not entitled to a bailout any more than someone who loses at the craps table in Las Vegas.

Ramsey attempts to scare us by saying gamblers in foreign lands would be “really, really pissed off” if the U.S. defaulted. Well, tough titty. Let them buy their own bonds.

He makes a false comparison to someone who walks away from a mortgage. “We don’t celebrate this man. . . . It is a predatory thing. He is breaking his word.” I celebrate him. He’s doing what’s best for his own family. The banks inflated property values, then securitized their mortgages. They don’t

## From the Editor

In our November issue, I announced that this would be the last print issue of Liberty. When you read these words, Liberty will have changed to an online journal. All of us will miss the look and feel of printed pages, but we at Liberty believe that we will not only lighten our costs but also increase our readership by going online.

The most important thing for us, however, is to keep our extraordinarily loyal readers with us. To make sure we do, I want to tell you more about Liberty online.

To start with, it will be free. No fees; just go to [libertyunbound.com](http://libertyunbound.com) and you’ll be at home again. By the way, if you subscribe to the print version of Liberty now, we’ll be refunding the unused portion of your subscription.

The online version of Liberty will publish features, reviews, and reflections, just as we do now; but you won’t have to wait a month to see them. They’ll be posted as soon as they’re ready for publication. The online version will also invite you to post your own comments. And don’t worry about having to wade through a lot of irrelevant or obscene remarks, sent by people who have nothing better to do. We’ll make sure that the posted comments, whatever views they express, make for civilized debate.

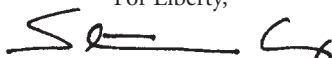
A special feature of Liberty online will be an archive of Liberty’s quarter-century of print publication — not just a few articles, but the whole of each issue. It will be one of the largest libraries of libertarian writing ever assembled.

I recently spent a day just browsing through some of the thousands of items contained in this library. I wasn’t surprised to find that Liberty has published virtually every important writer in the libertarian world. Nor was I surprised to find that every kind of writer is represented — statesmen, convicts, economists, historians, vagabonds, poets, philosophers — and every kind of subject. What struck me was how many things seemed new, enlightened, and enlightening. I found myself grinning with appreciation over the stunning arguments for ideas that I happen to favor, and worrying about the clever thrusts that good writers made against them. And always I was thinking, How great it is to read something that’s truly individual! No tired op-eds here. Liberty has always spoken with a thousand voices, and none of them predictable.

Liberty represents and explains, as no other journal has, the history of the libertarian movement. It has published more about our history than any other journal, and even the strictly historical articles are as fresh as dawn. Don’t take my word for it; go to [libertyunbound.com](http://libertyunbound.com) and see for yourself.

In 1987, R.W. Bradford founded Liberty as a journal devoted to publishing the best libertarian writing available. For 23 years, we’ve done just that. We’re continuing to do so, in our new online format. We thank you for your loyalty. We ask for your support, as always — the support of the liveliest and most discerning readers in the world for a journal written and produced for their enjoyment.

For Liberty,



Stephen Cox

even have the right to foreclose — only the myriad owners of the securities do, and I haven't heard of a single one who is foreclosing. Is the man stiffing them? Oh yeah. But they're gamblers, too. They gambled on the value of mortgage securities. They lost. Tough. Do you feel sorry for gamblers who lose? I don't. Everybody gambled in their own best self-interest, like good little libertarians. It's a game of musical chairs, and the music stopped. I celebrate anyone who has sufficient good sense to walk from an underwater mortgage that the banks created.

Neil Elliott  
Evanston, IL

### Whose Debt?

It is a peculiar morality that Bruce Ramsey espouses when he writes that a default of government bonds would be "the theft of \$13 trillion from the millions of people to whom it is owed." But whence comes that \$13 trillion to repay these people? Why, it can only be repaid by the theft from millions of U.S. taxpayers and their children and grandchildren. Why is one theft acceptable but not the other? I, for one, did not borrow the money nor spend the money (nor did I authorize the people who did), so in what way am I responsible? There may be practical consequences to consider in a default, but any theft is decidedly a two-edged sword.

Of course, holders of U.S. debt will see the value of their loan "defaulted" through the deterioration in the value of the dollar. For moral reasons as well as investment ones, do not lend to the government. If you do, you might get what you deserve.

Adrian Day  
Baltimore, MD

### Let It Be

I plan to borrow \$1,000 from Jeff Hummel and promise that Bruce Ramsey will repay the debt. Bruce Ramsey surely won't want me to default since he believes promises should be kept.

More interesting than Ramsey's absurd argument that we taxpayers are somehow obligated to make good on the debt incurred by past politicians and bureaucrats is his discussion of the likelihood of default and its probable effects.

Regarding likelihood, Ramsay repeats the standard belief that the government can always inflate its way out of debt. Prof. Hummel argues that because of the leverage in today's banking system and the discipline imposed by foreign borrowers, that is no longer a viable option. Stiff resistance to increased tax rates closes off that option, leaving default as the most likely outcome. Whether we libertarians celebrate it or not doesn't much matter.

A default would be an enormous financial upheaval, but not the end of the world. Expectations would be jolted back into line with reality, but real, tangible assets would remain. Equity investments as well as some private debt instruments would retain their value, and I suspect new monetary and financial institutions would evolve spontaneously and in fairly short order.

Warren Gibson  
San Carlos, CA

### Right of Refusal

Kudos to Tom Palmer for his articulate defense of anarcho-libertarianism, "Life Without the State" (October). My thoughts on how to work toward such a society of truly free men and women:

I am not holding my breath on 50.1% of the "representatives" effectively elected by a little as a single-digit percentage of the people residing in their district or state voluntarily relinquishing their grasp on power and giving back to me the natural rights I own simply by existing. One cannot expect slaveowners to voluntarily release their slaves from bondage — and let's not kid ourselves, the slaveholder-slave relationship is precisely the relationship that exists between almost every elected official and their "constituents."

So the only recourse, other than meek acceptance of that servitude, is for us serfs to quietly revolt and refuse to cooperate with the state as much as possible without provoking their retaliatory use of their monopoly of force in a geographic region. They will not give us our freedom. We must seize it every day, in every way we can. We should refuse to be involuntarily conscripted into armed forces, or into jury pools. We should evade or reduce the taxes that feed the state whenever possible. We should vote for people who reflect

our perspective whenever possible, and leave the ballot blank in silent protest whenever no acceptable choice presents itself, even if that means turning in a ballot with no politicians voted for at all. We must either acquiesce to their illegitimate rule, or nonviolently refuse to cooperate whenever and however we can.

Jim Henshaw  
Kailua, HI

### Law and Order

I see Tom Palmer's defense of anarchism as an attempt at a pragmatist approach. As such I find it unsatisfying from a philosophical viewpoint (which is my preferred approach). Specifically it avoids the key question, "Does a free society require law?"

One could answer yes without requiring, I suppose, a single set of laws. Maybe one could argue for competing sets of laws, but I doubt it. You would be arguing, I would think, for competing ideas for the nature of a free society. But a free society means one in which normal mature men and women deal with one another by honest persuasion, not force or deception. If this is an idea with objective meaning (and I would hope libertarians subscribe to the tenet that the idea of a free society has an objective validity), then law must embody this idea and provide means of defining legal arrangements and adjudicating disputes. Competing venues for enforcing law might arise but it would seem that a single code of law and a single final arbiter (a Supreme Court in essence) is only practical — and reflects the notion that a free society can really only follow from a single basic idea.

Palmer might term this final arbiter a "ruler" (perhaps even the concept of a single code of law), but I would not view it as such in the usual sense (i.e., as having arbitrary powers). But in any case my approach results in a kind of monopoly, that which would exist in the sense of a single code of law and a single final arbiter. But this monopoly would only be recognizing the fact that a free society can really only be defined a single way and that way has, in some sense, objective truth with no competition.

Wendl Thomis  
Acton, MA

# Reflections

**Keynesian Kool-Aid** — Round after round of stimulus has done little more than give the president a reason for speeches about how the economy should start to respond this time, and really will start recovering any day now. At least in the former Soviet Union, they would wait for the better part of five years before announcing a new program.

If people were paying attention, there wouldn't be a single Keynesian left in this country. — Tim Slagle

**Good news, everyone!** — Well, the job numbers for August were released shortly before the Labor Day holiday, and the "recovery summer" that Uncle Joe Biden crowed about is now officially a bust.

The unemployment rate increased from 9.5 to 9.6%, and the U.S. lost jobs for the third straight month, some 54,000 in total. This was actually considered good news in some quarters, since estimates were that the losses would be on the order of 110,000. But private sector employment grew by an anemic 67,000 jobs. This was a disappointing report for any Labor Day.

Obama's response was predictable. First, he congratulated himself, calling the figures "good news," and proof that his programs are working. He then started pushing yet another stimulus bill, this one for "small businesses." Also under consideration is yet another stimulus bill for "infrastructure."

Second, after all this exhausting work — devising stimulus bills that don't stimulate takes real mental effort — Obama felt the need for rest. He promptly took off to Camp David for yet another well-deserved vacation. — Gary Jason

**In the bazaar** — The Ground Zero mosque controversy must be the first time in history when politicians and bureaucrats have been afraid to interfere with a real-estate development. The reason seems to be an irrational fear of Muslims. So if you developers out there want to sail through environmental and zoning reviews, just put the word "mosque" in your permit applications. From now on, you're building "Joe's Bar and Grill and Mosque" or the "Colorado Strip Mine and Mosque." You can make room for a prayer rug, right? — Tom Isenberg

**Stimulless** — President Obama claims that the stimulus package was a rousing success, preventing the recession from getting much worse.

Now(!) we learn that the recession ended in June 2009. But at that time, only about 5% of the stimulus money had even been spent.

So if the recession was already over, after so little spending, is it reasonable to assume that expanding government

debt had anything to do with ending it?

On the other hand, with the officially recognized jobless rate approaching 10%, and the unofficial rate arguably much higher, why should we believe any government claim that the recession is over, even now?

So which is it? Recession over, and all that government intervention unnecessary? Or recession not over, and all that government intervention basically useless? Or is the whole issue just an opportunity for Obama to crow about his massive expansion of government power over us at our (future) expense? — John Kannarr

**Scanning for pleasure** — The American Reinvestment and Recovery Act, intended to create jobs and promote investment and consumer spending, provided funds for 11 full-body scanners to be installed throughout the country. This will allow certain TSA agents to spend their eight hours of government service looking at naked people — an activity that several SEC regulators were fired for.

Now, while I usually count only about one in about ten airline passengers that I wouldn't mind seeing naked, I know there are some sickos who are begging for the assignment. I don't believe most Americans thought this is what the president was referring to, when he proposed stimulus. — Tim Slagle

**Just another word** — Many readers turn to Liberty's Reflections section first. I can understand why, though the very first bit I always read is the liberty quote at the bottom of the cover. Years ago I even contributed one, a saying by Antonio Maceo (1845-1896), a black patriot, general, and hero of the Cuban struggle for independence: "La libertad no se mendiga; se conquista con el filo de un machete," or, "You can't beg for liberty; it's won with the blade of a machete" — the weapon of

choice in a 19th-century sugar economy, though now with terrible associations since the Rwandan massacre.

Recently, in preparation for a school presentation on Cuba, I watched the 2003 documentary "A Great Day in Havana," a series of sketches about modern Cuban artists — sculptors, painters, performance artists, poets, and musicians — along with their comments and reflections. Of course, modern Cuban artists are all state-sponsored (woe to the unlicensed!), live privileged lives, and refrain from biting the hand that feeds them. The best part of the film, for me, was the rich, elision-riddled Cuban Spanish saturated with local slang and mannerisms, a Spanish I seldom hear in Arizona and, to an American English speaker, akin to listening to the cadences of a rural Irish brogue. And the music.

Cuban music has always been world-renowned but under the Castro regime it has experienced the renaissance of



"The government says we have to list all ingredients — what's your Social Security number?"



creativity, innovation, and excellence that hardship and loss of liberty often seem to generate. Think of literature under the Soviet regime: Solzhenitsyn, Rybakov, Grossman, Akhmatova, Pasternak (and yes, Ayn Rand). But there is a big difference between state-sponsored art and samizdat, though the difference is less in music, which is a less overtly political art, than it is in prose, where a writer can rant to his heart's content. Nonetheless, the closing composition of "A Great Day in Havana" stopped me cold and left my jaw agape.

Carlos Varela, a state sponsored singer and songwriter who fancies himself unconventional and achieved a genuine hit with a song entitled "Politics Doesn't Fit into a Sugar Bowl" (which includes the refrain, "Fuck your embargo!") ends the movie with a composition whose chorus is, "La libertad solo existe cuando no es de nadie" or, "Liberty only exists when no one has it."

Imagine that on the cover of Liberty. Wonder at how the Cuban psyche has changed in the 100 years from Antonio

Maceo to Carlos Varela, half that time trapped in a people's paradise. Does the aphorism have such depth that I'm unable to plumb it? Is it postmodernism at its most abstruse? Have I lost my sense of irony, or is it post-post-ironic humor? No, it's brownnosing hypocrisy of the worst sort; it's Orwellian syntactical contortion disguised behind a grammatically correct string of words; it's what Mikhail Sholokov did when he declared Stalin's Belomor Canal — at the time communism's worst slave labor atrocity, with a death rate of 40 laborers per day, mounting to a total of 25,000 dead — a healthy rehabilitation program. Perhaps he should have rephrased that to "Life only exists when no one has it." — Robert H. Miller

**Hollow ring** — A few thoughts on the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, a.k.a. Obamacare. I can't resist kicking a bad law when it's down.

Even the federal government predicts that the unpopular law will add to the average American's annual healthcare ex-

## Word Watch

by Stephen Cox

Over the years, I've received a lot of comments about this column. They've revealed the existence of two linguistic parties.

One party asserts that nothing will come of noticing the mistakes people make with language. "The offenders don't read you, anyway," these people say, with great plausibility. "Or maybe they do, but they don't understand that you're talking about them. Barbarians don't know they're barbarians." That's even more plausible. At my university, I get messages every day from people who don't have a clue that they're Vandals, or Visigoths at the best.

The other party doesn't believe in giving up. These are the people who squirm every time a politician compliments "senior citizens." They scream when it's chummily shortened to "seniors." "Senior to whom?" they demand. And when Republicans and Democrats debate who is better at "growing" jobs, their response is that both sides have already applied enough manure.

The members of this second party may be either 20 or 90 years old, but they've been afflicted this way throughout their thinking lives. They just can't stand to see the language debased. So every time a snoop like me uncovers another nest of abuses, they rejoice and applaud, as if they were on the winning side of the Hundred Years' War.

Who's right? I won't try to decide; I'm not an unbiased judge. But I do remember a time when I myself didn't know how to explain what is wrong — all the things that are wrong — with "senior citizens" — and I was glad when one of my mentors, Robert Koelz, came to my rescue by giving me the word "cant." He helped me gain control of the language I use. And let's face it, it's fun to be right, even if nobody else pays any attention. Besides, the fact that people have been making some of the same mistakes for generations only makes it more important to bring them up again.

So please keep me enrolled as an enthusiastic member of the second party, the party of linguistic remembrance, rebellion, and revenge.

Now, take the word "alleged." (Take it, please!) I brought that up in last month's column, referring to a headline that proclaimed: "Panel hits Rangel with 13 alleged ethics charges." It wasn't the

first time I'd mentioned the guilty word. It's been sinning for a long, long time. But does that give it immunity? Hardly. There's no statute of limitations on murder, and this is the murder of brain cells.

There are thousands of habitual criminals that need to be brought to justice, no matter what their age. I fingered one of them just the other night, while watching a rerun of "Network" (1976). There's a scene in which we see the villain sitting behind a nice big villain's desk, and there, resting prominently on the shiny surface, is a sign saying: "Thank You for Not Smoking." So that nauseating pretension to politeness has been going on for 34 years. Longer, if you're not thinking just about signs objecting to second-hand smoke. Have you ever been in an office — usually, this is the office of a lumberyard or a car repair place or some other useful enterprise — where there's a sign that says, "This Is My Busy Day"? It's an impolitely polite way of telling you to shut up and pay your bill. This one also goes way back. In Sinclair Lewis' best novel, "Babbitt" (1922), the protagonist visits his pastor's office and notices that there's a sign on the wall: "This is the Lord's Busy Day." Amusing satire, right? But that was *nine decades ago*, and the fad still hasn't stopped.

Neither has the "Kraze for K," which Louise Pound brought to notice in a famous essay of 1925. Her comments haven't stopped people named Christine from opening Kris' Kafé and Kookery, or Krissy's Kanine Kompound, or Kristina's Kaktus Korner.

Christine may not realize that she's being trite, but at least she's getting her message across. There isn't much ambiguity about a Kaktus Korner. But not everyone has been so lucky with creative spelling. My favorite is the young lady who appears in Mary Chesnut's Civil War diary, the girl who writes a letter in which she calls her sister a "mean retch." Who says great writing doesn't transcend the centuries? The memory of that idiotic girl has brightened many a sad hour for me.

Not so the locutions of California congresswoman Maxine Waters, who has her own problems with being understood. The main problem is that she doesn't understand what she herself is



penses. According to a report from Medicare's Office of the Actuary, released in September, Americans will spend an average of \$13,652 per person per year on healthcare in 2019. Without Obamacare in place, they would spend \$13,387. (At present, Americans spend \$8,389 per person per year.) The difference is slight, but it's significant. The Feds are moving away from Obama's talk of "bending the cost curve down." And his promise that the law would pay for itself seems . . . unlikely to be true.

The Medicare actuaries also predict that healthcare spending will account for nearly 20% of the U.S. economy in 2019, up from 17%, currently. So the description of healthcare as "one-sixth of the economy" will have to be changed to "one-fifth."

The study also made two other noteworthy points:

1. Government is becoming the dominant player in healthcare even *without* the unpopular law. Federal, state, and local government spending will overtake private sources in 2011,

three years before the main provisions of Obamacare take effect.

2. Two federal-state programs, Medicaid and children's health insurance (known as CHIP or S-CHIP in most states), will grow dramatically under Obamacare. Enrollment will jump 34% between 2013 and 2014, to more than 85 million people. And these increases are likely to start even sooner, as private-sector insurance companies stop offering child-only policies.

White House health reform director Nancy-Ann DeParle was Obama's point person on spinning these troubling numbers. DeParle acknowledged that spending would rise in the short run as uninsured people get government-subsidized coverage but insisted that the rate of growth would slow in the second half of the coming decade. Then she offered projections from a different agency, the Congressional Budget Office, that suggested some slight *savings* would occur instead.

Former CBO director Douglas Holtz-Eakin has done a lot

saying. As you know, Waters is in trouble for *allegedly* cadging a financial bailout for a bank in which her husband had an interest. Here's her defense, as quoted by the Associated Press on August 2: "The record will clearly show that in advocating on behalf of minority banks, neither my office nor I benefited in any way, engaged in improper action or influenced anyone."

It's refreshing to find a member of Congress who confesses that she has no influence. I wonder, however, what exactly Waters was "advocating." I know, she was "advocating on behalf of," but what exactly did she *advocate*?

This is a new problem: it used to be that people advocated ideas, solutions, proposals — something. But Waters just advocates on behalf of. So what did she *say*? We'll probably never know. Let's not even worry about the tenuous relationship between the adjective "minority" and the noun "banks." The words literally mean that the banks are in a minority, whatever *that* might mean. Of course we're supposed to understand that "minority" really means "African-American." I guess it sounds less self-serving if you gum up the phrasing in the way Waters did. Why is it, though, that America is filled with self-serving people who talk as if society should give them a medal for this commonplace trait?

But there are many linguistic problems that have nothing to do with politics or "influence," and these appear to be just as hard for our fellow citizens to solve, despite the fact that solutions to many of them are readily available.

Think, for example, about the problem of strong verbs, which is merely a problem of memorization and appreciation. A weak verb forms its past and past perfect by adding -ed; a strong verb changes something more basic. Thus, "she retches," "she retched," "she has retched" (weak verb), as opposed to "she takes," "she took," "she had taken" (strong verb). Strong verbs are archaic, interesting, and deeply inscribed in the structure of our language. Also, they usually sound very cool. Everyone who speaks English learns a lot of them: find-found-found, bind-bound-bound, write-wrote-written, sing-sang-sung . . .

So why, if you've learned sing-sang-sung, do you have trouble coming up with spring-sprang-sprung? I have no idea, but you will never hear a person on TV or radio say that somebody "sprang into action." Nor are you likely to find "sprang" in *The New York Times*. It will always be "sprung," as in a report in the *Washington*

*Examiner* (Sept. 15): "On April 15, 2009, in honor of Tax Day, seemingly spontaneous tax protests sprung up across the country." Or try this one, which makes an attempt at an adjectival usage of the perfect form, and fails: "Indonesian Christians beat on their way to prayers" (AP headline, Sept. 13).

The second example is even worse than the first, because in that case it's so easy to find the right form. Finding it doesn't even require the minute amount of memorization that would clue you in to "sprang." It merely requires you to put the crucial word in a somewhat different context. "How many eggs have you beat today?" should sound strange enough to let you see your mistake about the Christians being "beat."

It should. Maybe it won't. But I'd like to believe that the tens of millions of our fellow English speakers who imagine that they are being super-correct when they say, very politely, "Just between you and I," would realize their mistake if they tried to reverse it: "Just between I and you." "Just between I?" That's not English." Right! And why isn't it? Because "I" has the wrong case. It has to be "me," even though "me" may seem like a low, common word, compared with the classier "I." End of story.

Unfortunately, that method doesn't seem to occur to people naturally. But maybe if sixth-grade teachers tried to introduce it, we would hear fewer people asserting that "grammar can't be taught." Of course it can. Sometimes, it's just a matter of getting students interested in things like strong verbs and pronoun cases.

Aren't you appalled by the fact that professional writers ordinarily possess no such interests? They have now, almost universally, adopted the spurious word "snuck" as the past and perfect form of "sneak." This is something so goofy that it can stand as a complete demonstration of the lack of logic in contemporary writing. "Sneak" is a weak verb: sneak- sneaked- sneaked. I prefer strong verbs, but that's the way "sneak" is; too bad. At least it's easy to remember. Yet along comes an illiterate variation, "snuck," which is a spurious attempt to create a strong verb — obscure evidence (like "just between you and I") of a bad conscience about formal language. And "snuck" wins the day. It's everywhere in supposedly formal writing.

Word Watch, however, is one place where it will never win. And don't think that Word Watch is going away. It will continue in the online version of *Liberty*. Just go to [libertyunbound.com](http://libertyunbound.com), and you'll see it appear, very frequently.

of work explaining that CBO numbers should be taken with a grain of salt. Or several. Most critical of the many points he makes: CBO projections must assume that the policy goals of a bill or law will occur as stated. So, when Obamacare promises to make drastic cuts in certain pricey programs several years out, the CBO must assume those cuts in its projections — even if everyone agrees they're unlikely to take place. As Holtz-Eakin has said, "I like to think of this as CBO being in the position of pricing Congressional fantasies and precluded from pointing out reality."

Statists like that. Obama has been yabbering about CBO projections of unlikely savings all year. In a media op last spring, he said, "That [CBO projection] makes this legislation the most significant effort to reduce deficits since the Balanced Budget Act in the 1990s. This is but one virtue of a reform that will bring new accountability to the insurance industry and greater economic security for all Americans."

This is a hollow man talking. For hollow men, convenient delusion always trumps inconvenient, er, truth. — Jim Walsh

**Becalmed** — As the East Coast started preparing for the wrath of hurricane Earl, just a few days after the fifth anniversary of hurricane Katrina, it occurred to me what a calm five years we've had. There haven't been many storms of consequence over those years, and in this year (which was predicted by experts on both sides of the aisle to be quite active) Earl was only the fifth named storm.

We should all be grateful for the lack of storms over the last half of the decade. Not only were lives and property spared from devastation, but global warming is now only slightly more credible than UFOs and Sasquatch. It's hard to sell a climate crisis when the weather is calm.

If the past five summers had been a repeat of 2005, I'm certain that cap-and-trade would have passed the Senate, and we would be facing an inflationary energy tax that would make economic recovery in our lifetimes less likely a World Series victory by the Cubs. While there is a slim chance that the healthcare bill might be revoked if Congress changes hands, taxes do not disappear quietly into the night. The battle to eliminate the Spanish war tax raged for a century longer than the Spanish War. I predict that cap-and-trade would last through the next ice age. — Tim Slagle

**Nuclear reprieve** — A decade ago, bowing to public pressure, Germany's leftist government and its electric power companies agreed to a plan to shut down the country's 17 nuclear power plants by 2022. These few plants supply fully 25% of the nation's electricity; but the idea was to convert to "renewable" energy sources, such as wind and solar.

Now, because of the high cost of renewable energy, the need to rein in public spending, and Germany's desire to meet its targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, Angela Merkel's center-right government has announced that it will extend the nukes' life. The oldest reactors (designed over 30 years ago) will be allowed to continue operating for eight years past the original deadline, while newer plants will be allowed to operate for 14 years thereafter.

This decision is, of course, expected to be fiercely resisted by the unreasoning Greens. — Gary Jason

**Hard times** — We came out of our house and stepped

into my truck. As we were driving off, my wife said, "Look at this guy. He walked to the end of the block and turned right around and walked back. He is going to rob our house as soon as we are gone." She was pointing at a short, neatly dressed, dark-skinned man with a thick mustache. I drove away and made a U-turn on our street, then another turn until I could stop right next to him.

"Are you lost?" I asked in Spanish.

"No," he said, "the thing is that I don't have work right now and I don't have anything to eat; I used to work at San Lorenzo Lumber." (This is an exact translation; every one of his words is printed in my mind.) He spoke clearly; his speech was not slurred; he seemed completely alert.

We were on our way to listen to a couple of friends playing music and singing in a local coffee shop. It was Sunday evening. I had on me a ten-dollar bill and four ones. My wife, like a real lady, had no money, of course. I peeled off a one-dollar bill and gave it to him.

The rest of my evening was filled with shame and a sad sense of missed opportunity, as if I had lost someone dear to me. In a way, I had.

Our left-liberal-run town of Santa Cruz often feels as if it has been overrun by thick crowds of the homeless. As is true everywhere, many are poor, mentally confused creatures who need both shelter and protection. Many more are substance abusers who are sometimes harmless, sometimes not. There is also a large minority of seemingly healthy young adult males with no perceptible handicap. Some are downright athletic-looking. They practice the fine art of switching from a plaintive, begging tone to a vaguely threatening one depending on the size, age, and sex of their target and also on the time of day or night.

On the one hand, I live downtown where their interruptions of your train of thought are endless. On the other hand, I recognize that living without working is an expression of individual freedom. It's protected by the Constitution. It even seems to be recommended by the Gospel. ("Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns . . ." — Matthew 6:26.)

On that evening, we were in a hurry and we only had what we had on us. One of the two advantages of advancing age is that often it allows you to trust your intuition. (I don't know what the second might be, but there has to be one.) My own considerable intuition, fed by many years of observation, told me that there was an honest man, a working man whom circumstances had driven to the edge of criminal behavior. Would I steal if I were really hungry? Almost certainly yes.

What I should have done and failed to do was obvious minutes after I drove off: I should have given him the four one-dollar bills, which would have bought him a hot dog-plus at the 7-Eleven. I felt the special taste of bitterness that comes up when one betrays oneself. Our ancestors used to call that "honor." The sense of loss was for my former, honorable self. I had missed an opportunity to make a modest investment in my ability to continue thinking of myself as an honorable man.

But that's not all. I blame for my downward transformation the left-liberals' climate in which I have lived for years. Their calf-like, all-encompassing, blurry compassion — always at others' expense — has made it difficult for me to

distinguish between criminal self-indulgence and simple hard luck. Breathing their air has turned me into a moral cripple — this, on a scale so small I am not even aware of it until reality knocks hard at my door. — Jacques Delacroix

**Chaos in crisis** — History happens, not as a matter of cause and effect, but because of the buildup of instability in a naturally self-organized chaotic system to the point of collapse. It is this collapse, which shows up as a sudden huge alteration from the status quo in response to a very minor incident, that appears to trigger major events in history. Wars, earthquakes, and forest fires all follow power laws of magnitude versus frequency because they are manifestations of the same fundamental mechanism — the self-organized system's critical instability.

If you haven't read the book "Ubiquity: Why Catastrophes Happen," by Mark Buchanan (Three Rivers Press, 2001), we highly recommend that you do. The book lucidly (and, amazingly, without mathematics) shows why cataclysmic events take place and why there is not and never will be a way to predict them. Otherwise it will be very hard to understand why small, otherwise completely unimportant events suddenly take on a large meaning and can appear to mark the start of huge historical events.

Take the murder of the archduke that occurred before the start of World War I. He was really of no importance. He just happened to be there at a time and a place when increasingly complex self-organized events had reached the point where a very small change could signal the collapse of a system on the edge. An interesting recent example of this is the way in which

a nobody of a Florida pastor (with a congregation of 50!) created a worldwide uproar by intending to burn a Koran, with Obama, generals, and even Glenn Beck trying to head off this "world-threatening" event. Seeing that the instability in relations between Islam and the West has reached this ridiculous point, there is clearly no way to stabilize it, and a war cannot be far off.

The Koran-burning "crisis," following on the heels of the increasingly hostile arguments about the attempt to build a "peaceful" mosque at Ground Zero, is not going to end here. But, as in the case of predictions about earthquakes and forest fires (also explained in the book), there is no way to know for sure when it will happen.

Most history is composed of just-so stories, no matter how factual. No historian who doesn't understand the critical instability of self-organizing systems can understand the central issue of historical causation. — Durk Pearson and Sandy Shaw

**Bon mot** — Often discovering the right word to label an activity or situation or mindset helps in considering and discussing it. The word should be amenable to a fairly straightforward definition. Sometimes, though, finding it is a challenge.

A trivial but instructive example comes from TV Chile's "Pelotón." In that "reality show," ordinary people (not professional actors, although some are entertainers) undergo imitation military training. Recruits of both sexes sleep together in an austere barracks, use the same showers, and take part in physical competitions. The recruits vote their colleagues out one by one until one or two winners remain.

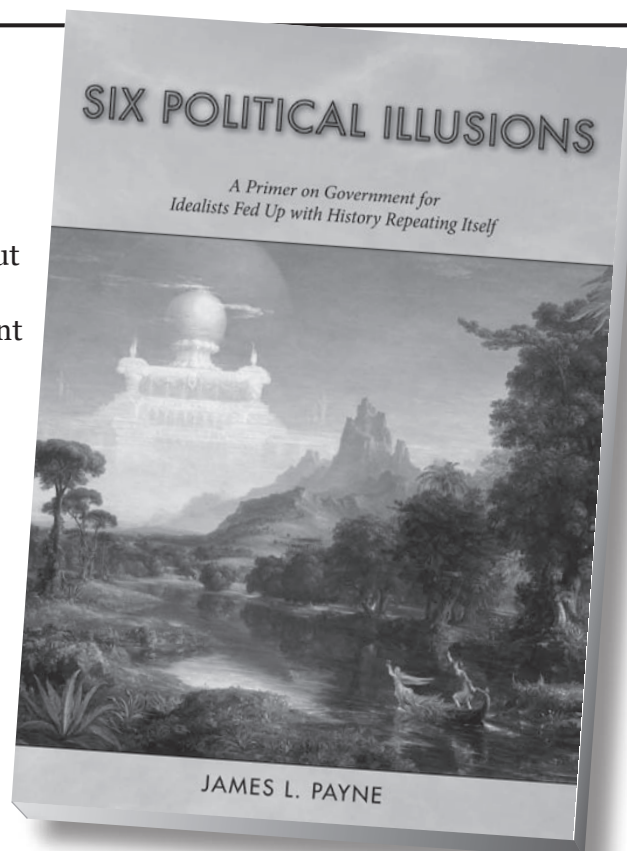
## What Accounts for Government's Growth?

Politicians and the public succumb to illusions about government's abilities, says political scientist James L. Payne. These fallacies lead them to suppose government can solve problems even when the evidence keeps demonstrating that it can't.

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"I wish someone had put such a book into my hands at age 20. It would have advanced my political sophistication by decades," says Payne, age 71, author of 15 books on government and politics.



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In one episode a little girl in a little uniform gleefully puts the recruits through their drills and even asks personal questions of individual recruits. She commands them to lie on the ground, whereupon she jumps up and down on their stomachs. Now, what word labels such an offensive script? What comes to my mind is “cutesy-poo,” a term that is cutesy-poo itself. Precisely defining that term is difficult, but, like “obscenity,” you know the thing so labeled when you see it. (A related challenge, unmet by me so far, is how to describe the mind-set of someone who, like me, watches such stuff, even though only occasionally and desultorily.)

A more important challenge is finding a word for the mind-set of people who look to government, especially the federal government, and even the president (see Gene Healy, “The Cult of the Presidency”) to provide or subsidize everything good and suppress everything bad. Examples are comfortable retirement, healthcare, home ownership, wholesome food and drugs, adequate schools, broadband internet access, energy generation and conservation, transportation, and, on the other hand, obesity, addictive drugs, gambling (except in approved casinos or state lotteries), and even questionable practices in collegiate and professional sports.

A politician with such a mindset does not understand how millions of persons and companies, trading among themselves, can satisfy the wants that they themselves consider most intense. He does not appreciate the invisible hand. He does not understand self-adjusting processes, such as someone’s decision to forgo a gas-heated swimming pool, or any pool at all, in view of the prices to be paid. Displaying alertness to problems and new technologies, he performs feats of routine originality in thinking of ways for a grandmotherly state to take charge — as by requiring that cars get 30 miles to the gallon, by imposing standards for building insulation, or by banning incandescent light bulbs, water-wasting toilets and laundry-washers, and pilot lights in gas appliances. He thinks up tax gimmicks to promote storm windows, solar heating, solar and wind power, and what not.

Just as Chanticleer thought that his crowing made the sun rise, so voters and politicians with that mindset can scarcely conceive of how good results can occur without being conspicuously sought and arranged for. If they should occur anyway, they do not count — not, anyway, as anything for which anyone deserves credit; they are like facts of nature. When a problem has become politically fashionable, to suggest leaving its solution to private initiative seems callous and “negative.”

The term that occurs to me for such a mindset is “scientism,” a term used by F.A. Hayek in “The Counter-Revolution of Science” (1952). Activist policy is considered scientific, the opposite of accidental and disorganized: it seeks scientifically planned social arrangements. Of course, this scientific attitude misconceives actual science.

I have defined “cutesy-poo” and “scientism” and “scientistic” only by context and examples. Framing explicit definitions remains a challenge for the reader and for me.

— Leland B. Yeager

**Failing marks** — The latest data have arrived on the progress of American educational reform, and they are as depressing as they are predictable.

According to The Wall Street Journal (August 18), in this new world of the knowledge-based economy, the U.S. now ranks only 12th in the percentage of adults (aged 25–34) with a college degree. We are at 40.4%. Australia is at 40.7%, Belgium at 41.3, France at 41.4, Israel at 41.5, Norway at 42.7, Ireland at 43.9, and New Zealand at 47.3. At the top of the world rankings are Japan (53.7), South Korea (55.5), and Canada (55.8).

The problem lies in our K-12 system — specifically, our high schools. These latest data show that less than a quarter of the 2010 high school grads who took the ACT have the academic skills to perform adequately in entry-level college courses. The ACT officials put the blame squarely on high schools. Of the students who took the ACT, 70% took the core high school courses theoretically needed to bring them up to entry college level (four years of English and three years each of math, social studies and science), but only 24% actually met the college-ready level on all four of the relevant ACT exams. That is, the kids who are passing the requisite classes are failing to master the requisite material.

This strongly suggests that the high schools have either watered down the content of their courses or inflated their grades, or both.

Susan Traiman of the Business Roundtable nailed it when she said that this amounts to “false advertising” by high schools. Indeed, it is, but most of them are public institutions, so they can’t be sued. Students and parents deceived by the education monopoly into thinking that the kids were prepared for college have no recourse. The taxpayers paid for a decent education, and the education complex ripped them off.

Traiman draws the obvious conclusion — that if and when this recession ever ends, businesses will once again face shortages of sufficiently educated workers. On that score, there is no doubt.

— Gary Jason

**Mixed message** — The Ground Zero mosque controversy is somewhat ironic, considering the fact that the city of New York claims it has no right to determine what happens on private property. Meanwhile, it is illegal in New York to smoke in a bar, drink in front of a naked dancing girl, or buy a slice of pie with a crust full of trans-fats.

— Tim Slagle

**Surprise attack?** — While I was writing my review of George Victor’s book “The Pearl Harbor Myth” (October) I learned that Percy L. Greaves, Jr.’s book, “Pearl Harbor: The Seeds and Fruits of Infamy” had just been published. In 1945 and ’46, Greaves was a consultant to the Republican minority members of the congressional committee that investigated the Pearl Harbor attack. He died in 1984, but his widow, Bettina Bien Greaves, a contributing editor of Liberty, edited his book, which is largely based on the committee’s hearings. I ordered the volume right away, but wasn’t able to read it until after my review was finished.

Let me begin by saying that it is a wonderful book, beautifully clear and lucid, thoroughly edited. For anyone interested in the key Pearl Harbor issue — which can be summarized as “what did FDR and his associates know and when?” — it is an extremely rich source of information. And in spite of its 937 pages, it is never boring. It gives detailed accounts of the many government investigations into Pearl Harbor, while

*continued on page 28*



# Cuba: Change We Can Count On?

*by Robert H. Miller*

Big bucks for some, pennies for most —  
otherwise, don't count on it yet.

When Raúl Castro replaced his ailing brother Fidel as president of Cuba in 2008, nobody — except the press and those who prefer sizzle to steak — prepared for a change of direction. Hopes that the more sensitive and pragmatic Raúl might usher in reforms have been little more than, well, hopes. So long as Fidel, “the conscience of the revolution incarnate,” remains incarnate — hovering and pontificating over all things large and small, and exercising a censoriously tempering judgment over events — little will change. But hope springs eternal, and recent events do hint at some adjustments in the course of the Cuban ship of state.

Previous deflections toward greater liberalization, such as legalizing small private businesses — B&Bs and restaurants, mostly — because of economic straits, have been little more than expedient intermissions, always reversed when state coffers start to be replenished. But now, the changes, so far subtle, appear to be systemic.

In early September, *el máximo líder* (still Fidel) announced first — in a reflective assessment of his accomplishments as he nears the end of his life — that he'd mishandled the Cuban

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Missile Crisis and rued his advocacy of nuking the United States. For good measure, he also added that he'd been wrong to persecute gays. And then — though he quickly said he'd been misunderstood — he bombshelled that the “Cuban model doesn't even work for us anymore.”

Notwithstanding his unclarified qualification, the Cuban government announced, through the mouth of its official trade union confederation, that more than one million people, or a fifth of the workforce, will be given pink slips from state jobs over the next few years, in an attempt to privatize parts of the economy, and so invigorate it. As *The Economist* reports, “self-employment is to be [notice the future reference in both announcements] legalized in dozens of areas, from transport to construction. The reforms will also allow many

small state-owned businesses to become co-operatives, run by their employees. They will have to pay taxes, though how much has not yet been spelled out." One should note that in the past, temporary dispensations, reforms have been nullified by extortionate taxes that sometimes exceeded 100% of "profits."

Not all of the newly unemployed will be cast adrift; some will be repositioned in new government jobs, including tourism and security — in effect, a rearrangement of the chairs on the floundering ship of state. Another tranche of the fired will consist of those who receive remittances from family abroad. But will the shuffle work?

Newly laid-off workers, already entitled to free healthcare, education, housing, transport, and food rations, have little incentive to get a job, since most of the basics are already guaranteed. In effect, they'll differ little from the still-employed, who receive a \$20 per month average wage from the state — a pittance that nonetheless proves useful in the large black market economy because the guaranteed essentials seldom materialize. Finally, the average Cuban is gunshy. How can Cubans trust a feckless state that, like Lucy in the "Peanuts" comic strip, never fails to move the football once Charlie Brown commits to the kick?

The government's plans still need enacting legislation and a restructuring of bureaucracies. This, considering the breadth of the reforms, might have a few uncrossed t's and undotted i's by the planned starting date of 2011. The details of the legislation — not as crucial for the long-suffering citizens (except in respect to avoiding arrest for illegal employment) — must be reasonably bombproof to attract foreign investment, an important goal of the reforms. In spite of authoritarian states' can-do approach to economic planning, foreign investors will require the reliability, predictability, and transparency of well-written laws.

The reforms are all about money — spending less and generating more. The Great Recession has highlighted the limits of the resort-hotel tourist model that has been in place since the Castros first opened for business. So, to attract more foreign investment and development, the tourism industry will

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*In the past, temporary reforms have been nullified by extortionate taxes that sometimes exceeded 100% of "profits."*

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be expanded in what for revolutionary Cuba will be new directions, including something resembling private property and ease of foreign exchange.

The government plans sixteen 18-hole golf courses anchoring new, gated resort-residential communities, complete with standalone homes, condominiums, and mansions ranging from \$150,000 to over a million dollars; hotels, apartments, and convention centers; shopping malls, fitness centers, movie metroplexes, and discotheques, all with their own water and power sources. Targeting the 3 million private yachts in the United States, construction of six giant luxury marinas, mod-

eled on Monaco's, will begin in 2011.

Apparently, the British-based Esencia Hotels & Resorts has already committed \$400 million for the first marina and golf course development, with 730 appurtenant residences. Canadian, Spanish, other British, and perhaps even American consortia (if that embargo bit can be finessed) are expected to pile in soon. The Cuban Ministry of Tourism is already rubbing its hands with glee, projecting 12,000 new homes (as a high target), including 800 mansions, by 2016.

One of the delicate points of the government's internal debate about crafting the new legislation focuses on property rights. At first, usufruct rights were to be limited to a 50-year lease with renewal rights extendable for another 50 years for leasers and their heirs. Now the debaters have settled on non-renewable 99-year leases. Rights to sell or mortgage the leases are still under discussion, but the Cuban government says reassuringly that such issues will not be an impediment to investment. With an eye to the end of the U.S. embargo and to facilitate commercial transactions and the day-to-day necessities of residential foreigners, an invitation for U.S. banks to open franchises on the island is hoped to be formalized by December 2010.

Enabling legislation is also pending about the list of requirements for foreign residents contemplating the buying, selling, and use of cars, yachts, appliances, communication technology, and liquor and other luxuries, as well as the length of visas.

How will the new investment climate help the average Cuban? Aside from the ever-present trickle-down effect, effective even through the thickest Chinese wall, the effects will come only indirectly. An as yet unformalized protocol indicates that foreign developers will be required to build modest appurtenant service and residential complexes for ancillaries such as domestic staff and maintenance and repair crews, and also health clinics, daycare centers, and so forth, to facilitate routine necessities. Foreigners will have the right — already decided — to hire local domestics, gardeners, and staff (whom they may also bring from abroad). But none of the new economic rights for foreigners will apply to Cubans.

Aside from emphasizing the already well-established apartheid policy of separating ordinary Cubans from foreigners, the new programs will pour salt on Cubans' grievances by classifying expatriate Cuban-Americans who choose to reside in the new enclaves as foreigners, with all the new gilded rights.



So, what's it like living in a 21st-century socialist paradise? At the end of 2009, Eduardo Semtei Alvarado, an ex-director of the Venezuelan Electoral Council (CNE) — the organization in charge of presidential, party, and union elections — and a Chavista who now cohosts a radio talk show in Caracas, visited Cuba, unofficially, to find out what life is like on the island. He returned with a great deal of detailed information. Although I grew up in Cuba, I found his report very interesting. Most of the following description of today's Cuba is based on this timely account.

Unlike most other foreign visitors who express their opinions on Cuba, Semtei did not isolate himself in a hotel. He stayed in a B&B, where state security surveillance is laxer and visitors can come and go at will. The Cuban and Venezuelan dialects, variants of Caribbean Spanish, are very similar, and Semtei was able to converse freely with many Cubans on any topic except internal politics and Fidel.

Semtei reports that no one says anything, good or bad, about the Cuban *caudillo*. His timeless presence is taken for granted, with resignation and fear. Cubans trust no one. The CIA estimates that one-half million work for the Ministry of Interior as informers. Among younger Cubans there is total apathy and lack of hope; disenchantment with a regime that dates from their grandparents' era and promises no future, no fun, no nothing. "Each to his own" is the catchphrase on the streets. It's not for nothing that Cuba has the lowest birthrate in the Americas, 1.59. No one wants to be tied down in case there's an opportunity to emigrate. In 2008 the popular destination was Ecuador. Thousands left, paying \$3,000 for black-market visas.

In his ramblings around the capital, Semtei found no bookstores with any current titles. The few libraries have a scarcely better selection. Practically the only newspapers — little more than propaganda rags — are Gramma and Juventud Rebelde, which carry prominently "The Reflections of Comrade Fidel" (also read at least three times daily on radio and TV). As he says, the promise and revolutionary dream of a country 100% illiteracy-free means nothing when there's nothing to read and nowhere to buy it if there were. On the other hand, businesses of every sort stock eyepopping quantities of tobacco and alcoholic beverages, especially Havana Club rum and Bucanero and Cristal beer, with 24/7 sales. Harmless drunks abound, nursing bottles of *chispa de tren* (train spark) or *planchado* (flattened, as in "when you drink this, you're flattened").

Though Cuba has cultivated a reputation for being crime-free, Semtei noticed more barbed wire and block-fenced houses than in Caracas, the undisputed crime capital of the world. He reports lots of petty filching — shoplifting, pocket picking, unauthorized borrowing, confidence rackets — mostly crimes of opportunity that get worse as conditions deteriorate.

Poverty is widespread. Not being tourist zones, neighborhoods such as San Miguel del Padrón and Guanabacoa have little police presence. They are destitute tragedies with rotten, potholed roads; peeling, crumbling buildings; burst sewers, and broken street lights. They are roamed by delinquents, vacant-eyed old folks, mumbling mental deficient, and drunks. Colonial Havana, *Habana Vieja*, is slowly being restored, with foreign aid. Venezuela's assistance to Cuba, which includes petroleum, food, machinery, etc., totals nearly \$10 million *daily* (Semtei's estimate). Electricity and water are not dependable, with over half of the water lost to broken pipes and mains. But billboards with admonitions and wisdom from Marx, Lenin, Che, and Fidel abound.

Semtei reports that provincial towns are even more desolate, especially given the paucity of transport other than the *araña* (spider), the ubiquitous axle-mounted wagon with car tires pulled by a saggy-backed horse. There is decent public transportation for *yumas* (tourists). Otherwise, the best bets are *bicitaxis* (pedicabs) in Havana and hitchhiking in the rest of the island.

Cubans make do in their daily life by a system called *resolver* (resolve) and, without a hint of irony, *por la izquierda* (by the left), meaning bribes or unlawful enterprises. Everyone is trying to *resolver*. In schools, students' lunches are eaten by staff, and teachers sell grades; at health clinics and hospitals,

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*Electricity and water are not dependable.  
But billboards with admonitions and wisdom  
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doctors "ask" for gifts; on the streets, predatory cops take their cut, as does everyone in the food business. Semtei estimates that half the island's population does something illegal to procure food. Killing a cow, even your own — which it isn't, because there is little to no private property — draws a harsher penalty than killing a person.

In mid-2010, it finally became legal for farmers to own their own shovels and work boots. Homes, buildings, cars, and motorcycles are all state-owned. These are bartered interminably — and legally, so long as no convertible currency changes hands — for any number of reasons. The famous Cuban vintage cars are being sold to foreigners in under-the-radar, complicated deals that will be consummated when the Castros leave the stage — in effect, virtual commerce.

Cubans love TV, but satellite dishes are *verboten*, punishable by accelerated fines including jail. The people are especially fond of American series such as "CSI," game shows, and talent competitions, which are transmitted on government channels, though probably pirated because of the embargo. Pirated CDs of the latest Miami shows are available *por la izquierda*. Internet service is available at the hotels for \$10 an hour, but a typical Google page takes five minutes to download and state security reviews whatever you write. Surprisingly, the service is available to Cubans but only after they fill out a lengthy security form. Cell phone saturation is the lowest in the Americas (including Haiti).

Many tiny, private repair shops for electronics, appliances, and cars operate overtime on the sly. A friend of Semtei's who lives in Cuba went to one but was turned away and told to return later, more discreetly; there were too many clients, which was suspicious and could be interpreted as incipient capitalism.

The much-touted Cuban doctors, once nicknamed *sietemesinos* (literally, seven-monthers, or "premies," premature babies), practice without an internship or specialization. The best of them are exported to work in other countries for foreign exchange at \$1,300 monthly, with \$300 going to the MD but \$1,000 returning as a commission to the Cuban government.

Cuba has become a destination for sex, with places such as the Discoteca Johnny and El Delirio Habanero permitted and supervised by state security. *Jineteras* (literally, female jockeys — prostitutes) are many. In one night one of them can take in what five first-class doctors earn as government salary in a month. For the ladies there are also *jineteros*. On the Malecon — Havana's emblematic walled strand — and 23rd

Street, *pingueros* (dickers) satisfy gay tourists. Semtei reports the rumor that Fidel once quipped that Cuba has the most cultured whores in the world.

Taking their cue from Stalin, who used to pack the NKVD with Siberians, provincials with little sympathy, much envy, and even rougher manners for the capital's sophisticates, the

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*In schools, students' lunches are eaten by staff, and teachers sell grades; at health clinics and hospitals, doctors "ask" for gifts; on the streets, predatory cops take their cut, as does everyone in the food business.*

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Castros have packed Havana's police with hicks from the poorest and remotest parts of the island. These cops — nicknamed *palestinos* (Palestinians), are hated by the *Habaneros*, who perceive them as carpetbaggers looking only to line their pockets. They are everywhere, especially when rumors of dissent are brewing, at which time they're reinforced by the Revolutionary Militia. The state also offers a "private" security service, the Servicio Privado de Seguridad (SPS), for those who want to buy extra protection.

Although central Havana, Marianao, El Cerro and all the areas usually visited by tourists are saturated with CCTV cameras gyrating 360°, the Venezuelan technicians whom Semtei talked to reported that these were mostly a Potemkin show, since the system lacked recording, archival, and supporting materials. Traffic, what little there is, punctiliously obeys traffic lights and laws.

Beef is generally available legally at \$6 a pound, about half the monthly salary of an engineer. Blue jeans run about \$30; tennis shoes about \$100. Although prices are reasonable, no one has any money. A retired colonel receives a pension of 750 pesos monthly; a postgraduate, foreign-trained economist about 600 pesos. With the peso at about 20 to the dollar, those salaries translate to about \$37 and \$30 respectively. The most coveted and fought for job is driving tourist taxis, a position available only with connections and bribes through the tourist hotels. Although the dollar is no longer legal tender, it is the basis for convertible currency — a complicated system that includes convertible and non-convertible pesos, with stores that accept one but not the other.

The food rationing system, in the form of a booklet, entitles each citizen to 1.5 pounds of chicken per month, seven pounds of rice, one-half pound of cooking oil, one-half pound of pasta, six pounds of sugar, one pound of laundry soap, and ten eggs. Occasionally, one-half pound of ham per person per month is made available. There are no canned goods. Vegetables are available in pesos from *agros*, farmers' markets, which are few and far between. Mayonnaise and tomato sauce are available only from special stores, for hard currency. Razor blades, cosmetics, mouthwash, and such are virtually impossible to find. There are no general merchandise shops, and Semtei could not locate any bakeries. Plastic grocery bags are unavailable and in great demand. Semtei advises that if

you visit Cuba, you should take at least 100 — you'll make someone's day.

In reality, Cuba produces nothing for export (with the exception of nickel) and imports 80% of its food. The 1925 sugar harvest weighed in at 5.16 million tons; the 2010 harvest, at about one million. Cuba now *imports* sugar. It survives on the generosity of Chávez, tourism, and foreign remittances.

Though Semtei remains a man of the Left, he now calls himself a "traditional socialist" instead of a "radical red," espousing democracy and freedom of expression. His disillusionment with Chávez is guarded.



A few years ago I ran into a recent Cuban refugee at a Phoenix gym. We struck up a conversation and, like all Cuban refugees everywhere, we exchanged our stories. Vladimiro was the son of Cuban diplomats, born in Prague, Czechoslovakia. He spoke Spanish, Czech, and a smattering of English. He'd been drafted for the Angolan War when Castro sent nearly 40,000 troops to aid the Marxist Front secure victory, a remarkable achievement for an island of 10.5 million.

But Vladimiro was a conscientious objector, a category unrecognized in Cuba, so he was thrown in jail for refusing to serve. While serving his time in La Cabaña prison, he resolved to emigrate if he were ever freed. Years later, after his release, he and his buddy Eusebio put a plan into action. Over many months they managed to acquire and patch four giant recycled truck tire inner tubes. With vines, slats, and cordage they stacked and lashed them together, fashioning a frame out of the stiff members and carved rough paddles.

A *balsero's* (rafter's) strategy for crossing the 90-mile-wide Florida Straits is not as hopeless as it may seem. Once well free of the Cuban coast, you'll find a favorable current trending toward Florida which, when finally caught, will carry your raft to freedom. Present U.S. policy gives asylum to those who make landfall, while those intercepted at sea by U.S. authorities are returned to Cuba. Those intercepted by Cuban authorities have sometimes been shot on the spot.

Vladimiro and Eusebio set adrift late on a moonless night. At dawn, they could still see the Cuban coast. Dispirited, Eusebio decided to swim back to shore. Vladimiro gave him "the courage talk," but Eusebio had had enough; so Vlad bade him farewell and promised to call as soon as he reached the United States. On the second night, sharks circled the raft.

Days later, it beached on Florida sands. As soon as he could get to a phone, Vladimiro rang Eusebio's family. There was no word of Eusebio, not even later, after many calls. Vladimiro assumes that he was eaten by sharks.

By the time I met Vladimiro, he'd been in the United States nearly a year and had been relocated to Phoenix. He was working as a short-order cook in a resort, but he still lacked his green card. His troubles with the immigration bureaucracy were probably typical, but one exchange stands out. His case worker, an unsympathetic black official, suggested that "perhaps he should go back to where he came from?"

Vladimiro, already sophisticated in dealing with officialdom replied, "Would that be Czechoslovakia, or Cuba?" □



# An Experiment in Apocalypse

*by Stephen Cox*

A major religious network is about to reveal what people do when they're proved to be utterly wrong about something tremendously important to them.

If you travel around the country, you will see, from time to time, a billboard that proclaims, "Judgment Day: May 21, 2011." Or you may see one that says, in more detail: "The Rapture: May 21, 2011. The End of the World: October 21, 2011."

Early this summer, the Portuguese sailing ship "Sagres" visited my town, San Diego. At the wharf, swarms of middle-aged men and women materialized with stacks of pamphlets in English and Portuguese. "The End of the World Is Almost Here!" the pamphlets said. "Holy God Will Bring Judgment Day on May 21, 2011."

The same information is being dispensed in many parts of the world. In origin, however, this is an American phenomenon, and Americans are likely to see much more of it in the days ahead. It provides a rare opportunity to study what happens when prophecy fails.

Those words — "When Prophecy Fails" — are the title of a seminal work in social psychology, published in 1956. The authors, Leon Festinger and two colleagues, researchers from the University of Minnesota, learned that a flying saucer enthusiast in Oak Park, Illinois, had received messages from

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another planet informing her that the world would soon (in December 1954) be devastated by earthquakes and floods. They immediately organized a team of investigators to infiltrate her followers, observe what was happening, and document the results.

The message bearer, Dorothy Martin, whom Festinger and his colleagues call "Marian Keech," reacted to the initial failure of her prophecies by making further prophecies. When these also failed, she rationalized the disconfirmation by conveying messages indicating that the world had been saved because of the spiritual light shed by her disciples. For a while, the fervor of her inner circle actually increased. The authors attributed this to the heightened intensity of the believers' struggle to retain their faith and explain it to the world.

Yet within a short time the group dissolved. Some people simply lost their faith. Others succumbed to social pressures.

Martin's neighbors tried to get her arrested for disturbing the peace, and relatives tried to get some of her disciples declared insane and unfit to rear their children.

Martin fled her home, but she never gave up on self-invented spirituality. She continued to operate as a guru of eccentric spiritual groups until her death in 1992. (Her story is perceptively told by Jerome Clark in "Alien Worlds" [ed. Diana G. Tumminia, 2007].) This kind of faithfulness is perhaps to be expected of a woman so poignantly gullible that

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*The prophecies about May 21, 2011 emanate from a large, well-funded Christian institution veering into hyperspace.*

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when a group of teenage pranksters visited her home in 1954, determined to make fun of her prophecies, she immediately recognized them as flying saucer pilots on a mission to test her resolve: "As soon as they had entered the house she had felt the force of their superhuman personalities, their strength, their intelligence."

Peace to Mrs. Martin. "When Prophecy Fails" remains the most influential study of why people believe in preposterous time prophecies, and why some of them continue to believe, even after the prophecies have been proven false. Yet it has to do with only a tiny group of outer space aficionados — about two dozen. That's a very small experiment. By contrast, the prophecies about May 21, 2011 (and collaterally, October 21, 2011), emanate from a large, well-funded Christian institution, formerly mainstream but now veering into hyperspace.

The institution is Family Stations, Inc., usually known as Family Radio. Based in Oakland, California, it is a worldwide network of AM, FM, and shortwave radio outlets (over 100 stations in the United States alone). No one can calculate how many steady adherents Family Radio has; doubtless, they are only a fraction of its millions of casual or chronic listeners (such as me). But however you figure it, Family Radio is a mass movement, the kind of movement that sometimes metastasizes from ordinary American ideas and institutions.

The interest of Family Radio's prophecies is doubled by the fact that it has predicted the end of the world *twice*. It did so in 1994, and it's doing so now — and if anything, the appeal of its ideas has grown. No apocalyptic messengers showed up at San Diego harbor in 1994. Now, they do.

But let's start with history.



Nothing is more American than predictions of the end of the world. One of the greatest mass movements in early American history was occasioned by William Miller (1782–1849), whose study of Bible prophecy led him to announce that Christ's second coming or "advent" would occur in 1843 or 1844. Various exact dates circulated among his followers,

but when nothing happened on the last one, October 22, 1844, almost everyone gave up. This is called in American religious history the Great Disappointment.

But it was not the end. Out of Millerism grew other movements. Many people could not shake the idea that something about Miller's prophecies must, in some sense, have been true. A period of reinterpretation ensued, and from it emerged the adventist movement in its many, various, and populous forms. Chief among them are the Seventh Day Adventists, who have a mighty following throughout the world. Other adventist groups include the Worldwide Church of God and its offshoots, and the movement now called Jehovah's Witnesses, begun by the disciples of Charles Taze Russell, a major adventist reinterpreter.

One classic pattern of adventist reinterpretation is to retain an apparently falsified prophetic date and argue that something did happen then, but that it happened invisibly. The Seventh Day Adventists retained 1844 but interpreted it as a time when Christ invisibly began a process of "investigative judgment." Another group of adventists predicted a visible second coming in 1874, then decided that it had been an invisible event. Russell learned from this group about the invisible coming in 1874 and predicted that 1914 would bring the highly visible end of everything not subject to Christ's kingdom. Fortunately for his followers, World War I began in 1914, allowing them to maintain that he was astonishingly right in having predicted that year — which they interpreted as the (revised) date of Christ's still-invisible second coming. From time to time, they have assigned new dates for the end of the world. They issued predictions for 1925 and 1975, among other years, and lost large numbers of adherents thereafter. Yet their movement continued, fortified by the belief that Russell had actually predicted something true about 1914.

These are some of the shapes that prophetic disappointment can take. But the early adventist experiments, though large, were messy. The Family Radio experiment is cleaner. Family Radio's disciples are many, but they don't number in the millions, and its ideas don't leak out at irregular intervals from the depths of a Protestant Vatican. The prophecies of Family Radio issue from one man, who is on the air every day.



In his younger years, Harold Egbert Camping (born 1921) operated a construction company in northern California. His business was successful, but having made his money, he looked for something more intellectual to do. He began an earnest study of the Bible. In 1958, at a time when FM stations were not very expensive to acquire, he and some friends founded Family Radio. They started with one station, then went on to purchase others. The stations are very frugally operated, and Camping has never tried to make any money from them. There has never been a whiff of scandal about Family Radio. The salaries of its officers and directors are only about \$80,000 a year, total — less than 1% of total wages and salaries. The organization ticks along with about \$15 million in

contributions a year. Its net assets, in 2007, were \$122 million.

Camping's current role in the organization is that of "Bible teacher." He is an active radio lecturer and conference speaker, but his primary means of teaching is his Monday-Friday call-in program "Open Forum," which began in 1961. (If you go to the Family Radio website, you can get a list of the stations that broadcast the show, as well as the texts of his recent publications.)

When you listen to "Open Forum," you will probably find it hard to conceive how Camping could ever have attracted a following. If there is such a thing as anti-charisma, Camping has it. He is the antithesis of the modern media personality. Dogmatic, repetitious, excruciatingly slow and digressive, he is also, very often, intolerably rude. When someone even hints at a disagreement or appears to introduce a term or concept that he considers erroneous, he begins shouting, "Excuse me! Excuse me!", until the annoying intervention ceases. "Open Forum" is neither "open" nor any kind of "forum." During the August 5 program, a hapless caller asked to be allowed to complete his comment: "Mr. Camping! May I please just finish what I was saying?" Camping replied, "Excuse me! This program is not designed to entertain just anybody and everybody's ideas!" It was a typical episode in the life of "Open Forum."

Camping has the annoying habit of preaching abject humility, while claiming that "we" (that is, he) have been favored by God with an understanding of Bible truth that was never vouchsafed to anyone before. Indeed, he constantly insists that the Bible was written *not* to be understood, until these latter days — that is, until a time when God enabled "us" to divine its meanings. It's a classic adventist idea — the idea that, as Russell put it in "The Time Is at Hand" (1889), "all these things have been *hidden* by the Lord" until the right Bible teacher is available to discover them.

Camping's theology is far from intuitive. He began life as a member of a Calvinist church — the Christian Reformed denomination, ordinarily a heritage church for the descendants of Dutch immigrants — and received from it a basic set of Calvinist doctrines to which he still assents. In his view, God decreed, before the foundation of the world, who would be saved and who would be damned, making his decision arbitrarily, not on the basis of the goodness or badness of the deeds that he foresaw his children would do. To believe anything else, Calvin thought, was to doubt God's supremacy, his freedom from all constraint. But Camping carries this theology to further extremes.

On June 13, 2010, in his "Bible Class of the Air" (part 92[!] in a series called "To God Be the Glory"), he asserted that "eternal life is a lottery prize." He then listed all the places in the Bible that refer to "lots" or "casting lots," as if that proved his point. On many occasions during 2010 he has maintained that only 200 million people will be saved (see Revelation 9:16, patently misinterpreted). He states, with great satisfaction in his numerology, that this number represents one-seventieth of the people who have ever lived on earth.

The inherent cruelty of such ideas must repel many potential converts, while bringing out the latent elitism in many others. But most of Camping's distinctive ideas are stranger still. His emphasis on what happened "from the foundation of the world" has led him to propose that Christ's redemptive sacri-

fice was not merely *foreseen* by God before the world began; it actually *took place* before the world began. (The poetic phrase comes from Revelation 13:8; the interpretation is confuted by Hebrews 9:26). Thus, Christ's death on the cross was merely a theatrical "demonstration" of the torture and death that had somehow happened before time began. I have never discovered anyone else who came up with this idea.

Most listeners probably become confused by doctrines like that and blank out on them. But Camping won't allow anyone to blank out on his prophecies about 2011: Christ will manifest himself on May 21, 2011; the last judgment will begin; the elect, "the true believers," will be "raptured" or caught up to heaven; the graves will cast out the dead, and birds of prey will feed on them. During the following five months, billions of the non-elect will live on, amid scenes of increasing violence and distress, repenting of their failure to believe Harold Camping. Then, on October 21, 2011, the entire physical universe will be destroyed.

How did Camping decide on these dates?

His ideas are extraordinarily hard to summarize logically. Camping is a man who is capable of arguing that the number 1,000 (in Revelation 20:2) symbolizes the 1,955 years from A.D. 33 to 1988 A.D. — one number "symbolizing" another number. Without trying to fill in the details, I'll sketch two lines of thought that have led him to 2011.

One begins with his interpretation of Daniel 8:13–14. There the question is asked, "How long shall . . . the sanctuary . . . be trodden under foot?", and the answer is given: "Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed." I'll come back to that. Remember the number 2,300.

Another line of thought starts from Camping's unique understanding of the age of the world. A bizarre recalculation of the ages of the patriarchs in the book of Genesis leads him to the conclusion that the world was created in 11,013 B.C., not 4004 B.C., the traditional Old Testament date. Add 13,000 years to 11,013 B.C., and you get 1988 A.D. (keep in mind that there's no year 0), an important date for Camping's prophecies.

It isn't clear why 13,000 should be significant; 13 is by no means an important biblical number. It is clear, however, that the year 2011 is 7,000 years from Camping's date for Noah's flood (4990 B.C.). So what? Well, 7 is frequently emphasized in the Bible, and so (rarely) is 1,000. Further, it is 23 years from May 21, 1988 to May 21, 2011, and 2,300 days from May 21,

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*Nothing is more American than predictions of the end of the world. From time to time, new dates are assigned.*

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1988, to September 6, 1994. You recall the figure 2,300 from Daniel 8:13–14. According to Camping, 23 signifies "God's wrath or judgment," as illustrated by the presence of 23 in two exceptionally obscure places in the Bible, as well as by the 2,300 days in Daniel 8 — which brings us back to where we started.

Are you lost? I wouldn't be surprised. But I'll proceed.

What, if anything, happened in 1988? In 1988, Harold Camping left his Christian Reformed church in Alameda, California, because it intended to oust him from his job as Bible teacher. And what happened in 1994? Camping says now that 1994 was when the "horror" of the churches began, because God then started to save "multitudes" of people without the churches' help. This was another of the invisible events well known in adventist circles. The visible and relevant event, however, was the failure of Camping's first prophecy about the end of the world. He had identified the date as September 6, 1994, and estimated the probability as 99.9%.



Camping's book, "1994?", appeared in 1992 and became a bestseller in the religious field. For two years thereafter broadcasts on Family Radio insisted that 1994 would see Christ's second coming, and the end of the world.

September 6, 1994, came and went. Nothing happened to the universe, and nothing happened to Family Radio, either — although that was wonderful enough in its own way. "Open Forum" continued; all the other programs continued. The prophetic failure was not acknowledged. Camping experimented with other dates in the neighborhood of September 6, and these also failed. Months later, he began to entertain questions about what might conceivably have gone wrong. He answered, without a hint of repentance or self-doubt, that the question mark after "1994" in the title of his book showed that he hadn't been sure, that he had merely introduced a possibility.

Family Radio was damaged by 1994, but it survived. Obviously, it had a core constituency that cared a lot about prophecy but not very much about prophetic failure, at least in the first instance. There was probably an additional reason for its survival. Nineteen ninety-four was a little early for most people to be masters of the internet, and for the internet to have entries on almost every conceivable subject. Today, it's easy to find Christian websites that combat Camping's views; but if you were going to leave the Family Radio movement in 1994, your first thought would probably not be, "I'm

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*The fact that every new religious interpretation represents itself as orthodoxy merely reflects Americans' invincible confidence.*

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going to start a website and expose this man's heresies!" You'd just leave, without broadcasting your opinions, and the way would be clear for Camping to offer his prophecies to people who had never heard of 1994.

There is a law, called Cox's Law of Institutional Fitness, that helps explain why churches and other voluntary organizations often survive ridiculous failures. The Law states: "Every preacher is good enough for the church he's in." In

other words, the people who can't stand the preacher go away, and the people who remain keep filling out surveys saying that he's doing a terrific job. So the church (or the community center, or the libertarian caucus, or any other voluntary organization) continues as it is, no matter how ridiculous it makes itself. Of course, this allows crazy things to get crazier still. That process is richly exemplified by the recent history of Family Radio.

Camping appears to have taken several years to process the failure of 1994, but in 2001 he began to announce radical new teachings. One was a revised date for the end of the world: 2011. About this date, as he frequently proclaims, he is even more certain than he was about 1994. In fact, he is totally certain. As he said on his June 29 broadcast, "It is absolutely going to happen."

Another new teaching was the idea that in 1988 "the Church Age" had ended: God had withdrawn his authority from the churches and given them up to Satan. He did that on May 21, 1988; afterward, for 2,300 days, few or no souls were saved. Then, in 1994, a fresh harvest of souls began, under the exclusive auspices of Family Radio.

Camping never discusses the fact that 1988 was the date of his trouble with his local church, and 1994 was the date of his failed prophecy of the End. Obviously, however, visible failure was now being converted into invisible but glorious victory. Camping has said (in a talk broadcast on May 2, 2009, but recorded some years before) that he was in the hospital, "not knowing whether I was gonna live or die" (here he chuckled), when it suddenly occurred to him that the Church Age was over and there would be 23 years from its end till the end of the world. For him, "everything" then "locked into place."

From that curious inspiration, his movement received new life and energy.



For three centuries, free religious speculation has been a hallmark of American life. That is one reason why Americans have invented so many denominations, and why the current views of any given denomination are impossible to predict from the premises with which it started. The fact that every fanciful new interpretation represents itself as orthodoxy merely reflects Americans' invincible confidence in themselves.

This is not, in itself, an unattractive quality, although it often leads people to arrive at places that are quite different from those they aimed at, without understanding the significance of their journey.

There is nothing that Harold Camping more detests than the teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses and other eccentric adventists. Yet, like the two warring brothers in Swift's "Tale of a Tub," he has adopted some of their crucial views: he denies the existence of a literal hell and embraces the idea that there is no "soul" that survives one's physical death — if God intends to resurrect you, then he will give you a brand-new existence; if not, as Camping puts it, you're just "dead, dead, dead!"



In some respects, Camping's ideas are also mirror images of atheism. Many atheists read the Bible as if it were all of a piece, disregarding the various approaches of its various authors and the various periods and genres in which it was written. So if you find something brutal in Jeremiah or something antilibertarian in Leviticus, so much for the rest of the Bible, too. Camping agrees with the premise, while denying the implication. For him, the Bible is "one work, one meaning, and one author" ("To God Be the Glory," part 98). Defending his right to take some Bible numbers literally and some symbolically, he has said that they may be literal or symbolic, "depending on the context, which is the whole Bible" ("Open Forum," July 13). Of course, that's a prescription for interpreting any individual passage in exactly the way you choose, since there are millions of things in "the whole Bible" that can provide a "context." Thus he justifies another common atheist assumption: the Bible is an old fiddle, on which one can play any old tune.

But the oddest mirror effect is Camping's treatment of the conditions of salvation. The Calvinist doctrine with which he began is that there are no conditions: God saves whomever he wills to save. Accordingly, Camping fanatically opposes the plausible idea, which he thinks all churches are preaching, that people can do *something* to indicate that they want to be saved, and thereby help, at least, to procure their salvation. He is so concerned with the falseness of this idea as to insist that if you are sitting in a church that preaches it, you have no possibility of being saved. Last year, he declared that you can be saved in a mosque, but you cannot be saved in a church.

Be that as it may — as he stated in his June 7 broadcast, "If anyone thinks that he's accepted Christ as savior and that this means he's saved, he is automatically *not* saved." Filling out this logic: you cannot influence your own salvation — *except* if you believe you can influence your own salvation; then you'll find that there are limits to God's power to save you — which is precisely the point that Calvin denied, and Camping believes that he himself denies.

Camping's antichurch theology has had major institutional effects. In 2001, he started exhorting his followers to "depart out" of the churches, abandoning even the primary rituals of baptism and communion. For many years, his stations had told prospective donors, "First take care of your local church; then give to Family Radio" — which, besides "Open Forum," broadcast many sermons and other features by conservative Christian clergy. Now, Family Radio's listeners fled their churches, and the network cancelled a good share of its programming simply because it was sponsored by a pastor or a church, or even mentioned a pastor or a church.

The vacant air time was filled with new forms of ritual — incessant replays of Camping's lectures and comments; frequent, often arbitrarily selected, recitations of Scripture; program notes, pleas for funds, and music introductions gruesomely expanded into sermons about the End. Meanwhile, Family Radio put a great deal of effort into organizing local conferences and missionary campaigns, obvious surrogates for the work of local churches. Family Radio is evolving into the image of all it hates, a church — a particularly dry and boring church, but nevertheless a church.

This also is truly American. It's hard to imagine that in America you can have a distinctive Christian belief and not

expect some kind of church to grow out of it. In this country, voluntary belief leads to voluntary organization. There is nothing to prevent it; it's just what happens.



In 1993, an anonymous Family Radio insider reported, "The majority of staff members here at Family Radio fear that the end just might be near . . . not for the world, but for Family Radio." Their fears were not realized. Since the failure of prediction in 1994, the institution has added many more stations, listeners, and activists. But the Depart Out message caused

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*Last year, Camping declared that you can be saved in a mosque, but you cannot be saved in a church.*

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large internal disruptions. Prominent personalities, well known to the radio audience, departed out of Family Radio, some of them issuing public statements about how unreasonable and pigheaded Camping was. One claimed that his teachings were "an embarrassment to almost all FR employees," with "only a small percentage of staff hanging on every word he says."

Most dissenters appear to have remained, but they have learned to lie low. They have stopped talking with the press, even anonymously, although occasionally echoes of their feelings are heard on anti-Camping websites. They are said to be waiting it out till Camping dies.

If you tune in today, you will find a strange mix of programs — not only Campingite propaganda but standard Christian music and a variety of daily features about common human problems. Some of the most attractive radio personalities continue in their niches, never mentioning the end of the world. Their thoughts are a mystery. But it's a remarkable commentary on the audience of Family Radio that the network's overriding theme — the End comes next year! — is balanced by programs about child-rearing, preserving your health, reducing your weight, and dealing with the lifelong problems of marriage.



Apocalyptic sects often grow large in absolute numbers, but none has ever become the dominant religion in any considerable geographical area. Yet at least in America, their following does not consist of socially marginal people. The nice, reasonably dressed, well-disciplined people who attend Camping's conferences and pass out his literature are in every outward sense just normal Americans. Camping's movement developed out of a radio service that until recently billed itself

as “a conservative ministry.”

I believe that many of the psychological mechanisms at work among Camping’s followers are characteristic of enormous numbers of other Americans as well. Four of these mechanisms seem to me especially worth noticing.

### 1. Invincible Pessimism

How many times have you entered a conversation about some secular forecast of disaster — global warming, nuclear terrorism, the collapse of the world economy — and watched the participants become enraged when evidence was presented that things might turn out all right, after all? Often, I suspect. There is a sizable part of the population that wants to believe the worst.

I don’t know why this is. Perhaps it has something to do with the desire to be different, to distinguish oneself from other citizens of a nation ideologically committed to the expectation of progress. (What does the Great Seal say? “*Novus ordo seclorum*” — a new order of the ages. New, and better.) That’s a speculation. But notice: these invincibly pessimistic people don’t really want to experience poverty, war, or the destruction of their friends and family by a vengeful God. They can believe in it; they can get angry when their belief is contradicted; but they don’t actually want to see it. If they did, they would burn all their money and alienate all their friends right now. They have no more trouble planning for the future than anyone else. Like almost everyone else, they want the best from the future. You can call this:

### 2. Not Letting Your Left Brain Know What Your Right Brain Is Doing

It’s a form of the self-entitlement to which Americans are now addicted. They want to believe that they know what other people don’t — the economy is about to crash; the Lord is about to destroy the universe — but they also want to retire to a beautiful home in Hawaii after their children (now three and five years old) graduate from Princeton. So they believe in destruction and plan for success. This is what you see in the two types of programming, apocalyptic and domestic, on Family Radio, which is far from the only place where you can witness doublethink in contemporary America. Festinger thought that people try to dispel “cognitive dissonance.” It might better be said that Americans cherish their cognitive dissonance; they keep it and guard it and try to make it bear fruit to them.

### 3. The Egotism of Expertise

I am not referring to the egotism of experts (a topic that can never be exhausted) but to the hand-me-down egotism of people who trust the experts — experts whom, for the most part, they don’t have enough expertise to select, calmly and rationally, on their own. They know it, too. Nothing is more frequent among people who call into Family Radio or are interviewed at its conferences than statements to this effect: “I wanted to understand the Bible, but I couldn’t make any headway. Then I stumbled on ‘Open Forum,’ and now I’m making so much progress, it’s unbelievable.” They’re right; it’s literally unbelievable. Figuring out the Bible is much easier than figuring out the discourse of Harold Camping. What people learn from him is chiefly pride in their association with a man so expert that nobody — including them — can under-

stand what he says. Here is another tendency that isn’t limited to adherents of the Depart Out movement. Popular economics and environmentalism would be nothing without it.

### 4. Boredom

The other thing that respondents to Family Radio constantly say is, “I used to go from one church to another, and somehow, none of them really spoke to me. It was all just, I don’t know, just a lot of ceremonies and rituals. But I discovered Family Radio, and now I’m learning so much about the truth.” People are bored, and boredom is for them the proof of falsehood. I would think that a few minutes of church ritual would bore them much less than a radio teacher droning by the hour about the churches’ refusal to listen to his message, but I’m just recording another subjective preference. The point is: the common assumption that truth is known when it “speaks to me,” when it keeps me awake, when it alleviates my chronic boredom, isn’t just a problem for the traditional churches; it’s a problem for us all. It’s the operative principle of much of American life, including virtually all of America’s political campaigns.

Those are four reasons why one should view the Depart Out movement as something more than a weird, irrational, and therefore unimportant episode. In many respects the movement is an accurate, though very unfortunate, reflection of the Americans with whom we live.



What will happen next?

One thing is certain: the Rapture will not take place on May 21. Nor will the total destruction of the physical universe occur on the following October 21. But what will happen to Family Radio?

Will the Depart Out movement collapse, like the Millerites? Will the Campingites try to reinterpret their message, as they did after the disappointment of 1994? Will they succeed? Or will there be a palace revolution?

I believe that the last is likeliest. People who have invested their careers in an organization are reluctant to part from it, no matter what happens, and in this instance there has been good reason for dissenters to stay and bide their time. Camping is the sole source of the sect’s peculiar theology, and he is 89 years old. (Not that he is senile — he isn’t. His method of argument is the same that it was 25 years ago, when I first found him on the dial.) It is difficult to imagine that Family Radio’s internal proletariat hasn’t made plans for what happens after his death — or even before it, when May 21 fails to justify his teachings. I look for a battle at Family Radio; and with luck, the battle will be public.

In any case, we are unlikely to see a more informative experiment in what happens when prophecy — definite, ceaselessly emphasized, widely disseminated prophecy — unmistakably and climactically fails. Every student of American civilization should plan to tune in to Family Radio on May 21 — not with the possibility of being caught up to heaven, but with the certainty of being caught up in a fascinating event. □

# The Queen of Africa

*by Jacques Delacroix*

Strength finds a way to surface — but  
encouragement can help.

She was sitting two feet away, right in front of my desk, in the seat that only students who are both good and self-assured ever choose. That's the seat where you won't miss a word, and the seat whose occupant gets called on whenever everyone else in the class is baffled by a question.

Note that I am casting no aspersions on back-row sitters. I have learned that they include justifiably disdainful intellectuals as well as the expected lazy, good-for-nothing, aspiring bums. Even those will surprise you occasionally, though, with end-of-quarter projects that bowl you over with their compensatory inventiveness.

She was a black girl who looked foreign, I thought. When I called roll, she sounded as if she had a slight French accent. Her name was definitely from somewhere in West Africa. To my inquiries, she replied that she was from Dakar, the capital of Senegal.

I am a former Frenchman myself. All French people have a soft spot for Senegal, because it's one of their rare successful colonial ventures. It's a nearly impeccably democratic country in a continent of broad tyranny. In spite of its comparative poverty, Senegal has an artistically lively and even creative

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popular culture. What's more, a great many Senegalese have profited from a mercifully unreformed, old-style French school system. They are well-read and they speak beautiful French. I mean by this that I would rather listen to a Senegalese primary school teacher than to a French television anchor, any day.

The young woman turned out to be exactly the kind of good student she had announced herself to be by selecting the hot seat the first minute of the first hour. She was never late; she seemed always well-prepared; she asked questions when others were staring vacantly into space, or avoiding my gaze. Her big brown eyes sparkled with intelligence. Occasionally, she would even attempt to argue with me, right there in class. (I surmise that this has become rare among undergraduates because almost none of them does the required reading: so,

disagree with the professor; get caught. You might say I am a well-informed pessimist.)

I was teaching an introductory class in international business, a sort of amalgam course combining elementary notions of international trade with commercial technical terms and as

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*If you suspect by now that I am bragging again, you are right. I am bragging about my culturally on-the-dot, effective intervention.*

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small a dosage of “cultural differences” as I could get away with. Her objections were always in line with conventional left-liberal ideas of the horrors that “globalization” allegedly fostered on Third World populations. “Your French communist teachers did a job on you at the Dakar Lycée, Ms. X,” I would assert. “Congratulations!” She would smile a big white smile and mutter something quick and attractively impertinent in French.

She was the kind of student that makes teaching worthwhile, even after 20 years. Her presence was enough to erase the existence of two dozen obstinately brain-dead seat warmers. (I don’t want to sound like an unredeemable curmudgeon; there are good students in every class.) She was also beautiful in the way that only women with dark skin can be: their good health is reflected in the shine of their skin and hair, in a manner that white women can only strive for. I was charmed.

Mine was a small campus where you bumped frequently into former students. Thus I became mildly curious when I did not see her anywhere for the whole of the next quarter. That was winter quarter, beginning just after Christmas break. I kept Aminata in the back of my mind and in the back of my heart. As if with a dual-tasking computer, one part of that same back of my mind was working out the puzzle of her disappearance from campus. I realize it’s bragging, but I know quite a bit about Africa and especially about Senegal, where I had spent some time on two occasions and was seduced. Also, I had had several close friends from there over the years. Moreover, I have read mountains about the former French colonies. That’s not because I am a nostalgic French colonialist but because some of these colonies nourished my tropical, warm-breeze-and-palm *trees reveries* when I was a child in cold, rainy Paris.

One day, at the end of March, for reasons I could not have explained, not even to myself, I picked up the phone and got Aminata’s Dakar address from the registrar. I sent her a brief postcard in a closed envelope saying approximately, in French: “I wonder what happened to you. Why don’t you send me an email if this card reaches you?” A week later, she replied.

Her mother, a prosperous businesswoman, had sent her a ticket to come and be with the family on the occasion of the winter break. Since the family was Muslim, there was no question of a Christmas celebration. Aminata thought of it as a family reunion after two long years of absence in America. Immediately after she reached home, her mother said, “Welcome home, my dear daughter; I am so proud of you. And here is the young man you will marry next week.”

Aminata refused, stamped her foot, and made herself disagreeable until the prospective groom dropped out in disgust or fear. She managed to borrow money from a female relative (who may have been there, done that, herself; I don’t know). She fled her own country and came back to the United States, where she found herself without resources for tuition, or for living expenses, because her mother had disowned the disobedient daughter.

Soon, however, she found the perfect live-in job with another immigrant, a wealthy Haitian woman who wanted a French-speaking nanny for her children. The agreement with the new employer seemed sweet, at first: room and board, time off for school and studying; the lady-boss even promised to pay for tuition or give Aminata a loan for that purpose. But after a while, the employer complained that Aminata was not spending enough time with the children. Soon, she imposed longer hours; soon, there was not enough time to do her school assignments. Then, Aminata was allowed time out of the house only for some of her classes, not all. In the end, the Haitian lady declined to give or lend tuition money.

The relationship with the Haitian slaver took several months to turn from a sweet dream into a nightmare. The disaster was so slow-moving as to be difficult to perceive clearly. Moreover, Aminata knew little about slavery. Few Africans actually do, I think. Those who believe they know something tend to be strikingly misinformed on the issue. In spite of her broad general culture, Aminata probably did not understand to what extent Haitian society was a pure product of slavery. It’s a slave society that freed itself, expelling the slave owners by force of arms but never expelled slavery from its collective mind. Aminata did not see it coming. Besides, she did not perceive that she had any other option. She ended up overworked, not enrolled in school, desperate, and depressed.

One low, low day, Aminata called me in tears and begun telling me the story. She sounded at the end of her rope. She needed immediate shoring up. Unfortunately, word choice

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*I am sure that, not so long ago, Aminata’s forefathers used to shoot an arrow point blank at a cow to drink blood directly from the vein.*

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matters with intelligent people. You can’t just tell them that everything will be all right. What makes the intelligent intelligent is that they distinguish between mere noises and meaningful utterances. So I tried to appeal to her pride.

I remembered the name of her tribal affiliation and, roughly, the place her tribe used to hold in the social ecology of her part of Africa. I ended up telling Aminata, “Don’t forget where you come from. Your ancestors not so far removed used to beat lions with a small stick to keep them away from their precious cattle. You are one of the queens of Africa.” I could almost see her smile through her tears, although we were on the phone.

*continued on page 27*



# ObamaCare: The Fine Print

*by Steve Murphy*

The healthcare bill may be even worse  
than you thought.

I decided to read the new ObamaCare law. I started with the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA). It's 906 pages, and it reads like the legalese on my widescreen TV warranty. I think I understand what it covers, but my stomach tells me I won't know for sure until something breaks — when customer service starts reading things to me from the fine print section.

So instead of trying to understand entire sections (or even paragraphs and sentences), I concentrated on certain individual words, whose importance became evident as I read, simply counting their occurrence. Although it did nothing for my indigestion, such a quasi-statistical approach greatly enhanced my understanding of the new law.

ObamaCare creates over 100 new government commissions. Some estimates are as high as 159; no one seems to know for sure. But judging by the 4,231 occurrences of the word "shall," the commissions will be very busy, whatever their number. And they will be everywhere, all the time.

According to the PPACA, commissions shall establish procedures; promulgate regulations; provide for efficient and non-discriminatory administration; prescribe regulations, rules, and guidance. They will be identifying health quality

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measures, monitoring outcomes, allotting money to states, awarding grants to entities, participating in rigorous federal evaluation of activities, ensuring that hospitals are representative of the spectrum, establishing a national strategy to improve healthcare, aggregating consistent data on quality, consulting with other commissions. They will be conducting demonstration programs, computing benchmarks, establishing geographically adjusted premiums, negotiating reimbursement rates, determining contingency margins, conducting competitive bidding processes. All this is barely the tip of a colossal, dizzying, and nebulous iceberg of healthcare command and control — so who needs the Public Option?

Luckily, someone had the good sense to include lots of studies (222 instances of "study" or "studies"). Besides, you can't have commissions without studies. Since ObamaCare

is a new program of unprecedented scale that will radically transform one-sixth of the economy and affect every citizen (not to mention up to 20 million noncitizens), studying it after enactment only makes good sense. Nancy Pelosi would, no doubt, consider it a corollary to her “we have to pass it to find out what’s in it” advice.

And what good are studies without reports? Reports are needed to document the objective and unbiased findings of their lobbyist authors. They also document recommendations, including that one most unabashedly important recommendation, shamelessly common to any self-respecting government study — the one for more funding. With 1,037 instances of “report” or “reports” or “reporting,” it looks like commissioners will have plenty of official-looking documents to make them look intelligent at healthcare meetings and hearings. And this will give them something to wave passionately above their big heads at their staged press conferences.

The frequency of the word “shall” is also an indicator of commission activity. But in many instances, it pertains to nongovernment healthcare participants — as do the words “require” (1,303 instances) and “comply” or “compliance” (143 instances). Consequently, doctors, patients, hospitals, insurance companies, and so forth are also going to be very busy. And they had better be meticulously compliant. If an investigation (57 instances) finds you to be in violation of ObamaCare, you will be subject to penalties (186 instances). Clearly, ObamaCare is serious about enforcement and tacitly urges compliance as a general rule to follow upon encountering a “shall” that may apply to you. That is obviously good advice when “shall” falls in the range from blatantly coercive to routinely coercive. For ambiguous “shalls” and seemingly innocuous ones, consult the nearest commission, the IRS, or a lawyer from the soon-to-be burgeoning ObamaCare litigation industry.

The early sections of the PPACA include many good words, but quickly switch to many not-so-good words in

the “fine print” area. For example, Title I is called “Quality, Affordable Health Care For All Americans” — an excellent heading except for the “Quality,” the “Affordable,” and the “For All Americans” parts.

## Quality

Section 2717, “Ensuring The Quality Of Care,” is illustrative of ObamaCare’s innovative ideas. For example, reporting requirements and reimbursement structures will be developed to

improve health outcomes through the implementation of activities such as quality reporting, effective case management, care coordination, chronic disease management, and medication and care compliance initiatives, including through the use of the medical homes model as defined for purposes of section 3602 of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, for treatment or services under the plan or coverage.

Who knew that quality reporting would ensure quality healthcare? And isn’t it about time doctors started managing cases effectively, coordinating care, and improving disease management? I bet they can’t get away with inferior stuff in Cuba. Surprisingly, there was no mention of the “anger management” that will surely be needed for doctors whose intelligence, professionalism, and dedication are insulted by these and many other sophomoric attempts to coerce them into the ObamaCare way of medical practice.

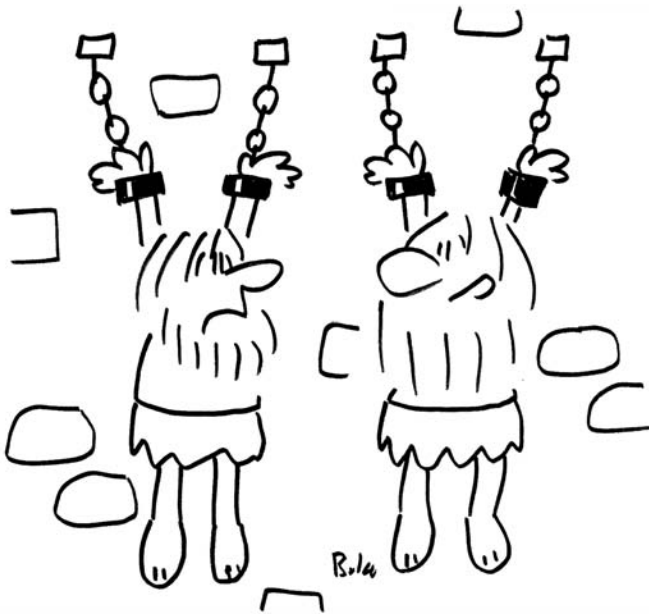
## Affordable

Apparently there will be savings (60 instances) that will make ObamaCare affordable. Indeed, there are provisions for excess savings. According to Section 2706:

An accountable care organization that meets the performance guidelines established by the Secretary under subsection (c)(1) and achieves savings greater than the annual minimal savings level established by the State under subsection (c)(2) shall receive an incentive payment for such year equal to a portion (as determined appropriate by the Secretary) of the amount of such excess savings. The Secretary may establish an annual cap on incentive payments for an accountable care organization.

So, first you have to achieve savings in excess of some minimum (set by the Secretary), then wait for your incentive payment (set by the Secretary), all the while hoping a cap (set by the Secretary) isn’t applied, siphoning off your portion to fund something else. Surprisingly, there was no mention of the armored trucks that will surely be needed for transporting all the savings to government counting houses.

Another source of savings will derive from increases in productivity. ObamaCare includes ingenious methods for getting slow and lazy doctors to treat patients at faster rates. For example, Medicare reimbursements will shrink to one-third of what private insurers pay. Such methods are sure to get patients flying out the door of hospitals and doctors’ offices. It’s one of those why-didn’t-I-think-of-that ideas, except for two problems: (1) most doctors and hospitals will likely opt out of ObamaCare long before reimbursements fall that low, and (2) after waiting weeks or months to get into an affordable ObamaCare facility, only to be treated hastily in assembly line fashion, most patients flying out the door will be on their way to a quality non-ObamaCare facility.



“If you think this is bad, just wait till they take away your *bathroom privileges!*”

## For All Americans

ObamaCare promises healthcare for all Americans, but some more than others. There are groups that get special treatment: special populations, underserved populations, vulnerable populations, American Indians, and Washington DC, to name a few. Minorities even get their own office and a deputy secretary. As stated in Section 10334,

... there is established in the Office of the Secretary, the Office of Minority Health, which shall be headed by the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Minority Health . . . for the purpose of improving minority health and the quality of health care minorities receive, and eliminating racial and ethnic disparities. In carrying out this subsection, the Secretary, acting through the Deputy Assistant Secretary, shall award grants, contracts, enter into memoranda of understanding, cooperative, interagency, intra-agency and other agreements with public and nonprofit private entities, agencies, as well as Departmental and Cabinet agencies and organizations, and with organizations that are indigenous human resource providers in communities of color to assure improved health status of racial and ethnic minorities, and shall develop measures to evaluate the effectiveness of activities aimed at reducing health disparities and supporting the local community. Such measures shall evaluate community outreach activities, language services, workforce cultural competence, and other areas as determined by the Secretary.

Such special populations have special rules. There are special rules for abortions, gender specific needs, children with special needs, widows and widowers, large group markets,

low income individuals and families, individuals with disabilities, geriatric and pediatric patients, the homeless, victims of abuse or trauma, individuals with mental health or substance-related disorders, individuals with HIV/AIDS, and many more. As in the case of minority health, these special rules are, no doubt, required to reduce health disparities caused by the bigotry or incompetence of pre-ObamaCare medical professionals. Surprisingly, given such priorities and the availability of grants and contracts to promote the healthcare of special populations, there is no mention of "social justice," "SEIU," or "ACORN."

Not belonging to a special population may not be a problem. With the elimination of annual and lifetime limits, prohibition of exclusions for pre-existing conditions, prohibition of rescissions, extensions for dependents, reinsurance of early retirees, etc., there should be plenty of ObamaCare for non-special Americans.

On the other hand, this may very well be a problem. There are 1,082 instances of the words "eligible" or "eligibility" and 643 instances of "qualified" or "approved." Once I see a word such as "eligible," I start thinking about who might be ineligible. And that brings my thought process back to the fine print in my TV warranty. I guess I'll just have to hope that when I need my ObamaCare I'll be eligible for an approved treatment at a qualified facility. In the meantime, however, I'll be thinking, with more than a little concern, about the true meaning of more than a few ObamaCare words, as they play on my growing heartburn. □

## The Queen of Africa, *from page 24*

Shortly afterward, Aminata dumped the Haitian slaver. She struggled, she persuaded, she cajoled, and this is America, after all. So she managed to return to the university. My wife and I helped a little. Others did too, because she is the kind of person who draws out helpfulness in people as others attract dislike. She graduated in good time and she is doing really well. She is single in America and happy about it. Thank you for asking.

You will want to know about the mother, of course. Well, a couple of months before Aminata was set to graduate, I took my best colonialist pen and did a job on her. I recalled the elaborate politeness formulas long defunct in the rudimentary French that today's French people speak. I laid them on thickly on a sheet of high-quality stationery. Since I was a perfect stranger, I began by apologizing humbly for intervening in a family's affair. Then, at length, I flattered Mom about her daughter's exceptional achievements and how they reflected on the superior upbringing that she, Mom, had given her daughter. That took a whole page. Then I mixed discreet threats of final abandonment with the slime of sycophancy to urge her to attend her daughter's commencement. Quickly, I received a short letter from Aminata's mother. She urged me tersely to mind my own business since I did not understand her people's customs.

But an email forwarded by her other daughter quickly followed. It announced the mother's arrival on such and such a date at such and such a time. Best seduction act at a distance ever! I was at the airport when Aminata picked up her mother. I kept away and caught the first glance the mother

cast at her daughter. There was surprise and admiration at her glowing, forceful appearance. I thought the mother was even a little intimidated.

If you suspect by now that I am bragging again, you are right. I am bragging about my friendship with Aminata. I am bragging also about my culturally on-the-dot, effective intervention in her life. Yet it has created a problem between us, a small but persistent problem. She has the nerve to affirm that I am confused about African ethnography.

As I said, Aminata comes from a herding people. That much is not in dispute. She and her family are thoroughly citified, of course. But I know from experience and observation that it matters psychologically what your great-grandparents did for a living and where. That's true even if you never knew them; that's true even if you have little idea of what it was they did; that's true even if you have never been where they did it. Something like cultural DNA must exist. Anyway, I am sure that, not so long ago, Aminata's forefathers used to shoot an arrow point blank at a selected cow to drink blood directly from the vein. Aminata insists that I am confusing her West African people with the East African Masai herders I have seen on television. Well, excuse me; it's true that I have always liked the television documentaries about the Masai. It proves nothing, though: Just because my neighbor to the left eats rabbits, it doesn't mean that my neighbor across the street does not.

I realize there is not much of a point to this story. It's just a sun-drenched slice of life. I thought you could use the sunshine. □

## Reflections, from page 12

also placing the attack in its historical context (including descriptions of what Germany and Japan were doing before the war).

Like Victor's book, Greaves' book shows that top officials of the Army, Navy, and even the White House distorted, denied, and covered up information about what was known before the Pearl Harbor attack. Many inconsistencies appeared in the congressional investigation — some witnesses were pressured to change their stories; others were simply not called. Although other books, such as Victor's, have shown these inconsistencies, I don't think there has been as extensive a description of the investigations and the prevarications with which they are riddled.

Although almost all the information in the book is based on information available before Greaves died, in 1988 his widow interviewed Ralph T. Briggs, who had been a young radioman in Cheltenham, MD, on December 4, 1941. Briggs had intercepted the Japanese radio message called "Winds Execute," which indicated that war with the United States was about to begin. Briggs' superiors told him not to testify in the congressional hearing, and his absence — along with revised stories by others who had previously admitted seeing or knowing about the message — led the committee to deny the message's existence.

There is one interesting difference between the findings of Victor and Greaves. Both report extensive duplicity and cover-ups, which went at least as high in the administration as Army Chief of Staff George Marshall and probably included President Roosevelt as well. Indeed, the cover-ups are as plain as day. But Greaves does not seem to think that FDR actually expected the impending Japanese attack to be on Hawaii. Greaves suggests that the group huddling secretly in the White House late in the night of December 6 expected attacks on British territories in Southeast Asia and the Philippines, a U.S. territory — attacks that would also have led to war. While George Victor offers evidence that top officials knew the target was Hawaii, there is also evidence, as Greaves reports, that some officials were genuinely surprised about the actual bombing site.

In conclusion, those fascinated by the tragic Pearl Harbor story have a tremendous new resource, written by Percy Greaves, an eyewitness to the 1945–46 congressional investigation, a beautiful book edited by his wife, Bettina Greaves. How fortunate we are!

— Jane S. Shaw

**River card** — Ron Paul has demanded that Fort Knox open its doors and show us how much gold is in the vault. This is the kind of showdown poker players dream of, the moment when we learn whether the whole run-up of the pot was a complete bluff.

I'm with Ron. Let's go all in and see their hand. I don't think many people would be surprised to learn that the gold went away long ago, and the stuff we've been calling "money" is nothing more than Dead President Trading Cards.

— Tim Slagle

**And, of course, the Squirrels** — A recent story that was rapidly ignored by the mainstream media points to an interesting fact: that while other sorts of terrorists get all

kinds of media coverage, ecoterrorists are mentioned as little as possible. The case of James Jay Lee is illustrative.

Lee briefly made the news on September 1 when he took over the Discovery Communications building with a gun and what he described as a bomb strapped to himself. He held three people captive for about four hours, before being killed by the police.

Lee's animus towards the Discovery Channel went back a ways — he had long been a protester outside its offices, and was sentenced two years ago to six months probation for disorderly conduct while protesting.

But his motives were interesting. He posted a lot of messages online to the effect that humans are a blight on the planet. As he put it in one of his ravings, "Nothing is more important than saving . . . the Lions, Tigers, Giraffes, Elephants, Froggies, Turtles, Apes, Raccoons, Beetles, Ants, Sharks, Bears, and, of course, the Squirrels. The humans? The planet does not need humans." He was angry that Discovery Communications was not promulgating his message.

He also said that he experienced an "awakening" when he watched Al Gore's documentary, "An Inconvenient Truth."

Now, what is absolutely amazing is how fast this story died. Would it have died as quickly if Lee had said that he was "awakened" by (say) listening to Rush Limbaugh or reading the works of Ann Coulter? You know the answer. It would have been news for weeks, with angry demands from the media for an accounting by Limbaugh or Coulter.

You might defend the double standard by saying that terrorism by environmentalists is rare. But in fact it is not. The Earth Liberation Front and other such groups have committed numerous acts of terror over the years.

No, we may as well be honest. The mainstream media are interested in terrorism only when it fits their preferred narrative — which always casts people of the Right as villains.

— Gary Jason

**Curtain call** — It was March 20, 2003. The American Civil War film "Gods and Generals" had opened in only a few cities, and Manhattan was one of them. Since I lived just 20 miles north of there, I was asked to review the film. The trouble was, George Bush had issued an ultimatum to Saddam Hussein, and if Hussein did not surrender by 8 p.m. EST, the United States was going to begin its Shock and Awe campaign. Manhattan had suffered the most severe terrorist attack ever experienced in the United States, and it continued to be the prime target for retaliation. I looked at my watch and did a few quick calculations. The film started at 2:00; it would be over at 5:00. If I hurried, I could make the 5:20 train afterward and be home a little after 6:00. The war was scheduled to begin at 8:00. I had just enough time to watch my movie and write my review. Of course, nothing happened to New York that night, or any night. But we were constantly on our guard in those days.

That was the first review I wrote for Liberty. The movie wasn't very good, but the review was, and Liberty's founder and publisher, Bill Bradford, began publishing my reviews in nearly every issue. Libertarians aren't known for organization

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# Whatever Happened to Integrity?

*by Jim Walsh*

It may be hard to define, but you can tell  
when it's missing — and it's missing now.

We don't hear much in today's popular discourse about integrity. That's too bad: integrity is an important matter in a republic with democratic institutions. The republic itself needs integrity, as do the people who would influence its institutions, as do their arguments and the data that back them up.

So, let's consider integrity.

Applied to people, "integrity" means consistency in principles, values, methods, and actions. It is generally considered the opposite of hypocrisy. For some thinkers, this consistency isn't a fundamental moral principle. In their version, a person with mistaken or flawed morals might act badly and still "have integrity" because his actions were consistent with his flawed principles. Others believe that integrity is a moral "first thing," that it means consistency between words and deeds but requires the deeds to be morally right. They see integrity as an essential "wholeness" in the person possessing it. They expect a person with integrity to understand the moral consequences of his actions. This second, deeper notion seems to be what most ordinary citizens have in mind when they speak of integrity.

Of course, the term "integrity" can also be applied to the

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purity or intactness of an object or system. Scientists will sometimes argue about the integrity of data in an experiment or supporting a conclusion. These arguments are often dismissed as "technicalities" when news of the experiment or conclusion makes its way into public discourse. This is a problem. Manipulation of data to the point where it no longer has integrity is a common practice among some activists.

The University of East Anglia is located in Norwich, England — about 80 miles north and east of London. In the hierarchy of British universities, UEA is in the third tier. There probably isn't a fourth tier. Schools like UEA struggle for academic and financial recognition in a marketplace where older, established players enjoy advantages that keep them on top. In the early 1970s, UEA developed a useful tool in this struggle: the Climate Research Unit (CRU).

The CRU started out with the dowdy mission of tabulating UK weather data. But, in the 1980s and early '90s, it broadened its mission to include such activities as compiling a "global near-surface temperature record" in conjunction with the more prestigious Hadley Centre for Climate Prediction and Research. This climate record turned out to be a big deal to the provincial university. The United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) used the record in its publications; this meant money and prestige. CRU staff would fly to Switzerland and the United States to explain datasets and consult with diplomats. The relationship was mutual in a way that CRU staff didn't understand. The IPCC, like many United Nations agencies, employed scientists and bureaucrats whose training and experience were not state-of-the-art. They hid these professional shortcomings behind the luster of a British university — no matter what tier it might be.

The CRU's operating budget increased steadily. It moved into a fashionable, cylindrical building designed by a trendy architect. Its staff made contacts with other climate scientists around the world. It was, by the standards of university budgets and politics, a big success. In 1998, Phillip D. Jones was appointed co-director (he would eventually take over as sole director). Jones cemented the CRU's relationship with the IPCC, contributing extensive data and analysis to several IPCC publications in the 2000s. He became a prominent man in climate science circles.

And then came Al Gore. After narrowly losing the 2000 U.S. presidential election, Gore set out to establish his bona fides as a public intellectual. To do this, he focused on the issue of anthropogenic global warming. And he wanted bold data to support what he fancied would be a populist crusade to protect Mother Earth from manmade pollution. The crusade relied on data provided by Jones and other climatologists to suggest scientific rigor and legitimacy.

In late 2009, an anonymous computer hacker (most likely, an employee of UEA) broke into the CRU's server, pulled out and released to the public a large number of emails and other documents which suggested that Phil Jones and several other

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*Lithwick's critique was marked by shoddy logic, strident self-righteousness, and self-satisfied contempt.*

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climate scientists had manipulated global temperature data. Jones wrote of using "a trick" that may have exaggerated warming-trend data that the CRU provided to the IPCC.

But the manipulations discussed in the emails weren't very tricky. They were crude. The most common seemed to be omitting numbers from locations likely to report lower temperatures, such as places in high elevations or near coasts. A close second: ignoring (and, in some cases, erasing) legitimate questions from credentialed scientists about CRU data.

Faced with a growing scandal, Jones stepped aside temporarily as director of the CRU. He has since been cleared by the UK House of Commons of criminal wrongdoing and has very recently returned to a somewhat different post at CRU. The

IPCC dug in, insisting that anthropogenic global warming is an "established fact" supported by "scientific consensus." Such ravings recall some tinhorn totalitarian from a banana republic; they are amusing rather than threatening — and typical of a United Nations agency.

The critical issue with regard to global warming is not only whether it exists (it may . . . or may not) but whether people are its *main* cause. The CRU's work, "tricks" and all, was intended to make a strong circumstantial case that human activity was the main cause. With the integrity of the CRU's data eroded, that case eroded also.

Gore has been cagey about acknowledging that the integrity of the data behind his climate change rhetoric has been compromised. Of course, in the midst of a complex daily life, people often have reasons to avoid resolving incompatible desires for such things as truth and convenience, or truth and power. But a slapdash resolution of such conflict, or an awkward withdrawal from it, is not consistent with most notions of integrity. To maintain his integrity, a public figure like Gore — so closely identified with the climate change issue — ought to make public statements thoroughly examining the relationship between the CRU's questionable data and the bold statements they were used to support.

Identity, personal and public, influences integrity. Some contemporary philosophers focus on the commitments people identify with most deeply, the things they consider their lives to be fundamentally "about." (The "identity" definition of integrity is associated most closely with British philosopher Bernard A.O. Williams.) Identity integrity recognizes the relevance of self-knowledge to acting with integrity.

Other philosophers argue that identity integrity isn't broad enough. To them, integrity requires you to have proper regard for your role in a community process of deliberation over what's valuable and what is worth doing. This means not only that you stand up for your best judgment but also that you have proper respect for the judgment of others. This respect (or its absence) explains why a fanatic does not have integrity. Fanatics remain true to their deepest commitments — much more than others usually do — but they lack respect for the deliberations of others and therefore to any method of checking their self-knowledge.

Dahlia Lithwick is a senior editor covering the Supreme Court beat for the internet magazine Slate.com, which is owned by the Washington Post Group; as a result, Lithwick's columns also appear in the Washington Post and Newsweek magazine. While critics dismiss her work as trivial and undone by vacuous references to pop culture (imagine *Kelo v. New London* explained by one of the women from "Sex in the City"), Lithwick has some influence in middlebrow circles. In early May, she dedicated a column to criticizing Virginia State Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli for investigating climatologist Michael Mann, a colleague of Jones in CRU projects and a former employee of the University of Virginia. Her critique was marked by shoddy logic, strident self-righteousness, and self-satisfied contempt. It presumed — not merited — reader agreement, which is a mark of inferior writing.

Lithwick set up Cuccinelli as a rube and a "darling of the Tea Party movement." She described the data Cuccinelli sought on "more than 10 years' worth of state-funded research." But she failed to acknowledge that state funding

was the critical point of Cuccinelli's investigation. "And who is this nefarious Michael Mann?," she asked. "A climate scientist who worked at UVa from 1999 to 2005 and now runs Penn State's Earth System Science Center." Having made a cartoon of Ken Cuccinelli, she ridiculed him for making a cartoon of Michael Mann.

Next, Lithwick (inadvertently, it seems) damned Mann with faint praise:

In 2006, U.S. Rep. Joe Barton, R-Texas, commissioned an investigation into Mann's research that ended with statistician Edward Wegman of George Mason University concluding that he would have looked at the data differently but "saw no evidence that Mann committed any fraud or deception." A panel assembled by the National Academy of Sciences reached the same conclusion that year: "There are some things that he could have done better, but there's no fatal flaw." A 2006 National Research Council report found that Mann's conclusion "has subsequently been supported by an array of evidence."

But Mann's hacked e-mails were at the center of the East Anglia 'Climategate' scandal, so more investigations ensued. A report by the British House of Commons' Science and Technology Select Committee concluded in March that there was no evidence of malpractice. . . . A Penn State panel also investigated Mann for allegations that he had manipulated or destroyed data to shore up his arguments and largely cleared him. (The investigation into one final allegation is still pending.)

These conclusions were no ringing endorsement of Mann's work — mainly carefully worded, legalistic answers. But Lithwick's aim was to create the impression that Mann has been the object of a political witch-hunt. And, surely, the debate over the existence of and best remedies for climate change brings out the fangs in many political animals. Academics who work on trendy subjects like climate change often operate in two worlds — activism as well as research. In the world of an activist, a witch-hunt can be a badge of honor; in the world of an academic research scientist, so many questions about a man's methods could be a career-stalling stain. Lithwick's catalogue of cautious or partial acquittals helps Mann the activist . . . but hurts Mann the scientist.

Lithwick stumbled on, trying to draw broader conclusions:

It's not just Mann on the hook here. "With a weapon like this in Cuccinelli's hands, any faculty member at a public university in Virginia has got to be thinking twice about doing politically controversial research or communicating with other scholars about it," says Rachel Levinson, senior counsel with the American Association of University Professors. UVa environmental science professor Howard Epstein, a former colleague of Mann's, puts it this way: "Who is going to want to be on our faculty when they realize Virginia is the state where the A.G. investigates climate scientists?" If researchers are really afraid to do cutting-edge research in Virginia, the state's flagship university is in enormous trouble.

Cagey framing. Mann isn't being investigated because his work is politically controversial or cutting-edge or climate science. He's been investigated repeatedly because his methods are suspect. Lithwick and company assume that a "state's flagship university" is somehow obligated to finance academic research with no oversight or control of how that

research is performed. This is a defect in the logic of most statisticians — a kind of tragedy of the commons for professional responsibility. They believe that government institutions should provide resources yet exact no obligations. The expectation that government employment comes with no strings is simply childish.

Lithwick implied that Cuccinelli's investigation is a repetition of Galileo's trial. In fact, it's something closer to the audit of an executive who may have been padding his expense account. Cuccinelli's investigation isn't interested in why Mann believes crackpot things about climate change;

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*Gore has been cagey about acknowledging that the integrity of the data behind his climate change rhetoric has been compromised.*

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it is, according to Cuccinelli's office, interested in whether Mann applied for funding based on data that he'd manipulated or falsified. And, again, Mann's own boasts in the CRU email thread opened the door to this possibility. All in all, Lithwick's defense of Mann was logically specious and intellectually lazy.

Integrity means more than following a path of least resistance. Mark Halfon, a professor at Nassau Community College in New York and author of several popular books on philosophy, describes integrity in terms of a person's dedication to the pursuit of a moral life and his intellectual responsibility in seeking to understand the demands of such a life. He writes that persons of integrity "embrace a moral point of view that urges them to be conceptually clear, logically consistent, apprised of relevant empirical evidence, and careful about acknowledging as well as weighing relevant moral considerations. Persons of integrity impose these restrictions on themselves since they are concerned, not simply with taking any moral position, but with pursuing a commitment to do what is best."

In other words, there are some things a person of integrity will not do — even if he could play logical tricks to justify those actions. The philosopher and novelist Lynn McFall has expanded on this notion:

A person of integrity is willing to bear the consequences of her convictions, even when this is difficult . . . A person whose only principle is "Seek my own pleasure" is not a candidate for integrity because there is no possibility of conflict — between pleasure and principle — in which integrity could be lost. Where there is no possibility of its loss, integrity cannot exist. Similarly in the case of the approval seeker. The single-minded pursuit of approval is inconsistent with integrity . . . A commitment to spinelessness does not vitiate its spinelessness — another of integrity's contraries. The same may be said for the ruthless seeker of wealth. A person whose only aim is to increase his bank balance is a person for whom nothing is ruled out: duplicity, theft, murder.

Halfon extends the list of hollow claims of principle to point out that there's more to intellectual integrity than having a fanatic commitment to truth and knowledge. Intellectual



integrity is often characterized as a kind of “openness” — to criticism and to the ideas of others — that’s essential to the scientific process in the modern liberal sense. According to Halfon: “An account of intellectual integrity should recognize

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*Academics who work on trendy subjects like climate change often operate in two worlds — activism as well as research.*

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other sources of conflict and temptations that impede intellectual integrity, such as the temptations offered by the commercialization of research, self-deception about the nature of one’s work, and the conflict between the free pursuit of ideas and responsibility to others.”

Free pursuit of ideas — versus the wanton politicization of research. In May of this year, Peter Dreier, the pompously (and repeatedly) self-described “E.P. Clapp Distinguished Professor of Politics, Director of the Urban & Environmental Policy program, Occidental College,” circulated an electronic memo soliciting contract workers to perform “paid activist research” for something he called the Cry Wolf Project, characterized as

the fight to transform American politics and policy takes place on a battlefield in which ideas, narratives, and the construction of a politically driven conventional wisdom constitutes a set of highly potent weapons. Too often conservatives in the Congress and the media have captured the rhetorical high ground by asserting that virtually any substantial, progressive change in public policy, especially that involving taxes on the wealthy or regulation of business, will kill jobs, generate a stifling government bureaucracy, or curtail economic growth. But history shows that in almost every instance the opponents of needed social and economic change are “crying wolf.” We therefore need to construct a counter narrative that demonstrates the falsity or exaggeration of such claims.

Do research — and make sure you know in advance how it will turn out.

The CRU’s biases remained mostly oblique; but Dreier plainly states that the Cry Wolf Project’s bought-and-paid-for partisanship “is sponsored by the San Diego-based Center on Policy Initiatives and funded by a grant from the Public Welfare Foundation.” It represents a further debasement of intellectual integrity — and capitulation to the temptations of research-for-pay.

Ignoring all the associated pomposity, the Cry Wolf Project is a mess of small fry, just one more group of radical professors trying desperately to seem relevant. But these small fry indicate a larger issue, an erosion of integrity that is pervasive in American institutions, an erosion of integrity that affects bigger fish.

Last April, Barack Obama signed a presidential memorandum suggesting that hospitals receiving Medicare and Medicaid monies should liberalize their policies about patient visitation. Specifically, the memo stated that the Secretary of Health and Human Services would “initiate appropriate rule-

making . . . to ensure that hospitals that participate in Medicare or Medicaid respect the rights of patients to designate visitors. It should be made clear that designated visitors, including individuals designated by legally valid advance directives (such as durable powers of attorney and health care proxies), should enjoy visitation privileges that are no more restrictive than those that immediate family members enjoy.”

Durable powers of attorney (DPAs, in legal jargon) have become commonplace documents that well-organized people use to make clear their preferences about the healthcare services they receive. Perhaps most significantly — and depending on applicable state law — these documents can nominate a “legal representative” to speak for a person who has become physically incapacitated. The nomination of a legal representative is an important thing. Basically, if you’re an unmarried adult, you should designate such a person because the law can be fuzzy about who speaks for you if you don’t.

Why does the president care enough about the minutiae of hospital management to draft a presidential memo on the subject? The third paragraph of the document gets to its political *raison d’être*. It charges the HHS Secretary to “provide additional recommendations to [the president], within 180 days of the date of this memorandum, on actions the Department of Health and Human Services can take to address hospital visitation, medical decision making, or other health care issues that affect LGBT patients and their families.”

There’s the rub. Obama had drawn heavily on money and political support from left-leaning gay and lesbian activist groups during his 2008 presidential campaign. In exchange, he’d implied that he would champion various issues important to these groups — including recognition of same-sex marriages and an end of the military’s “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy on gay service-members. But, a year and a half into his presidency, he hadn’t made significant headway on these issues. Hospital visitation *policy* seemed like a simpler matter.

Turned out it wasn’t. Since hospital visitation policies are shaped mostly by state law, Obama was reduced to manipulating Medicare and Medicaid purse strings to get the changes he desired. As if to compensate for the weak practical effects of his memorandum, Obama layered on the rhetorical treacle:

Every day, all across America, patients are denied the kindnesses and caring of a loved one at their sides — whether in a sudden medical emergency or a prolonged hospital stay. . . . Also uniquely affected are gay and lesbian Americans who are often barred from the bedsides of the partners with whom they may have spent decades of their lives — unable to be there for the person they love.

That’s awful writing, from the redundancy of “all across America” to the meaningless vernacular of “be there for.” It’s writing that exemplifies the president’s reputation for (false) eloquence. Then, glaringly and near the end of the memo, comes the all-important hedge: “This memorandum is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.”

If the president wanted to make a public service announcement about the importance of DPAs and other estate-planning

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# Reviews

**“An Introduction to Business Ethics,”** 3rd edition, by Joseph Desjardins. McGraw-Hill, 2009, 281 pages.

**“Mad About Trade: Why Main Street America Should Embrace Globalization,”** by Daniel Griswold. Cato Institute, 2009, 203 pages.

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## *The Case for Free Trade*

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Gary Jason

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A common topic in business ethics courses is international trade, which is typically covered under the rubric of “globalization.” Rare is the student who doesn’t have deeply unfavorable opinions about free trade. And rare is the business ethics text that takes a deeply favorable view of it. I want to explore the case for free trade and why it meets continuing resistance.

To put the discussion in context, let me briefly review the way in which a standard business text treats the issue. Let’s look at Joseph Desjardins’ book, a widely used text authored by a respected expert in the field. It is one of the texts I routinely use in my own business ethics classes.

Desjardins begins every chapter with a “discussion case” — almost always one in which some business or group of businesses is alleged to have behaved immorally. The “case study” approach is common among busi-

ness ethics texts, but the cases selected almost always have to do with unethical business behavior. As such, they are invitations to hasty generalization: the student meets just a few examples of business behavior, and these are examples of unethical behavior. No text I know of mentions the fact that there are about 27 million businesses in America and that the vast majority of them provide valuable goods and services, meanwhile causing no harm. And no business ethics text I know of discusses cases of *governmental* malfeasance.

The case that Desjardins starts with concerns the practice, allegedly widespread among apparel retailers, of using sweatshops, mostly located abroad. (I should note that Desjardins never defines what he means by “sweatshop.”) He notes that in August 1995 Los Angeles police arrested the operators of a shop employing 70 illegal Asian immigrants. These workers were paid much less than minimum wage, and forced to live in an apartment complex

set up like a prison. In the same year, Desjardins notes, it was discovered that Kathie Lee Gifford’s line of sportswear, sold at Wal-Mart stores, was manufactured by sweatshops in Honduras that employed teenagers working 14-hour days. And he discusses in detail the accusations that Nike has readily used foreign sweatshops to manufacture its shoes — observing, however, that by 1992 Nike had responded to bad publicity on this score by developing a code of conduct that requires its suppliers to meet high standards for wages and working conditions. So here we have three cases, all more than 15 years old.

This is the extent of the data he gives for this “case study,” yet it informs all the rest of the chapter, inviting students to view all foreign trade as consisting of American industries cutting domestic production to use foreign sweatshops.

Desjardins then sketches two broad categories of ethical issues regarding international business: micro-level issues about the degree to which

managers should apply their own ethical standards in foreign business dealings, and macro-level issues surrounding globalization generally.

Desjardins' discussion of the first set of issues is brief. He admits that different countries seem to have different ethical systems — for example when it comes to bribery. He rightly stipulates that the fact that ethical norms may vary does not imply that they are all equally valid and none are ultimately right or wrong. He also rightly observes that customs may not vary as much as is generally supposed. For instance, when Indonesia was ruled by President Suharto, corruption was common and widely recognized. But that didn't mean the average people approved of it: Suharto was eventually overthrown and anticorruption laws enacted.

That said, of course the issue becomes, what universal values should bind all American countries doing business abroad? Here Desjardins is not very helpful. He quotes another philosopher, Tom Donaldson, who distinguishes between "minimalist" and "maximalist" answers to the question. The minimalist approach holds that a business is free to pursue its interests in another country so long as certain minimal rights are respected in the process. The maximalist approach holds that besides respecting certain basic rights, a company must actually produce benefits for the host country.

Donaldson takes a minimalist tack, listing universal rights that any company with operations abroad must respect: freedom of movement, ownership of property, freedom from torture, fair trials, nondiscriminatory treatment,

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*That demonstrators oppose globalization no more indicates that globalization is bad than the riots on Kristallnacht prove that Jews are bad.*

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physical security, freedom of speech and association, minimal education, political participation, subsistence. But Desjardins doesn't say whether these

are to be taken as positive or merely negative rights (indeed, nowhere in his text does he even discuss the distinction), or whether "respect" means "provide" or merely "not interfere with." So the moral view is unclear: if I am opening a manufacturing plant in a dictatorship, am I to try to guarantee my employees the power to vote in that society (and how could I possibly achieve that without getting all of us killed?), or merely not stop them from voting? Or is doing business in countries without political freedom always immoral?

Donaldson's account doesn't tell us to whom the catalogue of rights applies: is employing a 15-year-old to run a sewing machine, with her and her parents' consent, in a country where general education ends at the 14th year, violating her rights? Nor does it say exactly how the Donaldson list is to be reconciled with or proven superior to other lists of rights that other people may come up with. For example, nowhere on his list is a right that I hold dearly, the right to keep and bear arms. What is his rationale for excluding it? We aren't told.

Even more vague and questionable is the maximalist account that Desjardins cites, abstracted from another business ethicist, Richard DeGeorge. This requires that the company doing business in another country do no direct harm, produce more good than harm for the host country, contribute to the host country's development, and a number of other things. But how would a company know whether it is, on balance, benefiting the country on balance, other than the authorities in that country who have agreed to the operation? And why is it the obligation of a company to contribute to the host country's development over and above the fact that it brings jobs and money to that country?

Desjardins then takes up the macro-level issues of global trade and globalization. He recognizes that the term "globalization" is unclear, though it certainly brings out the demonstrators every time the G20 meets, sometimes causing millions of dollars in damages. So he proceeds to define it, in a loaded way: "globalization refers to a process of international economic integration. While international trade and cooperation have existed as long as there have

been nations, this process of international economic integration has become increasingly more common . . ." He cites the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and the European Union (EU).

It is true that international trade has gone on for millennia, but there may have been, and we will soon find good evidence to suppose that there has been a recent, huge jump in its volume. But we shouldn't conflate simple free-trade associations, such as NAFTA, with more intense forms of association such as the EU. The EU was set up by its founders to be something like a United States of Europe, where the sovereign identity and powers of the member states would eventually be subsumed in political and economic union. In contrast, most free trade organizations are groups of countries that do not desire to integrate their economies, much less surrender their sovereignty and merge into one nation, but merely want to enjoy the benefits of increased trade.

Desjardins sketchily states the standard argument for free trade, the utilitarian idea that free movement of goods and capital among nations allows resources to be allocated in the most efficient manner, producing the greatest possible wellbeing for everyone. As corollaries, he notes (without crediting Adam Smith) that this line of thought suggests that free trade is the best way to eliminate poverty around the world, and (without crediting Frédéric Bastiat) that increased economic cooperation among nations decreases the likelihood of warfare. As Bastiat put it, "When goods do not cross borders, armies will."

Desjardins gives no data to support or even flesh out these arguments. He only says, "As we saw in the opening discussion case for the chapter [the one on sweatshops], a variety of public interest groups so disagree with these arguments that they have been willing to take to the streets to demonstrate against globalization." This is very feeble. To be precise, it is a howling *ad populum* fallacy. The fact that demonstrators, or even rioters, oppose globalization no more indicates that globalization is bad than the fact the riots occurred on Kristallnacht proves that Jews are bad.

Desjardins does rehearse three



common broad arguments against globalization: globalization hurts rather than helps the poor; globalization invites a “race to the bottom” of environmental and worker protections; globalization undermines equal rights and autonomy.

In respect to the question of whether globalization harms or helps the poor, he considers “market theory” from the

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*Desjardins recommends a minimum wage in the host country roughly equivalent to that of the developed country.*

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“empirical,” “conceptual,” and “ethical” perspectives, to see whether free trade actually does improve living standards. Market theory (in his view) provides that in trade involving a more developed country and a less developed country, the likely result is that jobs will be “exported” from the developed country to the developing one, because labor costs will be lower there. This, in theory, will depress wages among workers in the developed country, and increase unemployment there. In time, however, economic growth in the developing country should increase demand for the more “industrialized” products of the more developed country, resulting in higher employment there.

Desjardins has doubts. He thinks it is “empirical” that specific, identifiable workers in the developed country will lose their jobs, but it is only “theoretical” that other workers will eventually get jobs elsewhere in the economy, and the ethical question is whether the benefits outweigh the costs. Framed in that way, the question would certainly be hard to answer.

His discussion here is breathtakingly tendentious. Nowhere does he mention the consumer. If prices drop in the developed country, consumers there obviously benefit.

And nowhere does he mention the existence of the host of “safety net” programs that are universal in the developed countries — unemployment insurance, universal education, health-

care systems, job training programs, and so on. Nor does it even occur to him to ask whether trade always or even typically involves companies in a developed country opening plants in developing countries, as opposed to other developed countries. This is hardly an empirically informed discussion.

Moreover, Desjardins has an impoverished view of what counts as “empirical.” The fact that we can’t always “identify” the jobs created in a developed economy when it expands trade abroad — although you sometimes can, as when foreign companies open affiliates here — hardly means that you can’t empirically measure the effects. You can, for example, measure unemployment rates for a set period before trade expansion and then for an equal period after it, to see if unemployment goes up or down.

Again, “market theory” tells us that workers in newly opened plants in a developing country will be better off — after all, they chose the job, so clearly they feel themselves better off. But Desjardins argues that if desperately poor people only have the choice of working in sweatshops or starving, the choice is not really free. From that dubious assumption flow a variety of dogmatic moral demands. He recommends that economic indicators be used to set a minimum wage in the host country roughly equivalent to that of the developed country, and that companies not be allowed to employ contractors abroad without “taking full and direct responsibility for how those workers are treated,” preferably by making them direct employees.

Other deductions proceed from the cliché “race to the bottom.” Desjardins takes seriously the idea that competition induced by free trade results in countries lowering their environmental, labor, health, and safety regulations. For example, OSHA’s extensive safety regulations make production more costly here, encouraging American manufacturers to move production lines to countries with less regulation. Desjardins ruefully notes that the WTO will not allow tariffs designed to punish countries with lower safety standards, as well as prohibiting tariffs against other countries that fail to protect against dolphins being caught while harvesting tuna, or countries that feed

hormones to cattle. He admits that we don’t see a lessening of regulations in the developed countries that allow free trade — indeed, quite the reverse — yet amazingly, he doesn’t wonder if the developed countries may possibly have too many regulations to begin with, and whether many of those regulations may be bad. Yes, many European countries prohibit using hormones in cattle and the marketing of genetically modified grains, but it is quite disputable whether those regulations are scientifically defensible.

I turn now to the argument about globalization’s threat to democratic or humane political values — the argument that institutions such as the WTO, the World Bank, and the IMF are undemocratic bureaucracies, in conflict with democracy and self-determination; and that the reach of international corporations threatens the world with cultural homogeneity. Desjardins takes this argument seriously. He feels comfortable imposing Western or American values (especially as embodied in business regulations) on other cultures, but he objects to the IMF and the WTO imposing their own values, such as free trade. But participation in these organizations is voluntary. It seems fair to say that if you want the benefits that membership gives you, you have to agree to the rules, annoying as they sometimes are. And while international corporations can get certain products adopted worldwide, the Coca-Cola market hardly amounts to the destruction of other cultures. If the modern consumer society is being adopted worldwide, perhaps that’s because it appeals to

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*Desjardins takes seriously the idea that free trade results in lower environmental, labor, health, and safety regulations.*

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most people in developing countries. Despite the fact that people — especially philosophy professors — in developed countries complain about shallow materialist consumerism, you seldom see them leaving developed countries to live in the developing ones.

In sum, the view of free trade offered by a typical, widely-used business ethics text is pretty unfavorable. Free trade is presented as a way to ship jobs abroad in pursuit of lower wages. Free trade is shown to result in sweatshops. It is said to lower wages and cost identifiable jobs, while any offsetting job gains are held to be theoretical. It is presented as leading to a “race to the bottom.” It is claimed to involve rich nations exploiting poor ones. The suggested solution is to strongly limit trade by regulation. Support for these ideas comes not from detailed empirical data but from the moral intuitions of philosophy professors.

We are lucky to have a superb new book on the subject, written from a contrary point of view. Daniel Griswold’s “Mad about Trade” is a comprehensive, yet crisp and spirited, consideration of the major defenses of free trade. It provides copious evidence that should surprise and interest even the most skeptical student.

Griswold, an economist at the Cato Institute who specializes in trade, starts with a brief survey of America’s increasingly globalized economy. He shows, in a telling graph, that imports and import income payments as a portion of GDP hovered around 5% from 1900 until the early 1970s, when they went nearly linearly upward to about 23% in 2000. Exports and export income receipts as a portion of GDP are a slightly more complicated picture, essentially bouncing between 5% and 10% from 1900 till the early 1970s (but with spikes during WWI and WWII, when America

exported a lot of munitions), then going steeply upward to about 18% in 2000.

These figures explain not only how much more globalized our economy has become over the last 35 years, but also why it has aroused increasing concern: it is growing explosively. Griswold explores the reasons for increased foreign trade, from free trade agreements (FTAs) to falling transportation costs (sealed container ships have cut losses from theft, jet aircraft are increasingly efficient, and so on).

But does free trade, on balance, help society, from consumers to workers? Griswold stresses the important point that free trade benefits consumers enormously, in the form of lower prices. No surprise there — that was Adam Smith’s argument for supporting free trade in opposition to mercantilism. But Griswold gives substantial confirming data, showing, for instance, that the industries which saw the biggest price reductions from 2000 to 2007 were almost always the ones that faced foreign competition. A recent study indicates that by lowering prices, global trade has raised the real income of Americans by 3% (or about \$5,000) from 1972 to 2001. (This is another point Desjardins didn’t explore.)

Besides lowering prices, free trade provides greater product choice, greater product availability (e.g., fresh fruit in the middle of winter), and products of better quality. Griswold refutes the notions that our increased global trade is almost entirely with China (which accounts for only 15% of American imports), and that “big box” retailers

are hurting the consumer (Wal-Mart alone saves consumers about \$2,300 a year per household).

Less clear, of course, is whether the effect of free trade in the industries facing competition is so severe that America winds up with lower prices at the cost of higher unemployment or lower levels of worker compensation. Here Griswold argues that free trade doesn’t so much significantly increase or decrease the overall level of employment (i.e., the net number of jobs) as shift people from worse (less productive) jobs to better (more productive) jobs. He denies the claim, heard from some exponents of free trade, that it dramatically increases the level of domestic employment. And he recognizes that competition from free trade puts some companies out of business, and eliminates some jobs. But he argues that any such temporary, specific job losses from trade don’t lower the overall employment rate — for three reasons.

First, trade creates other jobs that quickly replace the ones lost. For example, lower prices for materials bought from foreign trade allow domestic producers to lower prices, thus increasing sales at home and abroad, and in turn creating new jobs. Also, the lower costs brought by trade increase the profits of domestic producers, inviting foreign investment and jobs expansion. Moreover, Griswold should have mentioned Bastiat’s observation that with the money saved from trade-induced lower prices, consumers can buy more of other products made domestically, again increasing jobs.

Second — and here Griswold does mention David Ricardo — if we lose our competitive edge in one area (because of lower prices abroad, or for that matter, some change in technology at home), the other areas of our economy will likely have their competitive advantage enhanced.

Third, there are powerful economic factors, such as foreign exchange rates and government monetary policy, involved in trade. A rapid increase in imports would rapidly increase the amount of our currency in foreign banks, which would tend to weaken the dollar, thus lowering the price of American manufactured goods, resulting in increased foreign purchases of our products.



“Oh, I almost forgot — commandeer some bread and milk on your way home.”

Griswold explores these concepts conceptually, but also adduces considerable empirical data to show that free trade does not increase unemployment over the long run. He also explores in detail a point often overlooked by critics of free trade — that normally the jobs lost because of foreign trade are a minor part of the general normal “job churn” the American economy experiences every year. Take a high estimate of jobs lost by trade (say, a figure put out by a thinktank tied to organized labor), and it is still only about 3% of the jobs lost in any given year. What “kills” the vast majority of jobs in America is technology, not trade.

And I would add that this is a good thing, too: the replacement of manual switchboards by computer switches killed tens of thousands of unproductive jobs but created new, more productive jobs, especially for women, who were the vast majority of those telephone operators. Women are now doctors, lawyers, professors, and scientists, rather than people who plug wires into boards. It is curious that Griswold doesn’t mention Joseph Schumpeter and his theory of creative destruction, for it explains this process remarkably well.

Griswold also marshals evidence to rebut the theory that trade results in stagnating wages. Crucial to his discussion is a critique of the use of “average real hourly wage” as a measure of the wellbeing of workers, which is the normal practice of critics of free trade. For one thing, the real hourly wage doesn’t reflect all compensation — it only looks at monetary compensation, not other forms of payment (such as healthcare benefits and 401k matching contributions). Yes, during the period from 1964 to 2006, real hourly wages remained essentially flat. But real hourly compensation rose by nearly 80%, with an upward spurt during the 1990s, when there was broad, bipartisan support for free trade. Griswold also notes that the Consumer Price Index doesn’t adequately reflect the lower prices that trade brings, or the increased variety and quality of goods available to Americans.

He takes on the claim made by commentator Lou Dobbs and others, that we are losing our manufacturing base and with it our middle class. The key

point is that while our manufacturing sector has lost jobs, we have gained more highly paid jobs elsewhere, in the service industry. (Griswold might have noted additionally that *all* the top manufacturing countries — including China, South Korea, and Mexico — have lost manufacturing jobs over the past decade.) Our level of manufacturing output has risen; we just manufacture more with fewer people. Simply put, automation is lowering manufacturing employment all around the world.

Moreover, from 1967–2007, median household income rose, and while the percentage of households with middle-class income went down, so did the percentage of poor households, leaving only the percentage of wealthy households going up.

But don’t trade deficits harm society? Griswold observes that economists distinguish between the merchandise trade balance (which measures cross-border flows of agricultural goods, commodities, and manufactured goods), the trade balance (which measures the cross-border flows of all goods and services), and the current account balance (which measures cross-border flows of all goods and services, together with income earned from all investments and all transfers of money). Now, over the past several decades, we have experienced a large trade deficit. But this is not generally a problem, because the surplus money that flows abroad flows back in the form of investments in the United States, which create jobs here. Empirical data from 1982 to 2008 show that periods of rising trade deficits are periods in which there is faster job growth, and periods of shrinking deficits are periods in which there is slower job growth.

Griswold reviews in considerable depth the range of foreign companies’ operations in America. About 4.6% of America’s private workforce is now employed by foreign companies and affiliates — up by a third in 20 years. Workers for these foreign affiliates earn an average of \$63,400 yearly, well above the average salary for American company employees (\$48,200, 2006 figures). Foreign affiliates accounted for 19% of all U.S. exports, 26% of all U.S. imports, and 14% of all U.S. R&D spending (or about \$34 billion annually).

Even when foreign investors don’t

open operations here, but just passively invest in stocks, corporate bonds, bank deposits, government bonds, and various derivatives, Americans still benefit. The \$15.3 trillion in foreign passive investment, which represents an expanded pool of investment

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*Griswold stresses the point that free trade benefits consumers enormously, in the form of lower prices.*

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capital, has lowered the interest rates Americans have to pay on mortgages and other consumer and business loans. Lower mortgages and consumer loans mean more houses built and products made, and that means more jobs. Lower costs of borrowing for businesses and farmers mean expansion of operations and equipment, which again leads to more jobs.

Does the \$20 trillion in foreign-owned American assets constitute a threat to our sovereignty? Hardly. It is less than 20% of the total \$110 trillion in American assets held by businesses (profit and nonprofit) and households. And only 3% of total American assets are held by foreign government agencies. If some big government holder of U.S. Treasury bills (such as China, which holds \$600 billion of them) were to try to dump them in order to hurt our economy, it would be unlikely to harm us; it would be working with a small proportion of our sovereign debt and an even smaller proportion of our total asset base. Not to mention the fact that it would be wielding a double-edged sword, hurting the value of its own assets. (I would add that such an attempt to harm us would doubtless be met with an American embargo that would economically devastate the dumpers.)

More controversial, these days, is American investment abroad. Companies that set up operations on foreign shores are routinely demonized by leftist demagogues, such as Barack Obama and John Kerry (remember his anger at “Benedict Arnold CEOs”?). Certainly, there are a lot of



companies with foreign operations. Over 2,500 American firms own about 24,000 affiliates abroad – affiliates that in 2006 posted over \$4 trillion in sales, employed 9.5 million foreign workers, and earned \$644 billion in net income for the parent companies. Individual Americans owned \$17 trillion in foreign assets, earning over \$800 billion annually. So what does all this foreign investment do to American jobs?

The case that investment abroad does not cost domestic jobs starts with the fact that earnings from abroad are generally used to purchase American products, thus producing American jobs. The evidence shows that foreign and domestic operations of multinational corporations expand together, since more production and sales abroad require more home staff (managers, professionals such as accountants and lawyers, and R&D people such as engineers). If you graph U.S. parent company employment alongside foreign affiliate employment from 1982 to 2006, they track each other very closely.

Griswold makes an interesting point about those who wax demagogic about investment in China and Mexico (to take the cases most demonized by neomercantilist populists). Between 2003 and 2007, U.S. manufacturing companies invested a total of \$10 billion in China and \$9 billion in Mexico – but they invested \$110 billion in Europe! You don't hear the neomercantilists ranting about jobs being shipped to England. Could there be some racism lurking on the left?

Further evidence showing that manufacturing jobs are not being “shipped” to China and Mexico: between 2000 and 2006, U.S. manufacturing lost 3 million jobs, net, but employment by American corporate affiliates abroad gained a minuscule 128,000 jobs (i.e., fewer than 22,000 jobs per year). Again, the jobs were not shipped abroad, they were lost to automation.

In rebutting the neomercantilist “race to the bottom” myth, it is important to note that in the years 2003–2007, over 70% of all American manufacturing investment abroad went to these wealthy countries: Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, and the European states. This seems paradoxical, but it isn't: *pace* Desjardins, what companies want is not cheap labor but more profit,

and a company can turn a profit in a rich country as easily as it can in a poor one. Rich countries have the wealthiest consumers, best-educated workers, most-open economies, and most-stable and transparent legal and political systems. As Griswold nicely puts it, “All that explains why more U.S. FDI [foreign domestic investment] flows to Ireland (population 4 million) than to the entire continent of Africa (population 700 million). More U.S. FDI flows to the tiny but rich European Low

Countries of Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg (population 27.5 million) than to China, Mexico, and India combined (population 2.5 billion)” (106). None of these points is even mentioned by Desjardins' text, much less addressed.

Griswold considers in detail the history of free trade in America, arguing compellingly that the early tariff barriers didn't help the American economy on the whole, that there were more recessions per decade during the

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protectionist years than in the post-WWII period of globalization, that the American economy has performed better after NAFTA than before it, and that not only do FTAs not violate our sovereignty; they enhance it by giving us all the right to purchase from a greater number of places.

Griswold cites a study by Scott C. Bradford, Paul L.E. Grieco, and Gary Clyde Hufbauer, calculating the benefits of lowered trade barriers to the American economy since World War II. They estimate that about \$1 trillion of America's current yearly GDP (or roughly \$7,100 per typical household) comes from global trade. They further estimate that achieving full global free trade would add an additional \$450 billion to our annual GDP (or as much as \$4,000 per typical household).

What of the effects of globalization on the developing world? Griswold refers to a study by economists Kym Anderson and L. Alan Winters showing that opening a country up to trade increases its GDP growth by several points for many years. The impact of global free trade is astoundingly favorable. Over the past quarter century, during which trade as a share of world GDP went from about a third to well over a half, the percentage of the world's population living in profound poverty has been more than cut in half. Over the past 50 years, the average life span in the developing countries increased by 45%, from 45 to 65 years. Global infant mortality dropped by 60%. The percentage of children inoculated against measles, diphtheria, tetanus, and whooping cough increased by 75%. The share of people in developing countries who are undernourished has been cut by more than 50%. The rate of literacy in developing countries has risen from less than half to more than two thirds. The amount of schooling that girls receive as a percentage of what boys receive went from 56% to 73%. And (again *pace* Desjardins) the percentage of working children, ages 10–14, fell from 25% to less than 10%, and it continues to drop.

Griswold also makes the case that Mexico is better off after NAFTA than it was before, and cites Freedom House figures showing that over the past 30 years, the number of "Not free" countries declined by a third, while the number of "Free" countries doubled. All of

this is hard to square with the neomercantilist rhetoric — such as that found in Desjardins' text — about globalization leading to poverty, sweatshops, and child labor abuse in developing countries.

Griswold concludes his argument by demonstrating that America is far from the free-trade Mecca that the neomercantilists portray. In the most recent Economic Freedom of the World Report, we are 27th among 140 nations ranked in terms of economic freedom, well behind places such as Hong Kong and Singapore. He shows in detail the crazy-quilt tariff system we currently have, and what it costs consumers. We have a trade-weighted average tariff on clothing and footwear of over 10%. Now consider sugar. Because of our subsidies and tariffs, American consumers have for decades paid two to three times the world price for sugar. Indeed, our trade barriers on agricultural products cost our consumers \$12 billion a year.

And barriers extend well beyond food and clothing. We put tariffs on vehicles (2.5% on cars and 25% on trucks). We keep foreign-owned carriers from flying between one U.S. airport and another. Foreigners cannot own more than 25% of any domestic airline. And our law (the Jones Act) requires all ships carrying goods between American ports to be American built, registered, owned, and manned. All this drives up the cost of shipping and distribution enormously, impoverishing us all.

Griswold's book is unabashedly one-sided. But if it is used to balance business ethics texts that are unabashedly one-sided against free trade, it will do much good. It is a compendium of relevant facts and statistics that increase the specificity of the discussion. In those respects it is tremendously useful. As full a case as Griswold presents, however, there is even more to be said in defense of free trade.

Consider a point he touches on, in his brief discussion of the Smoot-Hawley tariffs, but doesn't elaborate in detail: what happens to a country when it indulges in protectionism? Of course, the usual result is retaliation by other nations — a trade war. The present administration presents a good illustration of this.

The Obama administration is by

far the most anti-free-trade, protectionist regime since Hoover. Besides stalling the implementation of the three free trade agreements (with Colombia, Panama, and South Korea) that were negotiated by the Bush administration but not yet enacted when Obama took

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*To protect a couple hundred politically well-connected truckers, tens of thousands of workers are losing their jobs.*

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office, Obama hasn't done a thing about free trade. He hasn't negotiated one new treaty; he hasn't even shown any interest in doing so. Worse, his administration has enacted a number of protectionist measures that have drawn retaliatory measures from abroad.

For example, under the terms of NAFTA, a small number of Mexican truckers were allowed access to the U.S. market on a tightly monitored basis. Furious at the prospect of foreign truckers competing with their members, the Teamsters union, big contributors to Obama, got him to cancel the program last year. The result was predictable: Mexico put steep tariffs (as high as 45%) on a wide range of U.S. goods, from paper to grapes. The tariffs have totaled \$2.4 billion. As a consequence, workers in businesses from paper mills in Wisconsin to farms in Washington state — an estimated 25,000 people — have lost their jobs.

Thus, to protect a couple hundred politically well-connected truckers, hundreds of millions of consumers are paying higher prices, and tens of thousands of workers are losing their jobs.

Another example concerns Brazil. Lavish government subsidies to American cotton growers have in effect frozen Brazilian cotton growers out of our market. Not surprisingly, Brazil filed a case against us with the World Trade Organization and prevailed. Brazil now has the right to retaliate, and is now warning us that it is prepared to hit over a hundred categories of American exports with tariffs of up to 100%. The Obama administration is now proposing to subsidize the

Brazilian cotton growers to the tune of \$147 million.

So to protect a relatively few American cotton growers, hundreds of millions of consumers must pay higher prices, and tens of millions of taxpayers must pay higher taxes.

If the case for free trade is so rationally and empirically compelling, why do people — including bright students and even some of their teachers — so often oppose it? I suggest that the reasons are not logical but psychological.

Start with the most obvious psychological motive for opposing free trade — greed, simple greed. The two groups most opposed to free trade are

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*The two groups most opposed to free trade are organized labor and inefficient business. Both groups spend enormous amounts of money trying to stop it.*

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organized labor and inefficient business. Both spend enormous amounts of money running ads against free trade and trying to elect candidates who will enact laws to stop it. In the 2008 election alone, organized labor spent \$450 million to elect candidates (well over 90% of the money flowing to Democrats), and as a result we have the most protectionist regime in nearly three quarters of a century. And many if not most industries have in the past lobbied for protection, with some (such as the auto and steel industries) becoming notorious for it.

But to understand why there is resistance to free trade among the public generally, we should turn to the psychology of persuasion and behavioral economics. Robert Cialdini's approach is instructive (as, for example, in his book "Influence: the Psychology of Persuasion" [Morrow, 1993]).

He notes that all animals (humans included) have a variety of built-in psychological mechanisms (or "fixed-action patterns"). A psychological mechanism is a pattern of behavior that occurs whenever a specific feature of the environment (the "trigger feature")

is encountered. A female turkey will exhibit "mothering" behavior (such as warming, cleaning, and huddling chicks beneath it) whenever she hears a specific "cheep cheep" noise typically emitted by turkey chicks. This is not a rational response to observing a distressed chick. If a tape recorder buried on a stuffed skunk (a natural enemy of the turkey) emits the same noise, the turkey will exhibit the mothering behavior toward the stuffed skunk.

These mechanisms are wired into animals by evolution. They usually have worked well in the animal's environment — they have survival value. But they can occasionally prove dysfunctional. Other animals may learn to mimic the triggers, as when females of one firefly species mimic the mating signals of another species, luring males of that second species in, to become their food. Or the environment may change dramatically: humans evolved in conditions where food was scarce, so we crave sugar and fat, but that craving leads to obesity when food becomes plentiful.

Humans have many wired-in psychological mechanisms — and some of them are pertinent to the issue of free trade.

One is a weakness for *social proof*: people tend to judge what is proper by looking at what other people do. TV sitcoms have laugh tracks because when you hear other people laughing, you feel as if you should laugh as well. Then there is *association*: when two things occur together, people tend to think they are connected, even if there is no real causal connection between them — as when we associate favorable traits such as honesty and kindness with physical attractiveness. In addition, there is *salience*: people tend to notice what is novel or striking in a situation. In a robbery, they focus on the gun, rather than, for instance, the clothes that the robber may be wearing. *Sympathy* is also a factor: people tend to want to help others in need. Shown a picture of someone being pursued by wolves, we innately hope that he or she escapes. It's easy to see that people also practice *entrenchment*: once committed to a course of action, they prefer to stay in it, even if the consequences are unexpectedly bad. Behavioral economist (and Nobel laureate in economics)

Daniel Kahneman has shown that people are loss-averse: they will risk more to keep the \$200 they have than to earn \$200 more. And, to complete this brief list of examples, there is the reaction to *scarcity*: people tend to value more what they perceive to be in short supply. For example, in times of gasoline shortage, people will tend to top off their gasoline tanks more quickly than in normal times.

Several of these mechanisms help explain the aversion people feel toward free trade. The mechanism of salience explains why we are so struck by the jobs that are lost when an industry fails, while not being struck by the new jobs created by more productive industries. In Bastiat's terminology, we see what is salient, and what is not salient remains unseen. Sympathy leads us to be concerned with salient images of workers laid off, perhaps because of foreign competition in their industry. Protectionists exploit that concern, arguing that we should protect what is salient, the workers employed by an inefficient company. The workers who could have been employed in more productive enterprises had the company been allowed to fail are unseen, so do not elicit the same sympathy.

Entrenchment explains why we want to cling to manifestly less productive jobs, rather than the more productive ones we get when we open our borders to trade. And association — to cite a third example — plays a big role in the protectionist's arsenal. I see an FTA signed, and plants close, so I assume the FTA caused the plant to close.

If it is indeed true that people resist free trade for reasons that are more often psychological than logical or empirical, it suggests two points for those who want to see free trade flourish.

First, any politician who seeks to advance free trade had better be prepared to make the case forcefully and often to the voting public, combating the forces of entrenchment and all the rest of the mechanisms. The best illustration of what I am getting at is Obama's immediate predecessor in the White House, George Bush.

Bush's record on free trade is arguably the best of any American president. He received "fast track authority," a power conferred by Congress to negotiate FTAs free from congressional



meddling, a full two years after he was inaugurated for his first term, and he had it taken away from him early by a deeply protectionist Democratic Congress five years later. But in those five years he negotiated more FTAs than all his predecessors combined. The list is long indeed: Australia, Bahrain, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Morocco, Oman, Panama, Peru, Singapore, South Korea. All but three of his agreements were ratified.

Bush tried to conclude an even farther-reaching agreement, proposing a Free Trade Area of the Pacific at the 2007 meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Conference. The proposed free-trade zone would have included the United States and most of the other Pacific countries of the Western Hemisphere, along with China, Japan, South Korea, and most other Asian nations. Given the rising protectionist sentiment in Congress, and divisions among the Asian countries, this proved to be a bridge too far, but at least Bush tried to cross it.

Yet for all the effort he put into developing FTAs, he spent little time in explaining to the public just why free trade is so beneficial. He was the first president with an MBA, so he could have done this well, one supposes. But he rarely spoke on the matter. He let resistance to free trade grow (stoked by a lot of advertising money spent by organized labor, long the arch foe of free trade) without spending any time publicly and decisively refuting it. This was a failure to lead, and it should serve as an object lesson to proponents of free trade in the future.

Second, in making the case for free trade, political leaders would do well to use arguments for free trade that also tap into the psychological mechanisms I listed, besides providing the sort of data that Griswold supplies to rebut the arguments of the protectionist.

Consider an argument for free trade that Griswold doesn't happen to explore — the rapid growth of FTAs around the world. Unnoticed by American protectionists is the fact that most other countries, especially those in Asia and Europe, are increasingly embracing free trade.

Looking at the FTAs the WTO has recorded since 1995, we see that both

their number and the pace with which they are being signed are increasing. From 1995–2003 there were on average seven FTAs signed per year. From 2004–09, the number rose to a yearly average of 15. There are now 266 bilateral or regional FTAs recorded with the WTO, and roughly another 100 of which the WTO hasn't yet been notified.

When you look at where these FTAs are being negotiated, it is obvious that Asia and Europe, rather than the United States, are moving farthest towards free trade. Of the 64 FTAs signed since 2005, America is party to only five (all signed by Bush), compared to eight to which the EU is party, and nine to which Japan is party. The EU now has a total of 30 FTAs, compared to the U.S. total of 17 (all pre-Obama).

The EU total includes a deal signed in May of 2010 with the Central American nations, as well as the one it concluded in late 2009 with South Korea. And the EU is close to signing an FTA with India. Still more impressive is the regional FTA signed in early 2010 between China and the Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN). This FTA eliminated more than 7,000 tariffs instantly, and created the world's third largest free-trade zone, a zone covering one third of the world's population, with a trading volume of \$200 billion. At the same time, ASEAN signed a similar FTA with India, creating a free trade zone encompassing one and a half billion people with a trading volume of \$50 billion. Even more potentially game-changing, China and India are negotiating an FTA which if concluded would cover nearly half the planet's population.

The result is that while we have buried our heads in protectionist sand, and go month over month with nearly 10% unemployment and anemic growth, the Asian countries have embraced free trade and continue to grow briskly, at annual rates from 6 to 10%.

Now, not only is such an observation empirically sound, but it touches on at least two of the mechanisms we discussed earlier: social proof and scarcity. It indicates to Americans who are skeptical about or hostile about free trade that the other nations are embracing it rapidly. So if free trade is as bad as Obama and politicians of his ilk say, then why is the rest of the world embracing it? And if we keep delay-

ing the expansion of free trade, we may find ourselves frozen out. Better get while the getting's good.

Consider another argument for free trade, one recently given by the presidents of Uganda and Tanzania (see Yoweri Museveni and Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, "Free Trade and the Fight Against Malaria," Wall Street Journal, July 26, 2010). Malaria is a vicious disease that is common in Africa. Over 200 million people suffer from it, and it kills 800,000 a year, disproportionately children. During the past decade, new diagnostic tests, drugs, and mosquito-proof netting have been developed. But as Kikwete and Museveni note, a lot of African nations still have high tariff and tax barriers to protect their domestic industries. When some of them eliminated trade barriers on antimalarial products, the cost of those products dropped, and usage correspondingly increased. So did the number of local entrepreneurs who create homegrown medical businesses producing anti-malarial products.

Here is a good and forceful argument for free trade, forceful because it taps into our feelings of sympathy, especially toward children, and good because in this case those feelings are entirely appropriate.

Free trade is crucial to eliminating poverty and increasing global peace and prosperity. One can only hope that popular support for free trade will be

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*While we go month after month with nearly 10% unemployment, the countries that have embraced free trade grow briskly.*

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increased by compelling arguments and cogent facts, especially those aimed at the same psychological mechanisms exploited by the neomercantilists. Plainly, however, it will take an endless repetition of those facts and arguments to overcome not only the greed of organized interests opposed to economic freedom but also the age-old mechanisms by which hominids respond to the realities they perceive. □



**“Bourgeois Dignity: Why Economics Can’t Explain the Modern World,”** by Deirdre McCloskey. University of Chicago Press, 2010, 504 pages.

# The Way to Wealth

Bruce Ramsey

Economic historian Deirdre McCloskey sets out to undermine economists’ explanations of the Industrial Revolution. She aims to leave standing her own theory, which has much to do with liberty.

McCloskey was educated in economics at the University of Chicago. She is a professor at the University of Illinois in economics, and also in history, English, and communications. She argues that causes relating to these other fields, not economics, triggered economic history’s biggest event.

That event was the beginning of sustained growth. The world had seen growth before — in China and Egypt, among the Phoenicians and the Venetians — but it had always petered out, sapped by war or bureaucracy or population growth or some lack of essential fuel. Then, in Holland in the 1600s, things started to stir in a new way, and in England in the 1700s, things started really to happen. Industrial civilization birthed itself.

Why? Why there? Why then?

Capitalism was there. But as an explanation, it is not good enough. “It wasn’t ‘capitalism’ that was new in 1700,” McCloskey writes. “Markets and nonagricultural property and a town-living middle class in charge of them are very old. The market economy, contrary to what you might have heard, has existed since the caves.”

Liberty? “My libertarian friends want liberty alone to suffice, but it seems to me that it has not,” McCloskey

writes. Liberty was part of it.

She calls the other part bourgeois dignity, or the creation of “a business-respecting civilization.”

The thesis is not proven in this book. Then again, it is only the second of six projected books. Book one was “The Bourgeois Virtues: Ethics for an Age of Commerce” (2006). Book three will be “The Bourgeois Revaluation: How Innovation Became Virtuous, 1600–1848.” Her attempt at proof comes later. The effort here is to consider the rival explanations and knock them down.

Some explanations are purely economic. Capital accumulation is one. Maybe the British just piled up more capital than any previous people, through either thrift or imperialism. Except that the records don’t show that. In any case, the actual amount of capital needed to start the Industrial Revolution was small. “The first innovations of the Industrial Revolution,” writes McCloskey, “relied on retained earnings, trade credit and modest loans from cousins and scribes and solicitors.”

So it wasn’t capital. Nor was it trade, because trade had existed long before the Industrial Revolution. China had trade. Phoenicians had it. Rome had it. Venice had it. Canals? China had canals. Roads? Rome had roads. An island with easy access to the sea? Japan had that. Movable type? Korea had it before Gutenberg.

Many factors helped. Some might be necessary causes. Given all of them, what makes up the sufficient cause?

In 1905, sociologist Max Weber made a famous case for “The Protestant

Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.” McCloskey attacks that case for puritanical hard work by making hash of Weber’s portrait of Benjamin Franklin as a dour workaholic — a complete misreading of Franklin’s “Autobiography,” she says. Weber imagined Franklin as a dour proponent of “a penny saved, a penny earned,” which is not how Franklin lived his life.

Science is a better candidate as the match that lit the Industrial Revolution. But, McCloskey argues, the science of Newton and others “had practically no direct industrial applications” in the 1700s. The spinning jenny was not based on new science. The blast furnace was put to use well before anyone really understood the science of it. Many inventions followed this pattern.

Economist Douglass North and others have made a case for England’s Glorious Revolution of 1688, which created a constitutional monarchy. McCloskey thinks that the revolution was important, not because it changed institutions (North’s argument), but because it changed the political rhetoric about wealth creators. There was more focus on the needs, concerns, and problems of entrepreneurs — more attention to them, tending to elevate them relative to aristocrats or soldiers or priests. It was a public discourse more in their language and tending more toward celebrating their successes and value.

These are each parts of an explanation, and McCloskey moves past them too quickly. Steven Johnson’s book about Joseph Priestley, “The Invention of Air: A Story of Science, Faith, Revolution and the Birth of America” (2009), shows the connections in the 1700s between the scientific dabblers and Protestant radicalism. Also political radicalism. The ferment of political, religious, and scientific ideas clearly had something to do with the “relentless experimentation” that quickened the pace of economic change after 1700.

None of these is an *economic* explanation. None focuses on the economists’ prudential and utility-maximizing man, whom McCloskey calls “Max U.” Max U acts on the rule of Prudence Only, and McCloskey argues that it took more than that to create the world’s first Industrial Revolution.

“Prudence is a virtue,” she writes. “It is a virtue characteristic of a human

seeking purely monetary profit — but also of a rat seeking cheese and of a blade of grass seeking light. Consider that temperance and courage and love and justice and hope and faith are also virtues, and that they are the ones defining of humans.”

Those are all virtues involved in the great revolution. But what unleashed them all? “It was words,” McCloskey writes.

What words? The words of the scientists and scientific tinkers; of such writers as Defoe and Locke; of the religious dissenters; of the Levellers, who had argued during the English Civil War of the 1640s for religious toleration and natural rights; and of merchants who learned from Holland in the 1600s a new dignity of commerce and trade.

It was also the time when the discipline of economics was being invented. Around 1700, in several places in Europe, “strikingly modern defenses of free markets” were written.

“Nothing remotely like their thought can be found earlier in Europe,” McCloskey maintains, “and only glimmers elsewhere.”

All this is asserted and outlined, with most of the argument saved for a later book. Still, there is enough presented to be tantalizing.

“Bourgeois Dignity” has some fine arguments — and a lot of them. It has 46 chapters. Often it wanders to illustrate a point, or to inject a personal thing. For example, when talking about trade protection, and what a bad idea it is, McCloskey mentions former CNN journalist Lou Dobbs, a protectionist: “Dobbs majored in economics at Harvard College, but didn’t understand; to be quite fair, though, I majored in economics, too, a couple of years earlier — and I also didn’t understand, until returning to the same point in graduate school and then teaching it and then writing books about it: drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring . . .”

“Taste not the Pierian spring” is a reference to Alexander Pope’s “Essay on Criticism,” a reference you have to get on your own; and there are a number of such references in the book. At one point McCloskey says, “Economists and historians who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any philosophical influences are usually the slaves of some defunct philosopher of science a

few decades back — commonly a shaky logical positivist nearly a hundred years back.” Here she is mimicking John Maynard Keynes famous statement that “practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influence, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist.”

The quotations are many. McCloskey quotes economists Paul Collier, Robert Lucas, Israel Kirzner, F.A Hayek, Joseph Schumpeter, and Frédéric Bastiat; Leveller John Lilburne; Tammany Hall pol George Washington Plunkitt; anthropologist Marshall Sahlins; sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies; historians Christine MacLeod, Joyce Appleby, and Jack Hexter; novelist Jane Austen; essayist Michel de Montaigne; philosophers Alain de Botton, José Ortega y Gasset, John Stuart Mill, Friedrich Engels, and Karl Marx; and the Roman worthy Marcus Tullius Cicero. All this by page 25 — and she keeps it up to page 450.

Meanwhile, she takes jabs at rival academics. In arguing that the huge increase in output during the Industrial

Revolution cannot be explained by capital investment, she writes, “Our economist colleagues . . . want very much to go on believing that the quantity of output depends not on ideas independent of material causes but mainly on the labor applied and most especially on the masses of physical and human capital present,  $Q=F(L,K)$  — so lovely is the equation, so tough and masculine and endlessly mathematizable.”

This is a jab from a woman who famously used to be a man.

Some readers will get annoyed at her presumed indiscipline. One crabby fellow wrote at Amazon.com that McCloskey’s first “Bourgeois” book was “rambling, confused (or, at least, confusing), idiosyncratic, grandiose and self-serving.” I confess that I tried the first book and gave it up, and that some of those labels might be pasted on McCloskey’s current book. It is not, however, “confused.” If it occasionally rambles, it does so entertainingly. It is intelligent, and it is not dry. I enjoyed it, and am awaiting Book No. 3. □

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**“Wall Street,”** directed by Oliver Stone. 20th Century Fox, 1987, 126 minutes.

**“Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps,”** directed by Oliver Stone. 20th Century Fox, 2010, 133 minutes.

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# Greed Is Still Good

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Jo Ann Skousen

“Wall Street” (1987) was one of the first films focused on the inner workings of the financial markets, and is loosely based on the scandals involving junk bonds and insider trading in the 1980s. Michael Douglas won an Oscar for his performance as Gordon Gekko, the ruthless insider who takes down several companies before he is finally caught. His character’s name has become so tied to Wall Street shenanigans that business schools reference him in their courses. Hedge fund manager Anthony Scaramucci called his investment memoir “Goodbye Gordon Gekko” (2010), knowing that no one would have any trouble understanding the title. Libertarian reporter John Stossel borrowed Gekko’s most famous line, “Greed . . . is good” for the title of one of his best known TV specials (1998). As the sequel to this landmark film opens, it is worth taking another look at the original.

"Wall Street" (1987) begins with a sweeping panorama of downtown Manhattan and the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center. Seeing it today is eerie, since the Towers are now synonymous with terrorism. But it is a reminder that the Towers were once the greatest symbol of capitalism and finance. Symbols don't matter much, however, to Bud Fox (Charlie Sheen). He is a young, ambitious stockbroker making cold calls to potential clients

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*Gekko is right on both counts. Greed motivates people to work harder and produce more. Greed is good.*

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and begging them to give him "just five minutes" of their time. He eventually gets sucked into the glamorous world of massive profits from insider trading. It starts innocently enough, when, in a casual conversation over a beer, his father (Martin Sheen) mentions that a lawsuit against the aviation company he works for, Bluestar, is about to be decided in the airline's favor. Desperate to impress Gordon Gekko with a good investment deal when he finally has that "five minutes" of his time, Bud blurts out that Bluestar is going to be getting some good news. "I just know," he says intensely, when Gekko asks for details. Gekko knows that look.

As Bud is pulled deeper and deeper into the web of deceit, we see how easily stocks can be manipulated through a whisper here, a nod there, a phone call to the Wall Street "Chronicle" to get a stock puffed in the news, even some old-fashioned detective work to figure out what a competitor is getting ready to do.

Gekko stands as the giant of confidence, swagger, and bravado, his name already synonymous with financial villainy. And maybe for good reason — he does use insider information that is technically off limits because it isn't available to the general public, and he often uses illegal means to obtain that information. He brags, "If you're not an insider, you're an outsider," and tells Bud, "The most valuable commodity I know of is information" (as he

sends him out to ferret out some insider info).

Bud doesn't resist very hard being pulled into Gekko's world. When his father chides him because he is so focused on earning money instead of contributing to charity, he responds, "You gotta get to the big time first. Then you can be a pillar and do good works."

But the most famous speech in the movie (inspired by a commencement speech that Ivan Boesky gave in 1986) is delivered by Gekko, and it has actually suffered unfairly from bad press all these years. In fact, it's pretty sound. Having bought up a large percentage of a paper company, he addresses the shareholders to convince them that they should fire the 33 deadweight vice presidents, streamline the company, and make it profitable again. As he tells them, "I am not a destroyer of companies, I am a liberator of them!" It's an important point. Investing in stocks is not just a gamble in paper money. It is the way businesses raise capital and maintain their ability to produce, invest, and employ.

Gekko continues, "Greed, for the lack of a better word, is good. Greed is right. Greed works. Greed clarifies, cuts through, and captures the evolutionary spirit. . . . What's worth doing is worth doing for money. It's a bad bargain if nobody gains. And if we do this deal, everybody gains."

Gekko is right on both counts. Greed is good, and he does lack a better word. If greed motivates people to work harder and produce more, it's good. If it motivates real estate developers to buy decrepit buildings, fix them up, and sell them for a profit, the community gains. If it motivates a health food aficionado to build grocery stores that sell organic fruits and vegetables and expand the business around the world so that others can enjoy healthier food, that's good too. But "self-interest" might be the "better word" Gekko seems unable to find. Greed is good, but self-interest is a better brand.

Unfortunately, the word "greed" carries with it a sense of unfairness, of taking more than you should get, at the expense of others. Gekko contradicts himself when he later says, "It's a zero sum game. Somebody wins, somebody loses. Money isn't lost or made. It's sim-

ply transferred." That's a crowd-pleasing line, and it reveals Oliver Stone's own philosophical bias. It is also a falsehood. The idea that there is a finite amount of wealth in the world, and that the only way to gain wealth is by taking it from others, harks back to mercantilism, and was the basis for the colonialist drive to plunder other nations. Adam Smith blew that theory out of the water when he showed in "The Wealth of Nations" (1776) that wealth can indeed be created and expanded, simply by adding time, innovation, and labor to raw materials. A pound of iron may be worth 10 cents, but turn it into horseshoes and it's worth \$10. Add coal, heat, and manufacturing to turn it into pins or knives or a toaster oven, and it's worth \$100 or more. Capitalism is not a zero sum game. It is the vibrant process by which the Western economy has expanded to an almost incredible extent during the past two centuries.

"Wall Street" appears regularly on such cable stations as AMC and TNT, and is available on Netflix. It has held up well in the nearly quarter century since it was made. The story is compelling and the acting is superb, with the exception of Daryl Hannah as Bud's

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*The idea that there is a finite amount of wealth in the world harks back to mercantilism. It's a falsehood.*

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love interest. (Hannah won the Razzie for Worst Supporting Actress of 1987, and says she has never watched the film.) I like it better than the sequel.

In some ways "Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps" (2010) feels more like a remake than a sequel. It begins with Gekko (Michael Douglas) being released from prison, so we know the time frame is 15 years later. But it all seems so familiar, as though we had been here before, as indeed we have. It opens with the same sweeping panorama of the New York skyline, though this time with the Twin Towers conspicuously absent. Once again the story focuses on a young, ambitious investment broker, Jake Moore (Shia LaBeouf), trying to break into the big



time and keep up with the pros. Once again we watch the ticker tape of the young broker's first big trade falling steadily until the thud of the closing bell at the end of the day. Once again the wise fatherly stockbroker is named Lou (perhaps because Oliver Stone's own father, Louis, was a stockbroker). Once again the young broker is trying to get funding for a company he believes in. We even see the same real estate broker (Sylvia Miles) that Bud Fox used in the original "Wall Street." And yes, Charlie Sheen does make a cameo appearance, with a babe on each arm, channeling his alter ego from the TV show "Two and a Half Men" more than the sadder but wiser Bud from the 1987 movie.

The story line is similar, too. Gekko wants revenge against a rival investor, and he uses the cocky young broker to help him get it. The details are different, but the story is essentially the same. While "Wall Street" focused on the junk bond-insider trading scandals of the mid-1980s, "Money Never Sleeps" focuses on the economic meltdown of 2008. Scaramucci acted as a technical adviser on the film, and the result is technically accurate, though sometimes to a fault. As the film moves from boardroom to boardroom and talking head to talking head, it is often difficult to understand and process their words before the next dialogue-heavy scene appears. At 2 hours and 13 minutes, the film is long, and the editing is a little too tight. We keep stumbling into conversations that have already started, between people who already know what is going on.

Often those conversations and talking heads are presented in split-screen projections, along with a graph or two, so while we're still listening to one speaker, the next one has already started. It's almost as though the editors knew they couldn't make the movie any longer, but they couldn't bear to throw anything out, so they presented it all at the same time. Some of the computer graphics are pretty cool, such as the one that outlines London's Tower Bridge in the background as it demonstrates a company's rise and fall. Yet I suspect that ten years from now, on cable TV, those graphics will look dated and hokey.

I happened to attend a private screening in Manhattan with a theater

full of investment brokers and financial experts. They all loved the film, even those who said they seldom go to movies. I'm sure that for them, it was as simple as a primer. But at one point I just decided to stop trying to understand all the technojargon and focus instead on the storyline: something bad is happening, and those two attractive young lovers are caught up in it. That worked for me.

The two young lovers are Jake and Gekko's daughter, Winnie (Carey Mulligan), who hasn't seen or spoken to her father in several years. Jake wants to bring the two of them together again, ostensibly "to help her heal," but really to get closer to his idol, Gekko, who, despite being a jailbird, is still packing in the crowds on the lecture circuit, promoting his new book, "Is Greed Good?"

Once again, the film shines when Michael Douglas is on the screen. Yes, he is older, but he still has that great self-confident smile, that swagger. He's still talking about greed, and he's still just as flippant. He quips, "Once greed was good. Now it's legal . . .," and everyone laughs cynically, as though greed was ever *illegal*. I wanted to counter, "Theft is illegal. Fraud is illegal. Greed is human nature."

Gekko continues, "Greed makes the bartender take out three mortgages he can't afford. . . . Greed makes parents buy a \$200,000 house and borrow \$250,000 against it to go shopping at the mall. . . . Greed got greedier with a little envy mixed in. . . . They took a buck and shot it full of steroids and called

it leverage." He's right about those things happening. Many people who are underwater on their mortgages got there today by borrowing the equity out of their homes and using it to pay off credit cards, invest in businesses, or pay their children's college tuition. Or, yes, go to the mall. Others got there because they bought at the top of the market, expecting the bubble to continue rising. But they couldn't have done it without banks giving them outrageously unsubstantiated loans — or the government's encouraging such loans to be given. So why are we bailing them out? Greed was always legal. It just wasn't healthy for certain people.

And maybe the economy needed to get sick for us to learn that. Today people are using debit cards more and credit cards less. They've figured out that airline miles and rewards points aren't really free if they come with 18.6% interest rates. Learning some economic truths has required some belt tightening, but that's a good thing in times like these. We've learned, as Gekko says, that "money is a jealous lover. If you don't watch her carefully, in the morning she'll be gone," and that "speculation is a bankrupt business model." As private citizens we are becoming more frugal and setting our own houses in order. Many businesses are building up their cash reserves instead of borrowing money, so they will have more to spend on future investments. In this economic climate, it's in their best interest to do so. That's called capitalism. And it works. "Greed" is good, but self interest is better. □



"You're listening to the NPR pledge drive?"

"Yes — I'm hoping to pick up some pointers!"



**"God, Man, and Hollywood: Politically Incorrect Cinema from 'The Birth of a Nation' to 'The Passion of the Christ,'" by Mark Royden Winchell. Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2008, 451 pages.**

# Against the Grain

Gary Jason

One of America's major contributions to world culture is its cinema, the body of films produced, during more than a century, by an industry far larger than any other country's. American film at its finest has equaled the best products of the other great film producing countries. And it is the most popular art form: in any given week, far more people will go see a movie than will read a book, visit a museum, or attend a concert.

However, there is a curious anomaly in American cinema. America is, in colloquial political terms, a center-right country. Most Americans support private enterprise and at least the ideology of limited government. And they are — especially in comparison with the people of all other industrialized countries — extraordinarily religious. But the film industry has always, on the whole, been markedly left of center. The dominance of the Left in Hollywood became near absolute in the 1960s, with the demise of the studio system, which had usually been led by people on the Right.

As a consequence, most of the movies that come out of Hollywood are either politically neutral or politically correct. And the politically neutral movies tend to be PG types — which, as Michael Medved has often noted, bring in more money than the R-rated movies. But occasionally a movie sneaks through that, despite the critic's neglect or even disdain, is politically incorrect, and resonates with the public. Mark

Royden Winchell has written a delightful book about popular, though politically incorrect, flicks. "God, Man, and Hollywood" reviews a good number of such movies and never fails to deliver new insights.

Winchell is an English professor at Clemson University, and heads its Great Works of Western Civilization program. He is much-published, with books of literary history and criticism, and many essays and reviews. He is thus unlike most movie reviewers in that he is well-versed in literature as well as film.

His book has four sections. In Part One, he reviews in depth six major movies produced before 1960: D.W. Griffith's "The Birth of a Nation" (1915); David O. Selznick's "Gone With the Wind" (1939); Walt Disney's "Song of the South" (1946); Clarence Brown's "Intruder in the Dust" (1949); and the two versions of "Ben-Hur," Fred Niblo's (1926) and William Wyler's (1959). I found Winchell's comments about the first four especially perceptive; he deals skillfully with the issue of race and racial stereotypes in the movies, and his strong literary background serves him well.

Of special interest is his deft defense and explanation of "Song of the South," a popular movie when it was released, but rarely visible now. Disney's movie was based on the books of Joel Chandler Harris (1848–1908).

Harris was born illegitimate and poor, and got his first job working on a plantation. From his fictionalized

autobiography and other writings, it is clear that he empathized with African-Americans, slave and free, and was no naive defender of the plantation system. He is most famous for recording the folklore of African-Americans in his Uncle Remus books, from "Uncle Remus: His Songs and Sayings" (1880) to "Told by Uncle Remus" (1905). He uses a literary frame that was also used by his admirer Mark Twain in "Huckleberry Finn" (1884): he invents a lonely young white boy who finds friendship and support in an older black man. He dares to suggest that deep interracial fraternity is possible, and presents a black man as kind and supportive to young whites.

In the film, a man brings his wife and his son Johnny down to the plantation where he grew up and leaves them, apparently because of marital strains. Uncle Remus, who had told his tales to the father when the father was a child, takes Johnny under his wing. With his stories of the clever Br'er Rabbit, he helps Johnny become more confident and independent. His mother reacts by forbidding Uncle Remus from talking to her son, and the disheartened Remus leaves in a cart for Atlanta, where the father lives. Johnny chases after him but is knocked out by a bull. The father returns, but neither parent can awaken him. Only Uncle Remus can bring him back. The film ends with Johnny and his young friends walking up a hill with Uncle Remus, as a young black boy sings "Zip-a-dee-Doo-Dah" (a song that won the Academy Award in 1947). Interspersed in the movie are animated sequences of Br'er Rabbit and his associates, Br'ers Fox and Bear.

Movie critics complained about the movie's sentimentality, and a number suggested that it would have been better if it had been fully animated (as it stands, it is less than a third animated). But Uncle Remus caused the real controversy. The complaint was that he was an Uncle Tom stereotype — not a real man but a playmate of white boys (hence just a "boy"). Ironically, the movie put Harris' books into disrepute. Winchell helps to reestablish the value of the Uncle Remus story cycle.

In the second part of the book, he gives extended reviews of five major films of the '60s and '70s: John Ford's "The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance" (1962); Franklin Schaffner's

"Patton" (1970); Stanley Kubrick's "A Clockwork Orange" (1971); Sam Peckinpah's "Straw Dogs" (1971); and Michael Cimino's "The Deer Hunter" (1978).

His discussion of "Patton" rightly points out how great an anomaly it was — coming, as it did, during the unpopular Vietnam war. Hollywood and literary circles were churning out antimilitary works, with even World War II coming in for criticism (in books and movies such as Joseph Heller's "Catch-22" and Kurt Vonnegut's "Slaughterhouse-Five"). Though "Patton" was a fine bio-flick, its popularity with people of the Left as well as the Right came as a surprise. But here is one subject on which I am not sure that Winchell, as insightful as his discussion is, has exactly the right take.

In Winchell's view, the Oscar-winning script (written by Francis Ford Coppola) portrays the general as a "maverick." Those who were protesting the war, being rebels themselves, could respect *this* general, a rebel himself. And, Winchell adds, the general's belief in reincarnation may have appealed to the counterculture's tendency toward mysticism and nontraditional religions. But I think there is a better reason for the film's popularity. The script is cleverly Janus-faced, showing the general in two opposing ways: as a brilliant and heroic general, a man who stands on top of a truck to fire his pistol at a Nazi fighter strafing near his headquarters; and as a man of incredible vanity, a war-monger (during a banquet celebrating victory over the Nazis, he deliberately and without any provocation insults a Soviet general), and a crank who harbors screwy beliefs in reincarnation (he knows he fought the Carthaginians, and can even locate the battlefield). Promilitary viewers saw the story of a war hero brought down by small-minded, namby-pamby people; antimilitary viewers saw a bloodthirsty wingnut finally brought to justice.

The third part of Winchell's book provides discussions of movies from the period 1989–2004: Bruce Beresford's "Driving Miss Daisy" (1989), Richard Attenborough's "Shadowlands" (1993), Ang Lee's "Ride with the Devil" (1999), Martin Scorsese's "Gangs of New York" (2003), and Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ" (2004).

Winchell's treatment of Gibson's movie is especially worth commenting upon. He observes that critics and journalists generally heaped vicious insults on it, alleging that both it and its director were anti-Semitic. No doubt Mel Gibson's own behavior before (and after) the movie would give the average person the same kind of qualms. But what about the movie?

I certainly saw nothing anti-Semitic in the film, and I am not exactly a fundamentalist Christian — far from it. I'm an agnostic and completely indifferent to religion of any form. In the movie, of course, the people who condemn Jesus are Jews, but then so is Jesus, his disciples, and all the people who defend him. Really, the people portrayed most harshly are the Romans and the Devil (who is placed in a very bad light, indeed).

And Winchell notes that prominent (conservative) Jews defended the film — indeed, Michael Medved, a prominent film critic, political commentator, and observant Jew, used his good relationship with the Gibson team to try to bring them into a dialogue with the Anti-Defamation League. It was the ADL that refused. Medved was shown the pre-edited version of the film, and while he didn't see it as anti-Semitic, he did suggest a number of changes to make it less controversial and more palatable to Jewish audiences. Gibson incorporated these suggestions, but that didn't avert the critical whirlwind.

Why the fury? Some critics complained about the film's graphic violence. But those complaints were obviously both phony and fatuous. They were phony because for decades now even the most critically acclaimed movies, such as "Saving Private Ryan" and "The Godfather," have been laden with graphic violence, not to mention all the teenage horror flicks — consider "Saw" and "Nightmare on Elm Street" — that are even more packed with gore. And the complaints were fatuous because this is a movie that is precisely about one of the most violent ways to torture and kill a person — crucifixion.

No, I think that Winchell is spot on in his identification of what made this movie so offensive to the critics — its pure religiosity. It presents realistically the most important claim of Christianity, the idea that Jesus was

crucified and resurrected. It is the most vivid and accurate rendition of that key piece of Christian theology as can be imagined, with most of the dialogue in Aramaic, and the rest in Hebrew and Latin. It is far more frankly and unequivocally Christian than all the religious movies that went before it, especially Biblical epics such as "The Ten Commandments." (Pope John Paul II was reported to have said after seeing it, "It is as it was.") This is what was so especially galling to many viewers, and most critics, especially those of secularist or liberal Christian outlook.

In the last part of his book, Winchell gives very short (three- or four-paragraph) synopses of and commentaries upon one hundred other politically incorrect movies. Many of them are well-known ("On the Waterfront," "The Chronicles of Narnia," "Braveheart"), and many rather obscure ("Destination Moon," "We the Living," "The Fanny Trilogy"). Again, his discussions are always interesting.

One film of great interest is "Dirty Harry," the 1971 movie directed by Don Siegel and starring Clint Eastwood, which spawned several sequels. Winchell points out that it was

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*Most of the movies that come out of Hollywood are either politically neutral or politically correct.*

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a popular hit because (like a movie he doesn't mention that appeared at about the same time and with the same number of sequels, "Death Wish," starring Charles Bronson), it tapped into the public's frustration at the explosion of violent crime. He recognizes that while a number of critics reacted hysterically to what they called "fascism," the title character was actually portrayed as an honest detective who defies the system to achieve justice. The critics' hysteria showed that they were part of the dominant power elite that was truly "soft on crime."

Winchell's book is a learned but lightly written treat, one not to be missed by anyone who loves film and

is concerned about the reaction against films that violate some aspect of a dominant ideology. Perhaps in any future edition of the book Winchell will spend a few paragraphs on "Gran Torino," a 2009 movie that Eastwood directed. Here he stars as an aging Korean War veteran who confronts the local gangs

in his ethnically changing neighborhood. It doesn't end in a politically incorrect way; it appears, in fact, to be an act of atonement by the now established, Oscar-winner Eastwood, a way of saying to the film community that he regretted those earlier, popular anti-crime flicks. □

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**"Shane,"** directed by George Stevens. Paramount, 1953, 118 minutes.

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# Tragedy on the Commons

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Jo Ann Skousen

Jean Arthur was a charming actress, best known for her squeaky voice and comedic perfection in the screwball comedies in the 1930s. Recently I read an insightful biography of her: "Jean Arthur: The Actress Nobody Knew" (by John R. Oller, Limelight Editions, 1997). It led me to rewatch several of her films, including "The More the Merrier" (1943), "You Can't Take It with You" (1938), and her final and most serious film, "Shane" (1953).

"Shane" is ranked number 3 in the American Film Institute's list of the ten greatest films in the Western genre. Yet rankings like that mean nothing unless people watch and rewatch the movie, and pass it along to people who haven't watched it yet. And "Shane" provides a lot to watch and consider, much of it of special interest to libertarians.

Set in the 1880s, it chronicles the tension that arose between ranchers and farmers as families began to homestead in the west. The ranchers needed wide-open prairies to let their cattle graze, while the farmers needed fences to protect their crops. "Shane" vilifies

the ranchers' position in the person of Rufus Ryker (Emile Meyer), who wants to drive away all the homesteaders; and it romanticizes the homesteaders in the starry-eyed Starrett family.

Shane (Alan Ladd) is the mythical hero who appears on the scene at a crucial moment to save the community of homesteaders, not unlike Oedipus arriving in Thebes just in time to save that community from the Sphinx. With his golden curls, his sleek physique, his masculine buckskins, and his pearl-handled pistol, Shane exudes a magnetism felt by men, women, and children alike. Even animals are drawn to him. But he is a former gunslinger trying to escape his past. When he meets the Starrett family, he takes off his gun, trades his buckskins for denim, and accepts their offer of hospitality and a job.

Everyone in the Starrett family takes to Shane. Joe (Van Heflin) sees a partner who can share both work and friendship. His wife Marian (Jean Arthur) is overwhelmingly attracted to him, and struggles to control her feelings. It is clear that she loves her husband, and that he adores and respects her. But she loves Shane too. Little Joey (Brandon

de Wilde), idolizes Shane and his six-shooter with wild-eyed abandon. At one point little Joey confides in his mother, "I love Shane. Almost as much as I love Pa." His earnest expression of inner conflict reflects the confusion they all feel about their relationship with the mysterious visitor. This sub-story dominates the film and is one of the reasons "Shane" rises above the level of mere "horse opera" or "oater."

It's natural that in a film made in the '50s, the homesteaders should be portrayed as the good guys and the ranchers as the bad guys. The homesteaders are family men with wives and children; they shop at the dry-goods store and bring home candy and hats. The ranchers are unshaven, slovenly bachelors who spend their time at the saloon, drinking, spitting, and plotting how to get rid of the "sodbusters." Eventually Rufus Ryker hires Jack Wilson (Jack Palance, when he was still deciding whether to call himself Walter or Jack), a gunslinger from Cheyenne, to do their dirty work for them. When Ryker says of Starrett, "I'll kill him if I have to," Wilson quips cynically, "You mean I'll kill him if you have to."

But who is actually good or bad? If we look at the story a little more carefully, we discover that the plot of "Shane" is an early example of eminent domain.

In an impassioned defense of his position, Ryker tells Starrett:

When I come to this country you weren't much older than your boy there. We had rough times. Men that are mostly dead now. I got a bad shoulder yet from a Cheyenne arrowhead. We made this country! We found it and we made it. With blood and empty bellies. Cattle we brought in were chased off by Indians and rustlers. They don't bother you much any more because we handled 'em. We made a safe range outta this. Some of us died doing it. We made it.

Of course, Ryker glosses over the fact that another group of people controlled the land before the Europeans arrived to push them off, but from his perspective, cattlemen risked their capital, and even their lives, to claim this land, when only fur trappers and adventurers were willing to go into the wild.

Then, when it was finally safe to live



there, the U.S. government decided it would be in the country's best interest to encourage whole families to move westward, building communities that would include schools, churches, and millinery stores, instead of just saloons and brothels. Under the Homestead Act of 1862, any natural-born or naturalized citizen of the United States who had "not taken up arms against the United States" (in other words, Confederates and Mexicans need not apply) could claim a parcel of public land that would be deeded to him if he resided on the land without interruption for five years. The deed could be revoked if he did not continue to reside there for another two more years. For the amount of time that Jacob worked for each of his wives in the book of Genesis, a man could own a farm outright. It was an effective way to lessen the population burden in the cities along the eastern seaboard, to move Yankees westward, and to maintain control over the vast interior of the continent against those pesky Indians who kept trying to reclaim their own property rights.

Ryker brings up another important issue when he continues:

Then people moved in who never had a rawhide in their hands and fenced off my range and fenced me off from water. Some of 'em, like you, ploughed ditches and take [sic] out irrigation water, so the creek runs dry sometimes. I've got to move my stock because of it. And you say we have no right to the range! The men who ran the risks and did the work have no rights?

Starrett's response is weak: "You talk about rights. You think you have the right to say that nobody else has got any. Well, that ain't the way the government looks at it."

This is the public-works argument that is always used to defend the need for government regulation — or, in today's parlance, "cap and trade." How do we properly distribute natural resources? How do we properly control pollution? In this case, who owns the water? Does the person on whose property the spring or lake originates control all the water that flows from it? Or does it become the property of the person on whose land it flows? Is it okay to form a dam or a diversion in order to irrigate one's own crops effectively? Or

is irrigation only acceptable if everyone agrees to share and take a turn? What if one person doesn't agree — does the majority have the right to force him to agree? These issues cause the libertarian in me to rethink the heroes and the villains in this fine movie, regardless of who wears a beard and who is clean-shaven, or who wears a white hat and whose hat is black.

Another libertarian issue arises in the fact that there is no representative of the law in this community. The nearest sheriff is hundreds of miles away, and laws are enforced by the willingness or unwillingness of the community to abide by them. Instead, a code of the West arises, with a specific set of morals and acceptable punishments. Don't put on a man's hat. Don't touch his horse. Don't hit a woman. Don't shoot an unarmed man. Don't draw unless he draws first. Lacking a lawman in town, injured parties can mete out immediate justice against violators of the code. Knowing this, Shane takes off his guns and tries to broker a peace based on detente. But no lasting solution to the conflict is offered or even discussed in the film.

For good or ill, the two groups resolve their issues without the intrusion of government or judicial system, beyond the Homestead Act that brought families to the area and the unseen Army that helped remove the land's previous inhabitants. Virtual anarchy reigns, but without chaos. Storekeepers provide goods, families provide education, and community activities such as an Independence Day celebration are sponsored and enjoyed by common consent. The farmers join together to form a common defense, while the rancher employs a mercenary security system. Nevertheless, at the end of the week, four men are dead, one homestead is burned to the ground (despite the efforts of the volunteer bucket brigade), a family has been left fatherless, and several people have been run out of town. Anarchy seems not to have all the answers. How can the farmer and the rancher coexist? Both need grain; both need meat. Couldn't they look for peaceful solutions, such as selling their goods to each other? Not in this film. The final shootout is inevitable from the moment Shane enters the picture.

And what an impressive entrance it

is! Politics aside, this film is a work of art. In the very first scene, notice how the deer appears to be kissing itself in the water as it noses into the pond to drink. Then, as the buck lifts its mighty head, we see Shane arriving far in the distance, perfectly framed between the deer's antlers. How does a director get a wild animal to behave so perfectly on cue? And without cell phones to alert the actor? Simply amazing.

Jean Arthur, too, is superb in presenting the tension felt by a woman suddenly overwhelmed by passion for a man who is not her husband. Her acting is restrained, yet full of emotion, just as such a simple country woman would behave. When Joey openly declares his love for Shane, she cautions him, "Don't get to liking Shane too much. . . . He'll be moving on one day. . . . You'll be upset if you get to liking him too much." Of course, she is really cautioning herself. Perhaps because the story is told through the eyes of young Joey, the relationship between Marian and Shane remains completely chaste. They touch only twice: at the Independence Day dance, when they are pushed together by fate to dance a reel, and at their good-bye, when Marian bids him farewell in a formal handshake and says haltingly, "Please. . . . Please. . . ."

Several times, Marian speaks to Shane through the window of the family's cabin. Metaphorically, she is on the inside and he is on the outside, foreshadowing the ending when, although Shane has saved the community, he cannot stay in it. Like Oedipus, he is the tragic hero who sacrifices for his community and then is banished from it. "There's no living with a killing," he tells Joey. "There's no going back from one." As Shane rides away into the sunset, director Stevens uses an echo effect to drive home the force of Marian's unspoken longing. Joey calls after him, "Don't go! Mother wants you [wants you wants you wants you]! I know she does [she does she does she does]." This unresolved yearning (which exists in the whole family) lasts long after the movie ends, giving the film more power than any happy ending could have delivered. With this ending the film seems to suggest that civilization needs and longs for outsiders, not only to fight our battles, but to bring romance, wisdom, and wonder into our lives. □



**“Easy A,”** directed by Will Gluck. Sony/Screen Gems, 2010, 93 minutes.

# The Bogus Letter

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Jo Ann Skousen

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Here’s a new twist on an old formula: boy pays girl to pretend she likes him, so other kids at school will think he’s cool. It worked in “Can’t Buy Me Love” (1987), when geeky Roland Miller (played by dreamy Patrick Dempsey) hired the lovely and popular Cindi Mancini (Amanda Peterson) to pretend she was his girlfriend. Cindi went along with it because she desperately needed \$200, but she established strict rules governing their relationship, and it remained chaste until after the pseudo-romance blossomed inevitably into genuine love. That was a sweet movie about the superficiality of teenagers and the transformative power of a good haircut.

“Easy A,” however, avoids the relationship and cuts to the chase. In this film we are expected to believe that geeky teenaged boys would pay a girl simply to let them *say* “I had sex with her” (as though boys ever had to ask permission to start rumors like that). Moreover, we are expected to believe that a pretty, witty, and seemingly intelligent girl would be willing to destroy her reputation just to help these poor slobs out. Even more, we are expected to believe that having a one-time-only roll in the hay with the high school tramp (read on) would make these boys seem anything other than pathetic. I just don’t buy it.

As if that didn’t require enough suspension of disbelief, we then have to buy the idea that, after the girl has destroyed said reputation, the guy of her real dreams would still want her, slutty reputation and all, no questions asked. I may be old, but I don’t think human nature has changed that much since my dating days.

The film is presented episodically as Olive (Emma Stone) tells the story of her descent into infamy by means of her webcam journal. Supposedly Olive has been “invisible” and ignored by her peers, and this has caused her to give up on maintaining her good reputation. But she is friends with one of the coolest girls at school and is invited to her parties. She seems to be friends with the jocks and the cheerleaders as well. So I don’t get this angle either: why should she agree to say she has slept with all the losers in the class?

It begins innocently enough, with Olive making up a date with an imaginary boyfriend to avoid going camping with the family of her best friend, Rhiannon (Alyson Mychalka). When Rhiannon asks for prurient details about the date, Olive goes overboard in describing a night of passion, unaware that Marianne (Amanda Bynes), the class prude, can overhear them. Marianne spreads the false story, and everyone at school starts talking about Olive and her mysterious college boyfriend. Instead of denying it or ignoring

it, Olive embraces her new reputation by pretending to sleep with every boy who proffers a gift card, beginning with her gay friend Brandon (Dan Byrd) who wants to stay in the closet. Puh-leez!!

Coincidentally, Olive is studying Nathaniel Hawthorne’s “The Scarlet Letter” at school, so to demonstrate her contempt for the way others are treating her (even though it’s her own fault for lying to them), she buys an assortment of bustiers and corsets, adorns them all with deep red A’s, and begins living the martyred life of Hester Prynne. (Or so we are led to believe.)

However, as anyone who has read “The Scarlet Letter” knows, Hawthorne’s Hester is not a slut. She does not happily service every unhappy man in town — or pretend to. She falls in love — true love — with a man whom she cannot marry, and she becomes pregnant. Shunned by the community when her pregnancy begins to show, and forced to wear a letter A on her clothing as a brand, Hester lives a life of solitude and service to the community that has shunned her. She does it on her own terms, with her head held high. Through her actions, as time goes on, the “A” seems to transform itself from “Adulterer” to “Angel” in the eyes of many of the women in town, although they never lift the shunning. For Hester, the scarlet letter is not an “easy A.” It comes at a high cost. In fact, she names her baby “Pearl” to acknowledge the “great price” she has paid.

Like Hester, who is persecuted by her community’s puritanical leaders, Olive is persecuted by an overzealous Christian Club at school, led by Marianne. Members of the club are presented with typical Hollywood venom. They are self-righteous, cruel, vapid, and judgmental — and at least one is a sexual hypocrite (of course). By contrast, Olive’s parents (Stanley Tucci and Patricia Clarkson) are presented as hip, witty, and cool. Olive banters with them, exchanging clever word plays and literary references. But they are too hip — or too hippie — to provide any actual parenting, rules, or guidelines. “You know we accept your choices,” is all her mother says about the bizarre new wardrobe, providing a contrast to the judgmental Christian Club, but not much help.

School administrators are no better

— the principal gives her detention for using the British curse word for a female body part, but says nothing to her about wearing lingerie as a shirt. Olive's guidance counselor (Lisa Kudrow) is useless, giving Olive a handful of condoms when what Olive really wants is help figuring out how to undo the web of lies that entangles her.

Usually I enjoy teen films that borrow their plots from classic literature. I'm thinking of such films as "Clueless" (1995), based on Jane Austen's "Emma," and "10 Things I Hate about You" (1997), based on Shakespeare's "The Taming of the Shrew." These timeless stories translate well to modern settings, giving the films greater resonance and depth. But this one doesn't work. It's hard to root for a teenager who glorifies casual sex, teen drinking, and pal parenting, or a film that embraces stereotypes of any kind, whether Christian or gay. (Or business. When a Quiznos mascot shows up inexplicably at a Christian protest, Olive complains derisively, "The only thing that trumps religion is capitalism.") Oh, Hollywood. You are so predictable.

On the surface, the movie is a lot of fun. Emma Stone is a fine actress (if a bit old for this part). She is cute, sassy, smart, and fun, reminiscent of Lindsay Lohan in "Mean Girls" (before she was ruined by some of the same casual values portrayed in this film). Critics have almost universally praised the film for its high quality of acting, its humorous banter full of literary allusions, and its funny situations as the virginal Olive pretends to have sex. In the most memorable scene, Olive and Brandon stagger into a house party, feigning drunkenness, and ask for a bedroom where they can "finish what we started" in the car (wink, wink). Partygoers gather around the closed door to listen as the two jump on the bed, pound on the wall, moan and shout while they pretend to have sex. (He's gay, remember, and she's a virgin, so neither of them has any experience in "lemon-squeezing," as Brandon so delicately puts it.) A movie hasn't been this much fun since Harry met Sally.

So why do other reviewers find this film funnier than I do? I think they are blinded by the age of the actors. Emma Stone and Dan Byrd (Olive and Brandon) are both in their mid-20s.

They're adults. It's easy to forget that they are portraying children. But if 16-year-old Dakota Fanning were playing 16-year-old Olive, I think audiences would have a completely different reaction to the film.

My biggest beef with "Easy A" is that it simply looks too easy. Olive ruins her reputation with a long list of pretend

liaisons, and then restores it overnight, just by telling the boy of her dreams that it was all made up. But as any real girl will tell you, it ain't that easy when you're easy. If we learn anything from "The Scarlet Letter," it is that reputations are easily tarnished, but painfully restored. There is no such thing as an easy A. □

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**"The Town," directed by Ben Affleck. Warner Brothers, 2010, 125 minutes.**

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# The Boys of Boston

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Jo Ann Skousen

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"The Town" tells the story of four childhood friends who have grown up to follow in their fathers' footsteps. Unfortunately, those footsteps have led in most cases to prison or death. In Charlestown, Massachusetts, we are told, "Bank robbery is passed down from fathers to sons like a family business."

The film opens in the middle of a well organized bank heist. The robbers, dressed in Halloween masks and toting AK-47s, sail through the bank with speed and confidence, disabling cell phones and computers as they head for the vault, where they coolly check for dye tags and take only the clean stuff. When one quick-thinking employee sets off the silent alarm, they decide to take the pretty young bank manager, Claire (Rebecca Hall), as a hostage.

Most of the gang members are typical thugs, but Doug (Ben Affleck) is the robber with the heart of gold who

wants to break away but can't leave his friends. After they let Claire go (unharmed), Doug decides to track her down, ostensibly to find out what she might have told the FBI, but also to see how she's coping with the ordeal. He ends up falling for this pretty girl from the other side of town, despite the fact that he is already in a relationship with a local girl (Blake Lively), the sister of his best friend and partner, Jim (Jeremy Renner). Claire represents the life Doug might have had if he hadn't grown up in the projects of Boston. He is torn between loyalty to his pals and a desire for a different life.

The film has plenty of excitement, with a thrilling car chase down narrow Boston alleyways, and a shootout at Fenway Park. The robbers are cool, their plans are smart, and one of them has an itchy trigger finger that can get them all the death penalty if his bullets hit home. We especially feel sympathy for Doug, a good guy growing up in a bad situation.

The film doesn't praise or glorify

crime so much as it attempts to explain it. Life doesn't provide white picket fences for kids in the projects. Parents often end up dead or in prison, or they just walk away. Children learn to keep their eyes open and their mouths shut. They create their own code of right and wrong, with loyalty to friends at the top of the list.

The relationship between Doug and Jim, whose family took Doug in when his father went to prison, is best portrayed when Doug comes to Jim with a special request. Angry at some hoodlums who have been hassling Claire, Doug says to him, "I gotta ask ya to do something. I can't tell ya why. We gotta hurt somebody." Jim replies without question, "Let's go."

What happened in Charlestown? Why is it such a bastion of bank robbers and auto thieves? The film offers several reasons. As the FBI agents begin to close in on the robbers, Agent Frawley (Jon Hamm) comments dryly, "We won't get 24-hour surveillance unless one of these guys converts to Islam," suggesting that Homeland Security diverts funds away from hometown security. But it's more than that. In another telling scene, when the gang has outrun several police cars and crossed the bridge from Boston to Charlestown, they suddenly come eye to eye with a local policeman. He stares at them, and they stare at him. They're caught. Then the cop deliberately turns his head and looks the other way. It's hard to tell the good guys from the bad guys when they all grow up together.

Despite all this, or maybe because of it, the film is more than a typical bank heist flick; it is Ben Affleck's love letter to a town he adores. He grew up in the neighborhood of Boston, and he knows her seedy side as well as her beauty. He knows her accents and her moods, and he knows how to charm her into giving him exactly what he wants. Affleck's acting career has had its ups and downs, but Boston is clearly his lucky charm. He earned an Oscar (with Matt Damon) for the screenplay of "Good Will Hunting" (1997), set in Cambridge, where the two actors grew up. His directorial debut, "Gone, Baby, Gone" (2007), also set in Boston's seedy district, earned both critical accolades and box office success. "The Town" makes it a hat trick. Affleck is clearly back on top. □

**"Catfish," directed by Henry Joost and Ariel Schulman. Rogue Pictures, 2010, 94 minutes.**

# This Is Not a Pipe

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Jo Ann Skousen

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There was a time when drama focused on the acts of the rich and legendary. From Sophocles to Shakespeare, plays were about kings and heroes, gods and generals. When Henrik Ibsen introduced realism in the 19th century, critics predicted that no one would spend money to see ordinary people talking about such ordinary subjects as middle-class marriages and household budgets. But the critics were wrong. Audiences embraced these plays with characters very much like themselves, facing problems very much like their own.

We are seeing a similar shift in entertainment today, with the proliferation of webcams, weblogs, social networks, and reality TV. I don't predict an end to scripted movies by any means, but I do see a growing interest in documentaries that chronicle what real people are doing. In fact, documentaries are the fastest growing film genre today. Close to 9,000 were submitted to Sundance for consideration last year alone.

Another reason for the growing popularity of documentaries is the recent advance in digital film technology, making it possible for virtually anyone to be a filmmaker. Leaving behind the graininess of video tape recorders, the new digital cameras produce images with the crisp clarity of film, at a frac-

tion of the cost. Documentarians no longer have to worry about the cost of purchasing and developing 70mm film, or of renting expensive cameras worth tens of thousands of dollars. For a couple thousand bucks, anyone can own a good quality digital movie camera, and for a few hundred dollars more, can store hundreds of hours of footage. As a result, people have the luxury of keeping the cameras rolling and editing the stories later.

One trouble with real documentary work, however, is that the filmmakers have no control over the plot. They begin with an idea, but not a script. They're more like the hiker out for a walk than the adventurer out to scale Mt. Everest. They know the general area they plan to explore, but they don't know where specific trails will take them, until they go there. Often the story makes an unexpected turn, and they have to choose whether to pursue the original idea or detour down the new path.

Sometimes documentarians get extremely lucky, as did Byambasuren Davaa and Luigi Falorni when they filmed "The Story of the Weeping Camel" (2003) — how could they have anticipated that a rare white colt would be born while they were filming? The result was magical. Other times, documentarians end up creating the story;



Woodstock would have been just one of many music festivals in 1969, hardly remembered at all, if not for the award-winning documentary made of the event (and filmed in part by a young NYU film student named Martin Scorsese).

Fewer than 1% of those 9,000 documentaries submitted to Sundance last year were accepted. "Catfish" was one of them. In fact, it was all the buzz, and for good reason. The story is engaging, the main character good-looking and likable, and the suspense well-developed. The filmmakers also had the good fortune to stumble onto a story they could not have predicted when they began. And what a story!

The film starts simply enough. Shortly after photographer Yaniv

Schulman has a dance photo printed in The New York Times, he receives a fan letter from a talented young artist, 8-year-old Abby, who sends him a remarkable painting of his photograph, followed by several additional paintings. Thus begins Yaniv's online friendship with Abby, her mother Angela, and her beautiful 19-year-old sister Megan. As Yaniv becomes more and more involved with Megan and her circle of Facebook friends, his brother Ariel and his friend Henry Joost, budding filmmakers, start filming. After several months, Yaniv begins to fall in love with the girl he knows only through texting, emails, and phone calls, and the filmmakers decide it's time for a road trip. The resulting film is fascinating, funny, charming — and chilling.

This film could not have been made 20 years ago, or even ten years ago. In many ways it is both a celebration and a condemnation of modern communications technology. GoogleEarth, Google search, youtube, g-chat, Facebook, iTunes, cyberstalking, texting, sexting, and even identity theft — all of these play a role in the telling of this story. It's a cautionary tale, as old as "Little Red Riding Hood" and as contemporary as the TV show "CSI"; as emotionally simple as a love story, but as psychologically complex as the movie "Three Faces of Eve" (1957).

And that's all I'm going to say about "Catfish," because I want you to enjoy the filmmakers' unexpected path as much as I did. Shocking yet strangely moving, "Catfish" will reel you in. □

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## Whatever Happened to Integrity?, from page 32

directives, he could have done so more effectively if he hadn't allowed his staff to bill the message as a major step forward for gay rights. It wasn't. The memo wasn't a sincere attempt by Obama to combat antigay bias; it was a cynical attempt to impress LGBT supporters that he's doing something for them when he isn't. Not much integrity there.

The antics of academic or political or journalistic operators resurrect an old philosophical question: Are political conditions in the great liberal societies conducive to acquiring the self-knowledge necessary for integrity and, more importantly, for *acting* with integrity? Maybe not. Because those societies may not be great or truly liberal any longer.

Integrity in fact and argument is consistent with straight

talk, not cagey rhetoric. We expect straight talk from friends and family — and we should demand it from public figures too. If a friend spoke to us in the way that people too often speak to us in public, we'd sense that something was very wrong. Rational people shouldn't accept, as some pseudo-sophisticates do, being manipulated by people they are asked to trust.

We need to mind our own integrity as listeners and readers. Integrity has something to do with self-knowledge, the ability to assess ourselves in the context of a moral system that demands something of us. In this sense, are we people who expect to be manipulated? And, if we are, is that identity desirable? Does it allow us integrity? □

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## Reflections, from page 28

or synchronization, so often the movie reviews were spotty. We might not have any for a month or two, and then three of us would send reviews of the same movie at once. To ease the problem of feast or famine, I offered to take on the job of entertainment editor in 2006, and I've been reviewing movies, books, and Broadway shows for these pages ever since.

I use the phrase "these pages" nostalgically, for this is the final issue that will appear in print. Over the years I have enjoyed my position as movie reviewer. I love having a reason to go to the movies, and a reason to do more than just watch passively. Writing for Liberty has given me a voice, and it has also given me a reason to engage intellectually with the films I watch, whether they are good or bad. I hope my reviews have been helpful to our readers, but as a libertarian, I know that helping you is not my primary goal. I write these reviews because doing so pleases me, and if in the process it pleases you too, I am so much the happier for it. — Jo Ann Skousen

***Coulda been a contender*** — Politics is only part policy. It's also a large part psychology. This is a point that policy-minded libertarians need to remember. We complain

about the glaring elitism of Barack Obama and other establishment statists; but we fail to grasp the important aspirational quality of their elitism.

Just recently, at a cocktail party, I spent some time speaking with a small-town potentate. As the talk went on, he made some boozy boasts about his heavy connections with Democratic Party big shots in the state capitol. Now, generally speaking, this fellow had quite a bit to boast about. He is "self-made," having attended one good state university for his undergraduate degree and another for graduate school. (He doesn't understand . . . or doesn't readily admit . . . that government subsidies had a lot to do with his education and certification.) He's done well in his career — owning one of the finest houses in town and being appointed and subsequently elected to a high-profile local-government job.

Full of this, perhaps, he confided in me that the big people in the capitol were passing his name along for an appointment in the Obama Administration. A more sociable person would have let the boast slide; but I couldn't. In my wittiest tone, I said: "Really? But you don't fit the profile. You didn't go to

an Ivy League school and you've never worked at Goldman Sachs."

He was stunned for a moment. And then crestfallen. Literally, he looked at the ground. But when he looked up again, there was a sneer on his face. He muttered something indecipherable that included the word "fucking" and walked away.

Obama's political power — and Clinton's, before him — had a lot to do with the fact the petit bourgeois identified with him. He's like them. He made it "on his own." The student loans that he and his wife struggled to repay weren't a subsidy from a generous country; they were a hassle. If the Obamas made it all the way to the White House, well, maybe small-town potentates can, too.

I don't mean, entirely, to ridicule this aspirational identification. It's democratic, in the good sense. But it's also selective. And self-serving.

There's another mainstream American politician who taps into aspirational identification. That's why Sarah Palin drives the statist insane. She's encroaching on their psychological franchise.

— Jim Walsh

***Implant and entrap*** — Any notion that the Left is friendly to civil liberties should have been evaporated by a recent decision of the famously "liberal" 9th Circuit Court of Appeals.

The court refused an appeal by a marijuana grower who complained that his rights were violated when DEA agents hid a GPS on his vehicle. The DEA put the tracking device on his Jeep without a warrant, even though the police had to trespass on private property to get to it. Perfectly acceptable, claimed the court, since the police did nothing more than a child might do, retrieving a ball that had rolled under a car.

As these devices become cheaper with every round of electronic innovation, it is only a matter of time before we all will have one of them affixed to our undercarriage. — Tim Slagle

***Liberty is dead; long live Liberty!*** — It is a bittersweet moment, writing reflections for the final print version of *Liberty*. While I feel that the transition to the internet is long overdue, there has always been something special here. I have cherished my contributions, and tortured the deadlines, for over 11 years now, ever since Bill Bradford invited me to join the eclectic group of writers he assembled here.

The simplicity of the magazine, its two-color cover filled with text, seemed like something from an era gone by. *Liberty* had the feeling of an underground newspaper, and I always felt as if I were writing for one. The subscribers of *Liberty* are like a private club; there is a freedom in writing things for an audience limited to the reader base of the magazine. There was also a kick going into bookstores across the country and picking up a copy just to see my name in a town I had never visited before. (I hate to admit I did that much more frequently than a humble man should.)

I am shocked that it's over, even though I knew the transition was bound to happen eventually. In the electronic age, when opinions flash across the internet within seconds of a news event, having to wait two months between the event and the magazine's publication seemed quite archaic. But for the same reason, the things I wrote here were forced into a depth that transcended the 24-hour news cycle. While I ea-

gerly await the new era of Liberty, I cannot deny that a part of me grieves.

— Tim Slagle

***Shangri-LA*** — At the state level at least, the biggest area of wasteful spending is public education. On August 22 the AP reported a perfect illustration of such waste in the recent opening of what it calls a "Taj Mahal school" (a school costing more than \$100 million to build) in LA-LA-Land. The LA Unified School District (LAUSD) has just opened the most expensive school in the country.

This edifice — the Robert F. Kennedy Community Schools campus — cost an astonishing \$578 million. *Million!* It is a complex designed to house 4,200 K-12 students in style. It has murals (which will no doubt be covered in graffiti ere long — they should have just put up blank canvases), a large public park, a huge swimming pool, and a massive marble monument devoted to Robert Kennedy (the school was constructed on the site of the old Ambassador Hotel, where Kennedy was assassinated in 1968).

This isn't the only Taj Mahal school that LAUSD has built. Last year it opened the Visual and Performing Arts High School, which cost \$232 million, and the year before it opened the \$377 million Edward Roybal learning center (named after another Democratic politician).

The Roybal school is a real pip. The district cleared the land for the 2,400-student building, only to discover that it was building the school on an earthquake fault, over a methane gas field, and on polluted soil. It took 20 years to finish the place, which includes a dance studio with cushioned maple floors, a ten-acre park, a massive kitchen with a restaurant-quality pizza oven, and teacher "planning rooms" between the classrooms.

A big reason for the insanely high prices for such massive school boondoggles is the fact that the projects had to employ unionized labor.

How can the LAUSD afford to open these lavish new schools? I mean, it is one of the most incompetent bureaucracies in the world, with an aggregate 50% student dropout rate and a \$640 million budget deficit. It laid off 3,000 teachers in the last two years alone.

The answer is simple. Some time back, the idiot voters of the state approved a \$20 billion bond issue to build schools, so the education pigs have a big trough to feed in.

To be fair, Taj Mahal schools are not found only in LA-LA-Land. Dozens of such schools have been built nationwide, with every imaginable amenity (atriums, food courts, auditoriums with orchestra pits, and so on). For example, Newton North High School in Massachusetts cost nearly \$198 million. But it figures that the record would be set by the LAUSD, a nearly bankrupt school district, in a nearly bankrupt city, in a nearly bankrupt state.

— Gary Jason

***States' rights*** — The administration contends that the insurance mandate required by the healthcare reform bill falls within broad powers conferred on Congress to regulate interstate commerce. That is interesting, considering that the Republicans were fighting for the right of Americans to purchase health insurance across state lines, and were rebuked. So, by law, health insurance is commerce that cannot be interstate.

— Tim Slagle

## Philadelphia

Bold new constitutional theory, related by the *Philadelphia Daily News*:

In the last two years, Philadelphia police have confiscated guns from at least nine men — including four security guards — who were carrying them legally, and only one of the guns has been returned, according to interviews with the men.

Lt. Fran Healy, special adviser to the police commissioner, acknowledged that some city cops apparently are unfamiliar with some concealed-carry permits. But he said that it's better for cops to "err on the side of caution."

"Officers' safety comes first, and not infringing on people's rights comes second," Healy said.

## South Bend, Ind.

Covert advertisement for private schooling, from WSBT-22, CBS:

If you ever wondered how much difference just one letter can make when it comes to a message, ask the thousands of people who recently drove by a digital billboard near the intersection of Ironwood and State Road 23.

The ad urged people to go to the "southbendon.com" website for a look at the "15 best things about our public schools." Once the error was pointed out, the letter "L" was restored to the word "public."

## Washington, D.C.

Semantic revival of the Russo-Japanese War, spotted in the *Chicago Tribune*:

The White House has tapped a former leader of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources and the Indiana Wildlife Federation as the Asian carp czar to oversee the federal response to keeping the invasive species out of the Great Lakes.

President Obama's Council on Environmental Quality announced the selection of John Goss to lead the near \$80 million, multi-pronged federal attack against Asian carp. "This is a serious challenge, a serious threat," Illinois Senator Dick Durbin said. "When it comes to the Asian carp threat, we are not in denial. We are not in a go-slow mode. We are in a full attack, full-speed ahead mode. We want to stop this carp from advancing."

## Herndon, Va.

The high price of bar stunts, in the *Washington Examiner*:

Two fire-breathing bartenders face up to 45 years in prison each for performing flaming bar tricks.

Jimmy's Old Town Tavern owner Jimmy Cirrito said his bartenders have been entertaining his customers — by juggling bottles of alcohol and spitting out streams of flames using matchbooks and lighters — for more than a decade and no one's complained. But recently two of his longtime employees were hauled out of the Herndon bar in handcuffs and charged with three felonies each plus other misdemeanors.

Fairfax County fire investigators charged Tegee Rogers, 33, of Herndon, and Justin Fedorchak, 39, of Manassas, with manufacturing an explosive device, setting a fire capable of spreading, and burning or destroying a meeting house. They also were charged with several state fire code misdemeanors.

## Medford, Ore.

Costly slip, noted by the *Medford Mail-Tribune*:

A three-letter word may cost one of the nation's oldest air ambulance operators a \$30,000 fine. The word is "our" — the U.S. Department of Transportation says that was the wrong word for Mercy Flights of Oregon to use to describe a helicopter technically owned by another company.

The helicopter was purchased for Mercy Flights' exclusive use, but a separate company was formed for the deal, and it has ownership on paper. The DOT says Mercy Flights broke laws prohibiting unfair and deceptive practices in the sales of air transportation by saying it is "our helicopter."

The nonprofit will only have to pay half the fine if it avoids other pronoun violations for a year.

## Phoenix

Potential new venue for litigation, from *The National Law Journal*:

An Arizona attorney may face disciplinary action after an investigation found that she told a client she was channeling his dead wife, then lied about it during an unrelated disciplinary proceeding.

Charna Johnson began representing the client in 1999 in divorce proceedings after meeting him in a ballroom dancing class. The client's wife committed suicide the following year and Johnson handled the probate matters.

Within days of the death, Johnson began telling her client that "his deceased wife Jan had 'come' to her and that Jan's 'spirit' was 'inside' her and that she could communicate Jan's thoughts," according to the report. The client testified that Johnson pressured him to have a sexual relationship, although she told the investigator that the references to sex were coming from the deceased wife, not herself.

## San Jose

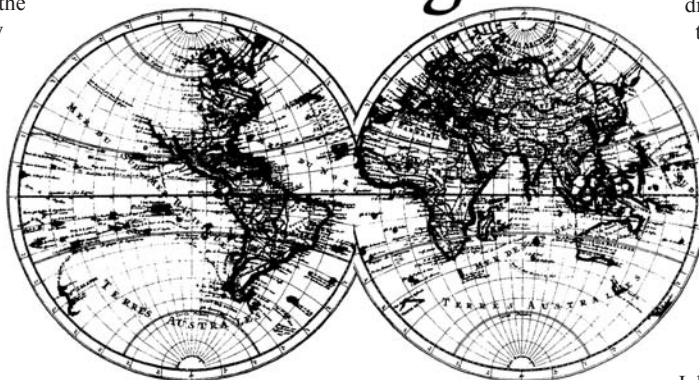
Educational mission, spotted by the *San Jose Mercury News*:

A top executive at the financially troubled San Jose/Evergreen Community College District earned a full salary while on sick leave — yet, during that same period, she earned a separate salary teaching at another nearby district.

Bayinaah Jones, whose title at SJECC is executive director of institutional effectiveness, earned \$30,672 on sick leave there, but was apparently healthy enough to hold down a teaching position in the Foothill-DeAnza Community College District. The revelation follows a searing state audit of the SJECC District's books, which was critical of spending by former Chancellor Rosa Perez — whose live-in partner is Jones. Perez also took paid sick leave — for eight months, earning \$25,000 each month — until retiring last Wednesday due to health reasons.

Jones took sick leave from her \$123,000 position in April, May, and June of 2010. She remains sick "until further notice." However, during those same months, she commuted to a job teaching at DeAnza. In the last several years, the pair took 18 business trips together to places such as El Salvador, Scotland, and West Palm Beach — paid with district credit cards.


# Terra Incognita



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(Readers are invited to forward news clippings or other items for publication in Terra Incognita, or email to [terraincognita@libertyunbound.com](mailto:terraincognita@libertyunbound.com).)





My home means everything to my family and me.

But my city wanted to take my property away  
so a politically connected developer can build condos.

I fought to protect my property rights . . . and yours.

And I won.

*I am IJ.*

EMINENT  
DOMAIN  
ABUSE

THIS LAND  
IS  
MY LAND

Lori Ann Vendetti  
Long Branch, New Jersey

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Private property rights